

**The Final Week (Tuesday/Wednesday):
The Calm Before the Storm**
Looking into the Face of Jesus
The Life of Christ, 2: Pages 373-384
Manuscript: Lesson Plan 102

Introduction

There are several texts for this lesson. We will start with Matthew 25:31-46, so please open your Bibles to Matthew 25. We will also be looking at Matthew 26:1, 2; John 13:1 and Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:1, 2 and Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10; Luke 22:3-6. For our main texts, we will stay in Matthew, so please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 25.

On the Day of Judgment, which side of the Lord do you want to be on—the right or the left? Have you ever felt that you betrayed Jesus? What happened? How do we betray Jesus?

We have come to a very sad day in the camp of our Lord. We are finally going to move from Tuesday to Wednesday. Not much happened on Wednesday or Thursday according to the Gospels. They call this the calm before the storm.

In this lesson, we are going to cover a wide range of topics. We need to finish Jesus' teaching concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming (Tuesday night), and then lead into the events of Wednesday.

Remember, they had retired to the Mount of Olives on Tuesday evening when He started answering their questions. Their conversation likely lasted past sundown. Since sundown marks the end of the Jewish day, it was Wednesday. We begin by finishing His teaching regarding His second coming.

Let us read Matthew 25:31-46 (read).

The Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

When Jesus comes, there will be judgment. Some think that Jesus is going to come and set up a physical kingdom and reign on the earth for 1,000 years. Does this text depict that? Absolutely not! Jesus does not teach this idea and it is not taught elsewhere in the Bible either. What's going to happen immediately when Jesus returns? In a word: judgment.

Some claim that there will be multiple judgments. They say that Matthew 25:31ff is the judgment of nations, and then there will be other judgments. The Bible teaches only one judgment day. Hebrews 9:27 teaches, "And inasmuch as it appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

Acts 17:31 tells us, ". . . because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

On that day, He will separate the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:32). This is a reference to what shepherds would do in those days. The sheep and goats would roam together during the day. But at evening, the shepherd would separate them. This is exactly what Jesus is going to do when He returns.

He places the sheep on His right hand (Matthew 25:33). The sheep inherit the kingdom (Matthew 25:34). Why is this so? We learned with the talents you better be serving and working while waiting on Jesus. Look at this list of how we

can serve: feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and visit those in prison (probably referring to those who were imprisoned for Christ's sake).

Christ said the righteous did all of these things to Him; they wanted to know how (Matthew 25:37), and the answer is when you do it to others, you do it to Christ (Matthew 25:40).

He places the goats on His left hand (Matthew 25:41). The goats inherit "eternal fire." "The word "eternal" is a big word in Matthew 25:46. The same word references both places; too many people do not grasp that fact the hell is just as eternal as heaven. Many believe deep down that hell will only be bad for time. Please do not forget that if you are separated with the goats, you will be punished forever.

They were separated as goats because they did not do all the things mentioned above. Christ said the "accursed" ones did not do all these things for Him. They wanted to know how (Matthew 25:44), and the answer is when you overlook the needs of others, you overlook the needs of Christ (Matthew 25:45).

In other words, betraying others means you are betraying Jesus. How can we betray Jesus today? This section of Scripture reminds us that we betray Him every time we decide to overlook the needs of others.

From the past several lessons, in regards to Jesus' second coming, we can know a few things. First, is that no one knows the hour or time (Matthew 24:36ff). That being the case, we need to be ready/prepared—parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14ff). We show our preparation by working—parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14ff). Judgment will happen when He comes (Matthew 25:31ff). Thus we should be mindful: our treatment of others is our treatment of Him, and our fate at judgment will be determined accordingly (Matthew 25:31ff).

Speaking of our treatment of Him, we then see . . .

Jesus Preparing for the Crucifixion (Matthew 26:1, 2; John 13:1)

Look at Matthew 26:1, 2 (read).

The text begins, "When Jesus had finished all these words. . ." "Remember it was Tuesday night when He finished this lesson. If He spoke past sundown, then by Jewish reckoning, that would be considered the next day which meant there were only two days left until the crucifixion. This was just another reminder for His disciples that He was going to die.

John 13:1 seems to let us in on Jesus' thoughts and mindset as He prepared for His death. Even during His darkest, most stressful times, Jesus still was focused on people. During busy and stressful times, we tend lose focus on others; stress and business cause our minds to go into survival mode which, in turn, causes us to be selfish. This time (Wednesday and the first part of Thursday) could be called the calm before the storm, but we can only imagine that He was continuing His development the disciples. He was probably also resting for the day ahead; He was preparing for Calvary.

Jesus, however, was not the only one who was preparing . . .

The Sanhedrin's New Plan (Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:1, 2)

In Matthew 26:3-5, we are told (read).

Christ rested, but His enemies did not. They had a secret meeting in the courtyard of the palace of Caiaphas. Council members partial to Jesus (like

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) may not have been at this meeting. Caiaphas had presided over the previous meeting in John 11 when things really changed and they decided to kill Jesus. After not being successful in bringing Jesus down on Tuesday (remember all the questions), they probably were more determined than ever on this occasion.

They knew Christ's arrest would be problematic. They were afraid to arrest Him in public. Matthew 26:4 tells us they wanted to "seize Jesus by stealth." They did not want to take Him during the festival (Matthew 26:5). They were unable to arrest Him in private. They did not know where He was staying. This was quite a dilemma.

But a solution would soon present itself from an unlikely source.

The Betrayal of Judas (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10, 11; Luke 23:3-6)

Let us continue reading Matthew 26:14-16 (read).

Judas plotted against Jesus. The Sanhedrin's dilemma was resolved. Judas asked them, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" (Matthew 26:15). He "discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them" (Luke 22:4). Remember, they wanted to take Jesus by stealth. They needed Judas to let them know where He would be at night to take him without a crowd.

They weighed out thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). This was prophesied in Zechariah 11:12. Many believe these pieces of silver were shekels. Shekels were worth about four denarii. Therefore, Judas betrayed Jesus for four months' pay, or the price of a common slave. The thirty pieces of silver could have just been a down payment (note Mark 14:11; they promised to give him money). Either way, this was all he received.

Why did Judas betray Jesus? This is one of those "questions for the ages." Most say it was greed (Matthew 26:14, 15; John 12:6). There were, possibly, several more reasons. Judas could have been upset that Jesus would not capitalize on His popularity. Judas could have been upset that He was rebuked a few days earlier (John 12:4-8). Judas could have wanted to prod Jesus into setting up His (physical, political) kingdom. Judas could have thought it was his "civic duty" to report Jesus whereabouts (but "How much?" is hardly the question of a civic-minded person). These were not, however, noble reasons. We are told one, basic reason for Judas betraying Jesus: the devil entered his heart (Luke 22:3). Satan put thoughts in Judas' mind. He does the same thing to us today. From then on, Judas began looking for good opportunities to betray our Lord (Matthew 26:16).

Conclusion

Earlier, we listed several ways that we can betray Jesus. We have seen several motives in our lesson today. We can betray Jesus willingly (Judas) and unknowingly at time (parable of the sheep and goats). We have now come to Wednesday night, Jesus would sleep for the last time on earth. We are also reminded that the Day of Judgment is upon us. Which side will Christ separate you to?