

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #50
"The Battle of the Cross" (Part Four)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 26:47-56:

And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Luke 22:53:

"When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

INTRODUCTION: We now continue on with the order of events occurring during what we call the Passion Week of our Lord. We are calling it "The Battle of the Cross." In the previous lesson we covered the events involved in the Last Supper. Then when the Supper was completed, we followed the steps of Jesus and His disciples as they traveled to the Garden of Gethsemane. There we observed Jesus as He prayed in agony over the coming event which was to occur on the cross. His agony was comprised of two elements. First, He would have the sins of men imputed to Him and His holy nature would sense the sinfulness of sin. Second, He would endure the forsaking of the Father, as God turned His comforting presence away from the Son. During His threefold prayer, the disciples fell asleep. We now take up the narrative in the Garden as He is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men by one of His own disciples.

A. EVENTS OCCURRING IN THE PASSION WEEK

1. His betrayal and arrest.

a. This is recorded in Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:3-11.

b. The basic elements in His betrayal are:

(1) His betrayal by Judas - Matthew 26:47-50

(2) Simon Peter cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant - John 18:10-11.

(3) Jesus refuses to resist the anger of His enemies and willingly submits to them. - Matthew 26:52-56.

(4) Jesus recognizes that His hour has arrived, and Satan's hour has arrived as well. The forces of heaven and hell, of men and angels are now involved in hand to hand combat. The mighty Captain of His people now stands strong and is determined to do His duty.

c. While Jesus is still speaking to His disciples, Judas makes his appearance with a great multitude carrying swords and clubs. This group was composed of the chief priests and elders of the Jews, along with a band of Roman soldiers. This band was known as a cohort and was comprised of from 600 to 1000 men. They were in Jerusalem to maintain order in the streets filled with probably hundreds of thousands of worshipers during the Passover Feast. In all likelihood, about 200 would have been asked to back up the arrest by the Jewish officials. Since Jesus was very popular with the people, and the Romans were informed about the Jewish plot, it was deemed necessary to have the power of the Roman army on standby in case of a riot. The Jews knew they would need the Romans to execute Jesus, because they no longer had the power of capital punishment.

d. The traitor's kiss: Judas is leading the large group. He has told them that he would place a kiss on the cheek of the one they were after. Upon seeing Jesus, he immediately did so. In Jewish culture, the kiss of greeting was a recognized gesture of respect and affection. Nothing could more clearly symbolize the depravity of heart and the depth of his sin, than using a disciple's kiss as a traitor's sign. Judas had been personally elected by Jesus to serve as one of the twelve apostles. He had been privileged to sit under Christ's ministry for some three years. He has been shown much love and kindness. Only a few hours ago, he has had his feet washed by Jesus. Now none of that can offset the sin that is ruling his heart. Just prior to his kiss, he says, **"Greetings Rabbi!"** The response of Jesus is amazing, **"Friend, why have you come?"**

e. NOTE: While Judas was not one of Christ's elect sheep, notice what acts of kindness are showered upon the non-elect in this life. Avoid a cold-hearted Calvinism that maintains that God has 100% love for the elect, and a 100% hatred for the non-elect.

The non-elect partake of the many benefits flowing from the common grace of God mediated by the sacrificial death of Jesus. It has been said that Judas "kissed the door of heaven and entered the door of hell!"

f. It is from the account given in John 18:4-9 we are told, **"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am He.' And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground. Then He asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,' that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.'"** Our scholars estimate there were about 1000 men in the group, and they, along with Judas, are all knocked backward by the words of Jesus, **"I Am."** We are told that the word "He" is not in the Greek text. Thus, as Jesus had done on so many occasions, He used the name of God, **"I Am!"** This was to demonstrate that He was not being overpowered by the mob, but He was submitting to His enemies, in order to fulfill the Scriptures. Men are made to bow the knee before the name of God!

g. It is at this point that Peter makes another one of His mistakes and comes to the defense of Jesus, perhaps believing this was the time that Christ would use His miraculous power to defeat His enemies and set up His kingdom. He strikes at the servant of the high priest and cuts off his ear. Obviously, he missed by just a few inches!

h. Jesus tells Peter to put up his sword, He has a better way to establish His kingdom. It will be according to the Scriptures. **"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit. . ."** (Zachariah 4:6). **". . . with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it.'"** (verse 7). Jesus would then heal the servant's ear and ask that His disciples be let go without harm. He then submitted to be arrested, and at that time, all of His disciples fled. This means that they realized they were not to fight the warfare with swords and bows, but they still would not comprehend what was ahead until after the resurrection.

i. The words of Jesus to Peter, **"All who take the sword will perish by the sword"** (Matthew 26:52) have been taken by some to teach that Jesus taught a pacifist approach against the use of warfare, even in a justifiable situation. This is a classic example of the misuse of scripture by pulling a scriptural statement out of its context. Jesus is clearly applying this principle to His immediate situation in which He says in verses 53 and 54, **"Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the**

Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" Notice that He said, if it was His purpose to defend Himself, He would be willing to ask for the military aid of twelve legions of angels. A Roman legion was comprised of between 3000 and 6000 men. That would be an overwhelming army of between thirty-six to seventy-two thousand angels, which could easily overcome the 1000 or so officers present at the time. In II Kings 19:35, a single angel killed 185,000 soldiers in one night. This again exposes us to the role of the angels, holy and unholy, that are present at the moment. This is the battle of the ages. Why does Christ not call for the angels? Because the Scriptures regarding His crucifixion would not be fulfilled. NOTE: Not only is the future predetermined by God, but each of the details which make up the future are predetermined!

j. We are now leaving the Garden and making our way back into the city to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. This can be seen on your map by following route number three which sets forth the steps of Jesus.

2. The order of events after Christ's arrest.

NOTE: The following is taken from the notes found in the Scofield Study Bible (NKJV) on page 1353.

(1) The Jewish trial of Jesus, composed of three stages:

- (a) the preliminary hearing before Annas (John 18:12-14; 19-24);
- (b) the informal trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, presumably before dawn (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:24); and
- © the formal trial by the Sanhedrin (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71).

(2) Associated with (1) (my note, Jewish trial) but before (3) (my note, Gentile trial) were Peter's denials (Matt. 26:58, 69-75; Mark 14:54, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27) and Judas' suicide (Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19).

(3) The Gentile trial of Jesus, composed of three stages:

- (a) Jesus was questioned by Pilate the first time (Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38);
- (b) Pilate sent Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:6-12); and

- (c) Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, who released Barabbas (Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40). Then
- (4) Jesus was crowned with thorns and brutally beaten by the Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; John 19:1-3).
- (5) As Christ was led forth to be crucified, the cross was laid on Simon (Matt. 27:31-32; Mark 15:20-21; Luke 23:26). And
- (6) on the way to Golgotha, Jesus warned the weeping women of judgment yet to fall on Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31).

3. The Jewish trial of Jesus, composed of three stages.

a. The preliminary hearing before Annas is recorded in John 18:12-14; 19-24. In verses 12-14 we read, ***"Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."*** The footnote in the *Reformation Study Bible* p. 1547, is helpful at this point.

18:13 Annas. One of the most influential Jewish leaders of that age. Although deposed from the high priesthood by the Romans, he was still known by this title among the Jews. It is difficult to determine whether this verse and vv. 19-24 represent one or two phases of a trial before the Jewish authorities. Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to an additional phase before the Sanhedrin. Judging from the description of rules for trials found in the Mishnah of some two hundred years later, the proceedings here were marked by serious irregularities and violations of Jewish law. The Sanhedrin was not supposed to meet at night; the death penalty could not be declared on the day of the trial; there was false evidence, and false witnesses were used (Matt. 26:59, 60); Jesus was exposed to blows from attendants during the trial (v. 22; Mark 14:65). In addition to all this, it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet for a capital case on the eve of a Sabbath or a feast day. These violations show that Jesus' condemnation by the Jewish authorities was a travesty of justice.

b. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and was still recognized by the Jews as a high priest, even though Caiaphas was the official high priest. He would hold the honor of having held the office like someone in the United States who had served as a former President.

John MacArthur has some valuable information which helps us to understand why Jesus was taken to Annas first. He says:

Annas controlled the Temple money changers and sacrifice sellers to such an extent that their operations were sometimes referred to as the Bazaars of

Annas. It is likely that no Temple merchant could operate without being approved by Annas and agreeing to give him a large percentage of the profits.

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A Jew who came to offer a sacrifice to God had to use an unblemished animal that had been certified by the priests. And although he could legitimately bring one of his own animals, the corrupt priests who were in charge of certification would seldom accept an animal not bought from a Temple merchant. Like those who needed to exchange their money, Jews who wanted to sacrifice were at the mercy of Annas's Temple establishment. It was for that reason that Jesus had twice cleansed the Temple of the money changers and sacrifice sellers, declaring in anger that they had profaned His Father's house of prayer by making it a den of robbers (John 2:13-17; Mark 11:15-17). It was immediately after the second cleansing that the infuriated Temple authorities "began seeking how to destroy Him" (Mark 11:18).

Jesus was a persistent threat to Annas's power, prestige, security, and prosperity, for which He was bitterly despised by the high priest. In addition to that, Annas resented Jesus for His holiness, truth, and righteousness, because those virtues were a judgment on his own vile character. Everything Jesus said and did angered Annas, because, like Judas, his absolute rejection of Christ had placed him utterly in the hands of Satan, the great choreographer who was staging this heinous travesty against God's Son. Annas was one of a large cast of characters who were now manipulated by hell.

Annas may have instructed the arresting officials to bring Jesus to him first, or the officials may have reasoned that a charge against Jesus by such a powerful dignitary would not be contested when He was brought before the Sanhedrin for trial. In any case, taking Him first to Annas allowed Caiaphas time to assemble the Sanhedrin at his own house (see v. 59). (MacArthur, *Commentary on Matthew*, pp. 202, 203).

c. Annas proceeded to ask Jesus two questions as seen in John 18:19 - **"The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine."** The questions were concerned with the reason for His disciples' devotion in following Him, and then to explain His doctrine or teaching. This was designed to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. Jesus refused to answer either question and stated that His ministry was not a secretive one, but open. He had taught in the synagogues and in the temple, and if Annas did not understand His ministry, let him go and ask those who had heard Him. He was saying to Annas that thousands upon thousands had heard Him speak, so he should go ask them. Jesus was in effect challenging Annas's illegal attempt to make Him testify against Himself. Under Jewish law, in order to be convicted of a crime, there had to be witnesses against the defendant. The defendant did not have to witness against Himself. This offended one of the officers who proceeded to slap Jesus with his hand. Jesus calmly responded by saying, "if I have spoken in an evil way, show me by our law where I have done wrong."

d. Not being able to render any charge against Jesus, Annas was probably angry and frustrated with his unsuccessful efforts. He then sends Jesus to the house or palace of Caiaphas, where the Jewish council, known as the Sanhedrin, has already assembled to proceed with the formal trial. Remember, it is in the middle of the night, and it is illegal for a Jewish trial to begin at night. The conspiracy was well planned so that the scribes and elders, along with the Sanhedrin were already assembled at the house of Caiaphas and ready to try Jesus. This was illegal, because as of yet no charge has been established. There are no witnesses to bring forth any charges and the council cannot make the charges themselves and be the jury at the same time.

e. Under the law of God given through Moses, a person who was charged with an offence, was entitled to a fair trial. The Jewish system of jurisprudence is the model on which the western civilization system of law is based. The essence of the law is given in Deuteronomy 16:18-20 which reads, ***"You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you."***

f. The ecclesiastical trial of Christ took place under the authority of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. It is helpful to know something about this council, as the Hebrews worked out specific judicial procedures following the general principles found in Deuteronomy. They determined that any community that had at least 120 men who were heads of families, could form a local council. In later years after the Babylonian exile, that council was often composed of the leaders from the synagogues. This council came to be known as a "sanhedrin" which means a "sitting together." A local sanhedrin was composed of up to 23 members, and the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was composed of 70 chief priests, elders and scribes, with the high priest making a total of 71. The odd number was maintained in order to eliminate the possibility of a tie vote.

While the members were to be chosen because of their wisdom and maturity, long before Jesus' day, the membership of the Great Sanhedrin had degenerated largely into appointments based on religious or political favoritism and influence. The trial of Jesus is about to take place in an environment in which nearly everything is stacked against Him. Peter's words on the Day of Pentecost were most accurate when he said to the Jewish people concerning Jesus, ***"You have taken by lawless (wicked) hands, have crucified, and put to death"*** (Acts 2:23). After exhorting his hearers to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, Peter also tells them, ***"Be saved from this perverse (crooked) generation."*** (Acts 2:40).

g. The Jewish trial guaranteed an accused criminal the right to a public trial, to defense counsel, and conviction of at least two reliable witnesses. Trials were to be open to public scrutiny, and the defendant had the right to bring forth evidence and witnesses in his own behalf. On the day of the trial, the court officers would require all the evidence against the accused person to be read in the full hearing of the open court. The witnesses must swear that their testimony was true to the best of their knowledge, and was based on their direct experience, and not on hearsay or presumption. Even today in our courts in America, you will have a defense attorney stand and object by crying out "Hearsay!" And the judge will rule in the matter. Witnesses had to identify the precise month, day, hour, and location of the event about which they were testifying. A council itself could not initiate charges against a person, but could only consider charges brought before it by an outside party. As the trial begins in the palace of Caiaphas, there are yet no formal charges existing against Jesus, as Annas could not produce an outside charge.

h. Jesus is marching into a hornet's nest. It appears that He has no chance of winning. He has been betrayed by one of His supporters. He is about to come unto His own, and **"His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe in His name."** (John 1:11,12). Let us remember that Jesus is God in human form. This means that He is all-wise and all-powerful at all times. This means He is in control of all things at all times. Even though the wrong seems oft so strong, He is the Ruler yet! The whole atmosphere in the Passion Week is permeated with Satanic darkness and evil. The wrath of men and angels has been released to do their thing since this is their "hour of darkness." Satan may win some battles, but Christ will win the war! The serpent may bite the heel of the woman's Seed, but Christ shall crush the serpent's head. We close for now with the words found in Psalm 76:10. Reading from the KJV, **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shall thou restrain."**