

Christ's Passion According to Matthew

Text: [MATTHEW 26-27](#)

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Introduction:

In MATTHEW 10:28 Jesus is recorded as saying, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Today I want us to follow the progression that occurred when Jesus took up His own cross to do the will of His Father in Heaven. Even though the crosses we must bear will not be exactly the same as the cross Jesus bore, there are many aspects of our cross bearing that will be the same. Most people will never have to experience the extent of physical pain and suffering experienced by Jesus. And no one but Jesus can possibly play the role of a bearer of sin for all mankind. However, there will be components of our cross bearing that will be exactly the same as those of our Lord Jesus Christ. By understanding what those particular elements are, we will be better prepared to take up our own crosses and follow.

Altogether we will look at six portions of scripture. A person from the drama team will read each scripture portion. After each section of scripture is read, I will attempt to summarize the drama that took place. And following the summary we will sing a song of worship. The first scripture reading will be MATTHEW 26:1-19.

Scripture Reading: MATTHEW 26:1-19

Our Lord's journey with His own cross started long before the day when He was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. It started with His own knowledge of God's will for His life. And, since He was God incarnate, it is possible to conclude that Jesus, as God, knew about the plan before the universe was even created. It is also possible to conclude that Jesus, as a human being, knew about the plan the moment He was able to reason with His mind. So Christ's journey began with a commitment to a plan to do the will of His Father in heaven.

One day Jesus told a group of Jewish people about the plan to which He was committed. He said that He was about to lay down his life—only to take it up again. He said, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord." Even though it would seem that Christ's death was planned and carried out by men, ACTS 2:23 says that it was done according to "God's set purpose and foreknowledge."

Unless God had ordained it to happen, the crucifixion

of Christ would never have taken place. There were many times when people tried to kill Jesus; but they were unsuccessful, because "His time had not yet come." But now the time had come, and Jesus knew it had come. He was in full cooperation with God the Father. Jesus called a meeting with His disciples. He told them that the time had come for Him to be handed over to be killed. He also told them that it would happen in two days, during the feast of the Passover, and the method of His death would be the cross.

At the same time Jesus met with His disciples, the leaders of the Jews were also meeting. They were scheming how to arrest Jesus and put him to death. They did not talk about how Jesus would be killed, but they did decide that it would not happen during the Passover.

The plan that came from heaven was that Jesus would be killed on a cross during the Passover. The plan that came from the servants of hell was that Jesus would be killed, but not during the Passover. So we see that heaven and hell had the same goal; namely, that Jesus would be killed. However the two plans could not agree upon the time.

Before the Passover, Christ's disciple, Judas, went to the Jewish leaders and asked them how much money they would give him in exchange for Jesus. They said they would give him thirty pieces of silver. From that moment Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

But if the leaders of the Jewish people had decided not to kill Jesus during the Passover, then why did they finally decide to carry out their plan during the Passover? The answer is that they had no choice. They had to do it according to God's plan.

Our Lord's journey began with a vision. The vision was the redemption of all creation. It was part of God's plan from the beginning of time. Jesus knew well the part He had to play in the plan. And He made a commitment to play His part. That is where His journey began. And if we are to take up our crosses and follow Jesus, we must also begin with a commitment to God's master plan of redemption. We can be assured that God has a role for each of us in His plan, and we can be assured that it is possible for us to know what the role will be step by step. And it

is also possible for us to know that the plan will not be thwarted. If we only submit ourselves and commit ourselves to God's plan for our lives, then no power from hell can stop us from playing out the role God has for us in His redemptive plan.

Besides Jesus, perhaps the only other person who understood her role in God's plan of redemption in the drama that was just read was Mary. She knew that Jesus would soon die, and she knew that her role in the plan was to anoint him for the occasion, so that's what she did. The disciples felt that her action was a waste, but her action was motivated by love. Mary's commitment to her role in God's redemptive plan was inspired by love. Her love for her God motivated her to sacrifice something worth a lot of money so that she could do her part. What Mary did was done to prepare Jesus for burial.

Thus we have seen Jesus begin his journey, and we have also seen one of his disciples taking up her cross to follow. For both Jesus and Mary the journey begins with a commitment to be involved in God's redemptive plan, a commitment inspired by love for the One who made the plan, and a commitment strengthened by an assurance that the plan will not be thwarted.

Scripture Reading: MATTHEW 26:20-30

A commitment to be involved in God's redemptive plan is a good reason for a ceremony. Wedding ceremonies are organized around a mutual commitment to a vision of marriage between a man and a woman. Ceremonies are a time for celebration. They are a time when the hearts of the people making the commitment should be filled with joy. But ceremonies are also meant to be serious. They are meant to help us in our resolve to follow through on our commitment. In the scripture reading that was just read we see a ceremony being initiated. During that Last Supper the atmosphere was both joyful and serious.

Heaven had already ordained that Jesus would lay down His life during the Feast of the Passover. Now the Feast of the Passover has arrived. Judas did not want to betray Jesus at this time. The Jewish leaders had already instructed him not to do it during the Passover. But Jesus wanted it to be done during the Passover. Therefore, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray me." Judas must have been shocked to hear Jesus speak those words. In his heart, he must have thought, "Jesus has found out about the plan. What should I do?" In JOHN 13:27 we read that Jesus told him what to do. He said, "What you are about to do, do quickly."

So Judas immediately left the room and went to the Jewish leaders to tell them, "Somehow Jesus has

discovered our plan. We have no choice but to act quickly; otherwise we will miss our opportunity." The servants of hell must have felt extremely anxious at that time.

But there was no anxiety on the part of our Lord. The plan of hell was "not during the Passover." But Jesus is Lord of the Passover. In affect, He told Judas, "You must obey my plan. What you are about to do, do quickly."

Then Jesus passed the bread and the cup to His disciples. By doing so, He initiated a ceremony for every disciple coming after Him to follow. We call it communion. It is meant to bring joy to our hearts by reminding us of the communion we know have with God the Father through the death of Christ on the cross. And it is meant to be a serious reminder of our obligation as individuals and as a corporate body to play out our roles in God's redemptive plan.

Next week, when we participate in the ceremony we call Holy Communion, I hope that our hearts will be full of both joy and renewed resolve to take up our cross and follow Jesus both individually and as a team.

After eating the Passover Feast, Jesus sang songs with His disciples. His heart was filled with joy. But after the time of celebration, the atmosphere became very serious as they left the room and made their way to the garden of Gethsemane.

Text: MATTHEW 26:31-56

Jesus knew well that it was the will of God that He become the King of kings, but He also knew that the only way for Him to become King of kings was through suffering and death on a cross. It was God's will that the Messiah rightful place as King, and the cross was God's appointed method for making it happen.

The devil often tempted Jesus by saying, "You can become King of kings, but don't use the method of the cross." One day, in the desert, Satan spoke to Jesus and said, "If you worship before me, all the kingdoms will be yours. Jesus knew that Satan's method of becoming King was wrong, because the Bible says, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

On another day Jesus told His disciples, "I must suffer and be nailed to a cross." At that time the disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah who would become King of kings, but they did not want him to use the method of the cross. Satan used one of His own disciples to tempt Jesus. Peter said, "God forbid it Lord, this shall never happen to you." But Jesus

turned to Peter and said, *“Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me.”* God’s will is for Me to be nailed to a cross.

Now Jesus is at the Garden of Gethsemane. Satan is also there tempting Jesus. Listen to our Lord’s prayer. *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”* The cup that Jesus was talking about was the cross. Satan did not want Jesus to drink that cup. So Jesus was tempted by Satan; but He countered by quickly saying, *“Yet not as I will, but as You will.”* Therefore, Jesus, in prayer, had victory over the temptation of the devil.

Whenever a person decides to commit himself to God’s redemptive plan, spiritual warfare is bound to follow. It is during this part in the process of following Jesus that many people will fall away. It is easy to say that we want to travel this road before Satan attacks and while many other people are saying the same thing. But when the attacks begin and when we realize that not many other people are walking the road with us—that’s when the going really gets tough.

And when the going really gets tough, we must turn to God in prayer. Of course we should pray without ceasing, in good times and in bad. But when we feel we have run out of strength to fight the battle, prayer becomes all the more urgent. The times when we feel we are too tired and too weak to pray are the times when we need to pray the most.

Just recently, when I was being tempted to take a break from playing the role God has given me in His redemptive plan, I came across a poem. One verse in the poem encouraged me at the time of my need.

“Dear restless heart, be still. Don’t struggle to be free. God’s life is in your life, form Him you may not flee; Just pray, and pray, and pray, till you have faith to see.”

Text: MATTHEW 26:57-75

“Jesus was handed over to men by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge, and they, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to a cross (ACTS 2:23).

When Jesus was taken away from the Garden of Gethsemane, He had already won a great victory, because He had overcome Satan’s temptation. He totally surrendered His life to do the will of God; therefore, He did not fear being handed over to wicked men. And He was not afraid to face the certain loneliness that would follow.

Many people used lies to accuse Jesus, but Jesus did not say a word in response. They had already decided

to put Jesus to death, so it was useless to respond to their lies. There were two witnesses who testified that Jesus had said He would destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days. But their testimony was not accurate. Jesus had not said, “I will destroy the temple of God”; rather, He had referred to His own body as a temple and said, “Destroy the temple of My body, and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus did not respond to their testimony, because it was false.

Then the high priest said to Jesus, “I charge you under oath by the living God,; Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Now Jesus finally responds, “Yes, it is as you say, but I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

When the priest and others heard Jesus make this statement, they became very angry and said, “He is worthy of death.”

There was another person present during that trial. It was Christ’s disciple, Peter. Unlike the rest of the people there at the time, Peter did not hate Jesus. He loved Him. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah. At the time of the trial Peter still believed in Jesus, and He still loved Him. But He had already fallen out of close fellowship with His Lord. He had lost His courage. Therefore, when people challenged Peter’s love and loyalty toward Jesus by asking Him if he were Jesus’s friend, Peter denied that He knew Jesus.

At the beginning, many people wanted to travel this road with Jesus. Later, everyone deserted but twelve people. Twelve? No, only eleven, because Judas had already left to betray Jesus. And then, at the Garden of Gethsemane we saw only three people with Jesus, because the others remained at the gate. And then we noticed the three were sleeping, and Jesus was left alone to pray. And now, at the time of his trial, everyone deserted Jesus and fled. Those who hated Jesus wanted to kill Him. Those who loved Jesus denied Him. Do you feel lonely? Loneliness is also part of the experience of people who choose to become a cross bearers. Jesus knew what it meant to be lonely, and so must we.

Text: MATTHEW 27:1-26

During the night they said that Jesus was worthy of death. Now it is morning, and they need to decide how they are going to kill Jesus. In the end they decided to hand Jesus over to Pilate, because Pilate would use the Roman method of execution which was the cross. Everything they decided to do was known long before by Jesus, because it had been arranged by God and not by men. Those people had no authority to take the

life of Jesus.

In this passage of scripture, we want to notice two people. The first person is Judas and the second person is Pilate. When Judas saw that Jesus had been found guilty, he felt a great deal of regret. Now he was frightened. He knew that it was a serious sin for him to betray an innocent man. He also knew that he would be judged for his sin, so he regretted what he had done. But in his remorse, there was no desire to repent. It was the fact that he realized that he would be punished for what he had done that caused him to feel such regret. The night before, Peter sinned by denying Jesus. Afterwards, he cried. He wanted to repent. But Judas never shed a tear. He had no intention of repenting. He regretted the fact that he would have to face judgment. But this kind of remorse is not the kind that will lead a person to salvation.

The story of Pilate is also a tragedy. During this period of time Pilate experienced a struggle between his conscience and reality. In the end, reality won out over his conscience, so he washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." Afterwards, he turned Jesus over to be flogged and then crucified. Pilate felt no remorse, because he had completely suppressed his conscience.

Judas said, "I have sinned, because I have betrayed innocent blood." He regretted what he had done, because of the judgement that would come his way. Pilate said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." Pilate didn't even feel remorse.

Every day Satan whispers in the ears of the people whom we are trying to help. Every day he whispers in their ears, "Do you want to betray Jesus? How much do you want? Just let me know what you want, and I will give it to you. Do you want to raise your standard of living? Just betray Jesus and I will make it happen. Let go of Jesus and I will give you anything you want."

But everything that Satan gives us will be of no use to us when we leave this world. In hell people will have feelings of remorse. They will regret trading Jesus for the things that perish. They will cry out in agony, "Please give Jesus back to me!" But in hell nothing can be done to reverse the situation. It is too late.

Everyone likes success stories, but not all stories have a happy ending. When people ask me how things are going at the church, I often say, "there are sorrows and there are joys." I have learned that the agony of the cross includes the heartache that comes when we see other people fail, people that we loved, people for whom we have worked so hard to help them know God. Sometimes I have been tempted to drop out of ministry just so I can be spared from such heartache

in the future. But when Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow Him, we must be prepared to experience such suffering. It is part of what it means to be His disciple.

MATTHEW 27:27-56

Perhaps it is possible for us to understand, at least to some extent, the physical suffering that Christ endured. We have the Biblical account to help us. And we also have extra-Biblical sources of information. Some of those sources are reliable and some are questionable.

But maybe it really doesn't matter that much that we understand all the gory details of our Lord's physical suffering. What's really important is that we struggle to understand the spiritual suffering that took place. It was a suffering that will always be impossible to portray pictorially regardless of how advanced our technology becomes. It was a suffering that no words can adequately describe. Nevertheless, it was a suffering that we must try to understand, because it was through that suffering that God's plan of redemption was accomplished.

I used to think that my redemption was accomplished through the physical suffering Jesus experienced. And I believed that my Lord's physical suffering never ended. In my mind, every time a mass was performed, Jesus suffered once again, just as He had done before. And I believed that it was through that physical suffering that my sins were forgiven.

Even back then I had heard stories and seen a motion picture about the crucifixion. I thought the thunderstorm that took place while Jesus hung on the cross was an expression of God's disgust and anger toward people who were responsible for His Son's death. And I felt guilty, because I was responsible.

It wasn't until later that my thinking about the physical suffering of Christ changed. I came to realize that there is no Biblical account of a thunderstorm that slightly darkened the sky. According to the Biblical account, at nine o'clock in the morning they nailed Jesus to the cross. He hung on the cross for a total of six hours before He died. After three hours, and when the sun was at its highest place in the sky, from twelve noon to three o'clock in the afternoon the entire land became dark, as dark as night. During that three-hour period of darkness there is no record of a single word being spoken. And then, at the end of that period of darkness, we hear the voice of our Savior breaking the silence. Referring to those three hours, Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

I now strongly believe that those three hours of darkness were not a manifestation of God's anger towards sinful man. Instead, I believe they were a physical manifestation or incarnation of Satan himself. It was the hour where Satan's power was manifest in a way that must have sent chills up and down the spines of all who were present.

Perhaps the best way to think about what happened during those hours of darkness is to think about the crown of thorns that they placed on our Lord's head. We must remember that the One who was forsaken by God Himself was the Son of God. He was the King of kings and Lord of lords.

On His head there was a crown. It was not a crown made of precious jewels. It was made out of thorns. But where did the thorns come from? When the earth was originally created, it had no thorns. But when the first man sinned, God said, "Cursed is the ground because of you...it will produce thorns and thistles for you."

That day, the soldiers of Pilate took the curse that was the result of the first sin of mankind and placed it on the head of Jesus. The thorns pierced through the skin of the Son of God, and blood flowed from the open wounds. Maybe that can help paint a picture in our minds, a picture of the sin of man and the blood of God being mingled together.

But it's a disturbing picture, because we know that it is impossible for God to have any fellowship with sin. Therefore, on the cross, we notice something that is impossible for us to comprehend. The Son of God took upon Himself the sin of mankind. God, who is Holy cannot have fellowship with sin; but, for three dark hours on the cross, it seems that the impossible became a reality. It seems that God refused to have fellowship with Himself. This is the mystery of the

cross, and it is the main point of Christ's passion. When Jesus said, "It is finished" He was talking about His part in God's plan to win His creation back to Himself. His part was accomplished. In essence, the victory had been won even before Jesus took His last breath.

Whatever our specific role in God's redemptive plan may be, our ultimate goal must be the cross. We must go to the cross for salvation, and we must bring other people to the cross so that they can find salvation. Through the mystery of what took place on the cross we must experience victory. We must experience the grace needed to overcome the penalty and power and, eventually, the presence of sin in our own lives so that we can enter into the kingdom of God. And we must lead others to the cross so they might experience the same. That day a centurion saw Jesus on the cross and responded by saying, "Surely He was the Son of God." Our goal in following Jesus is to help as many people as we can to see Jesus on the cross so that they will say the same thing.

Commitment, celebration, temptation, loneliness, sorrow, and victory—I believe these are the experiences we will have in common with our Lord when we take up our crosses to follow Him. During these past few weeks millions of people in our country who have never been to church or read the Bible have been exposed to the story of Christ's passion through a movie. Many have been touched. That movie has opened up opportunities for us to preach the gospel. It has given me the chance to talk about Jesus with some people that I love dearly. Whether you choose to use the movie or some other means of sharing with people, please never forget the main purpose of taking up your cross to follow Jesus is to lead others to the cross so that they can find salvation from their sins. Salvation from sin is the ultimate victory of the cross.