

38. The King's Preparation

5/2/2004

I have been at the side of those who knew their time of death are getting close. They want to spend their time as wisely as they can. They don't want to waste any one minute of their time, because their time on earth is very limited.

I see the same thing in the heart of Jesus who was standing at the shadow of His death on the cross. Only a week away from the crucifixion on Calvary. I am sure that He could feel each second is passing by, yet the world was clueless and His disciples didn't have the foggiest idea.

Chapter 25 marked the end of the preaching and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ. Events were now moving to a climax fast.

A. PREVIEW OF THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN

Matt 26:1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 2 "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

For the last time, Jesus predicts His own death on the cross to His disciples.

Matt 26:3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. 5 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Caiaphas was the son of Annas. He had four other sons who were making some serious money from the temple money changing tables. What did Jesus do with their tables? He overturned them. Consequently, Caiaphas and Annas were determined to destroy Jesus. Not only they were jealous of His widespread fame and following among the people, but they were angry that He was destroying their ungodly money-making operation and cutting into their profit margin.

B. THE ULTIMATE WORSHIP BY MARY

Matt 26:6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table.

This perfume, undoubtedly imported from the East, was expensive, worth a year of a common laborer's wages, and had probably been kept for her own wedding. Its fragrance was preserved by its sealing in alabaster jar. Once the flask was broken, its contents could be used with their full freshness only once.

Matt 26:8 But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?" 9 For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor."

Each time we find Mary, she was at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him. Because she had listened to His word, Mary knew that soon Jesus would die and be buried. She also knew that His body would not need the traditional care given to the dead because His body would not see corruption. Instead of anointing His body after His death, she did so before His death. It was an act of faith and love.

"It's a waste," Judas said. Yet in a few hours, Jesus would call Judas himself "the son of perdition," or literally, "the son of waste" in John 17:12. People who don't love God or understand His ways always see worship as a waste.

As she broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon Jesus, Mary showed us about true worship:

1) True worship comes from brokenness.

When finally we're at our wits' end and broken, we humble ourselves before the Lord and worship Him.

Ps 34:18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

2) True worship is often costly.

It cost Mary a lot. What does our worship cost you and me? Our image. "There's no way I'm going to sing those songs. I'm too cool for that," some say.

"I don't care if Scripture declares lifting hands is a sign of submission and adoration, but I'll never lift mine. People will think I'm weird."

If that is the case, whom do you worship? If it is God, it really doesn't matter what the others think and what you think. If it is people whom you worship, you are in a wrong church.

3) True worship is often misunderstood.

There will always be those in Judas' corner who say, "Quit trying to be so holy. Do something more practical." They will scrutinize your sincere motive of worship.

Let'em. But God loves your worship. However, if you are causing a lot of commotions and bringing attention to ourselves instead of God, it is a problem.

4) True worship is always beneficial.

After Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, her hair took on the same fragrance as Jesus' feet. That's what worship does. When we're worshipping the Lord, we get to take on the fragrance of the Lord.

Matt 26:10 But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. 11 For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. 12 For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. 13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

Jesus immediately came to the defense of Mary for her loving act of devotion, because He always protects His own. Nothing given to Jesus in love is ever wasted. Her act of worship not only brought joy to the heart of Jesus and fragrance to the house, but also blessing to the whole world. We can never outgive God.

Her devotion encourages us to love and serve Christ with our very best.

C. THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS

Matt 26:14-16 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

What a comparison between Mary and Judas! While she was giving away her treasure to Jesus, Judas sold his Master for a cheap reward that would be the average Old Testament compensation for the death of a slave.

"Judas" means "praised." It's a beautiful name, but Judas wasted it and ruined it for future generations. How many parents name their kids Judas today?

Judas realized that he is not going to get what he wants from Jesus, he betrayed the One who gives Himself up for his eternal soul.

I believe it was his disappointment with Jesus that prompted Judas to entertain a betrayal mentality. I believe that when Judas initially followed Jesus, he was excited about the prospect of a kingdom being set up on earth. But when Jesus began leaving the area every time the multitude wanted to make Him king, perhaps Judas felt his heart sink. So, too, I see a tendency in people today to sell out when they get disappointed in Jesus. "I thought Jesus would bless my business if I became a Christian," they say. "But what happened? I went bankrupt." Or "I believe in God, but I have a cancer and I am dying."

We also find some Christians who get involved in ministry with their own agendas. And they promote their own things to achieve what they want. They would do song and dance while they see fit to their own agendas. But once they realize they are not going anywhere with theirs, they pack up and leave.

What is the cost of our betrayal against Jesus? What would be the trigger point for us to decide to betray our gracious Savior? The pleasure of sin for season? Alcohol, gambling, car, obsession to your job?

In spite of his affiliation with the band of disciples, and his association with Christ, Judas was not a true believer. For three years, Judas shared meals with Jesus, lived with Him and listened to His teachings day in and day out. But like many professing Christians today, Judas was "in" the group of believers but not "of" them.

Let me ask you this question: Are you a Judas? Are you pretending to be a follower of Jesus Christ, yet you are not a born-again Christian? Or you might be a born-again Christian, but are you living in carnal life?

Romans 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

D. THE OLD TESTAMENT REDEMPTION

Matt 26:17 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. 20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." 22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" 23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

Peter and John were to follow a man who was carrying a pitcher of water and he would show them a large upper room. It would be most unusual for a man to be carrying the water, for this was usually done by the women.

Nobody in the group have noticed that Jesus was treating Judas any different than other guys even though He knew who the betrayer was.

Passover was instituted during the time of the slavery of the Hebrew people in Egypt in Genesis. The Lord told Moses to kill a lamb for every ten people as a sacrifice for their sins. Then they had to apply the blood of the lamb on their door post, each side top and bottom which represents a cross. By doing so, the death angel will "pass over" their homes to the homes without lamb's blood.

The Passover remembered the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which was the central act of redemption in the Old Testament. Now Jesus will provide a new center of redemption.

E. THE NEW TESTAMENT REDEMPTION

Matt 26:26-30 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

It was after Judas had left the room, Jesus took two elements from the Passover feast, the unleavened bread and the cup, and He used these to picture His own death. The broken bread pictured His body given for the sins of the world. The "fruit of the vine" pictured His blood, shed for the remission of sins. The text does not indicate that anything special or mysterious happened to these two elements. They are mere symbols of His body and blood.

The Roman Catholic Church holds the idea of transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and the wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus. That is a wrong doctrine.

The Passover became a new celebration - the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, Communion. In the ancient Greek language, 'thanks' is the word 'eucharist.' This is why the commemoration of the Lord's table is sometimes called the Eucharist.

Now, if I were setting up the Lord's Supper, I would have reversed the order. I would have served the cup first. I would have said, "Before the Body of Christ can enter into us, the blood must first cleanse us." But Jesus didn't follow that pattern. He gave the bread first and followed it with the cup. And in so doing, He essentially said, "I will come into you just as you are. And then I will cleanse you with My blood."

Most people have the mistaken idea that they must clean up their act and get it together before they ask Jesus into their hearts. But just the opposite is true. The bread is first. He comes in and He cleans us up. It's not perspiration - our hard work.

It's impartation - Jesus in us, the hope of glory.

The Lord's Supper reminds us to look ahead for Christ's return. We will observe this supper until He comes. The Passover pointed ahead to the Lamb of God who would

take away the sins of the world. The Lord's Supper announces that this great work has been accomplished.

In Matthew 26:29, Jesus added the note of future glory in the kingdom. Jesus did eat bread, fish, and honey after His resurrection. But there is no record that He drank the fruit of the vine. Even as He faced the rejection of His nation and the suffering of the cross, He was looking ahead to the kingdom that would be established because of His sacrifice.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) The only way we can get to know the heart and the will of God is sitting at His feet.

We, too, like Mary can know God's heart through devotion of the Word of God and prayers to Him. Don't complain to God about not telling you what He wants, when you don't read the Word daily.

2) Judas' life is a warning to those who pretend to serve Christ but whose hearts are far from God.

He is also a warning to those who waste their opportunities and their lives. "Why this waste?" asked Judas when he saw that expensive ointment poured out on Jesus. Yet Judas wasted his opportunities, his life, and his soul! Are you wasting your life for the things not worth in eternal life? Please examine your heart.

3) We cannot be sinless, but we can live the life of sin less.

Just because the blood of Jesus cleansed our sins, that doesn't mean we can continue our sin rampage. Yes, His grace and mercy are abound ever more. We must remember that God's grace is not a license to sin more. It should be the other way around.