

Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 26-28)

- The Jewish leaders gather together in the house of Caiaphas to plot Jesus' death.
- The Anointing in Bethany
 - ◇ The woman anoints Jesus and this can be seen in many different ways:
 - * It is representative of Jesus as the anointed one. In Hebrew the word מָשִׁיחַ or in Greek Μεσσίας, literally means "the anointed one". Here Jesus is anointed as a sign that he is indeed the anointed one.
 - * Kings were anointed at the beginning of their reigns.
 - * Bodies were also anointed before burial which points ahead to Jesus' forthcoming death on the cross.
 - * The expensive oil is not wasted. It is an act of reverence and worship for God. The costly gift also represents Jesus giving his life for the world. His self-gift is of immeasurable value.
 - * We should also see this in contrast to the thirty pieces of silver that Judas takes to betray Jesus. The thirty pieces of silver is the cost of a slave. We see the immense value the woman places upon Jesus while Judas sees Jesus as relatively worthless (the cost of a slave).



- The Last Supper
 - ◇ Jesus celebrates the Passover with his apostles. The fact that it was Passover is meaningful. This feast recalls God's act of delivering the Jews from slavery in Egypt. There was a lamb that was offered as the central part of this ritual meal.
 - ◇ The Eucharist
 - * Jesus says that the bread **IS** his body and the wine **IS** his blood. The Greek words used do not leave any room to interpret his words symbolically.
 - * Jesus links the Eucharist with his sacrifice on the cross. The use of the phrase "poured out" is the same words used to describe how the priests in the Temple poured out the blood of the sacrificial offerings at the base of the Temple's altar.
 - * In the Old Testament, the Jews were prohibited from drinking blood. In the ancient world blood was seen as the life force of an animal. To drink its blood was to become something of the thing that you consumed.
 - * Jesus, by commanding the drinking of his own blood, seeks to bring God and man into a greater unity than even Adam had in the Garden.

- ◇ The singing of the Psalms was something common to the Passover. The *Hallel* Psalms were sung in conjunction with this feast. Usually Psalms 113 & 114 were sung before the Passover meal and Psalms 115-118 were sung after.
- ◇ Jesus does not drink the 4th cup of the Passover. It was usually drank after Psalm 114 was sung but instead he and his disciples go out to the Mount of Olives.
- ◇ The fourth cup is representative of the restoration of the kingdom and Jesus says in Luke that he will not drink the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.
- ◇ He refused the cup of wine at the outset of his crucifixion but when he is about to die he drinks the fourth cup. His death has restored the kingdom.

The Four Cups of Passover

Sanctification



“I will bring you out from Egypt.”
Jesus sanctifies us.

Deliverance



“I will rescue you from their bondage.”
Jesus delivers us.

Redemption/Praise



“I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”
Jesus redeems us.

Kingdom/Salvation/ Restoration



“I will take you as my people.”
Jesus restores the kingdom.



• Peter’s Denial

- ◇ Jesus alludes to the forthcoming scattering of the apostles upon his arrest. Although they will be scattered, Jesus promises they will be brought back together.
- ◇ Peter denies that he will run away. Peter has faith but his faith hasn’t stood up against testing (walking on water).
- ◇ The cockcrow may not be a reference to an actual animal. The Romans called the third watch (3-6am) of the night the cockcrow and would usually sound a bugle like instrument to signal the end of the third watch.
- ◇ The threefold denial: 1. a maid (probably a young girl); 2. another maid; 3. a group of bystanders. These illustrate Peter’s intense fear even to young maids that could not have done him physical harm.
- ◇ Peter curses and swears that he doesn’t even know Jesus. This is a betrayal of the friendship they shared.
- ◇ At the sound of the cockcrow Peter remembers what Jesus had said and his own confidence that he would not deny him.

- In the Garden of Gethsemane

- ◇ Jesus takes Peter, James and John to the foot of the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem.
- ◇ Jesus prays for strength as he faces the end of his early life.
- ◇ Jesus fears what is to happen to him. He embraces our humanity. He could have simply chosen, as God, to not feel pain or fear but instead chooses to accept them.
- ◇ Jesus remains in perfect obedience to the Father. His own fear and anxieties are subject to the will of the Father.
- ◇ Jesus returns to find his apostles sleeping. Being with Jesus is a privilege that we must nourish by prayer and vigilance.
- ◇ The symbol of Judas' betrayal is significant.
 - * He calls Jesus master which outwardly is a sign of reverence but inwardly Judas has already betrayed Jesus and these words are hollow.
 - * Judas then kisses Jesus. The kiss is a sign of friendship. Judas approaches Jesus as a friend and disciple but is neither of these things.
- ◇ Peter raises his sword to fight off those who would take Jesus. It is a good idea to fight to retain Jesus but not in light of Jesus' own teaching: When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. Matthew 5:39.
- ◇ Jesus also makes clear that he is letting this happen. He could summon an army of angels to defend him. Jesus **chooses** the cross. It isn't chosen for him.
- ◇ Judas' betrayal parallels the betrayal of David by Ahithophel in 2 Samuel: 1. he sought David out at night; 2. it was when David was weary and discouraged; 3. David's companions would flee; 4. strike down the king only; 5. when his plans fail, Ahithophel hangs himself.



Are you betraying the
Son of Man with a
kiss?

Luke 22:48



- The Trial of Jesus

- ◇ Accused of blasphemy Jesus stands trial before the Jewish high priest.
- ◇ Caiaphas asks Jesus if he is the Christ and the Son of God.
- ◇ Jesus' answer is somewhat ambiguous.
 - * He seems to be a victim but he pronounces himself as the victor: I say to you....Jesus states that he will be at the right hand God's right hand.
 - * He alludes to a heavenly throne room (Psalm 110 and Daniel 7:9) where a kingly Messiah is present ruling over his enemies.
 - * At his answer the Caiaphas tears his robes. This is a gesture of extreme distress and wrongdoing.
 - * The Mosaic Law is clear that the high priest's robe is never to be torn. Although Caiaphas sits as the high priest, his vestments are torn which represents that he isn't really a priest at all. In contrast, it is Jesus' robe that will not be torn as the Roman soldiers cast lots for it.
 - * Matthew's allusion to the conspiracy to kill Jesus recalls Psalm 2:2: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed ..."



- ◇ Jesus is brought before Pilate. Jesus does not give Pilate an answer to the charge of being a king.
- ◇ Jesus or Barabbas?
 - * The Jews are offered a choice to have one of their captives set free.
 - * Jesus has done nothing wrong. He has injured no one but has healed and taught.
 - * Barabbas is a notorious prisoner. Whether it be theft or murder, Barabbas is a sign of evil.
 - * We elect the evil and sentence the good to death.
 - * The name Barabbas means "son of the Father". We have before us the real Son of the Father-Jesus and a false one.
 - * Out of fear of the crowd Barabbas is freed and Jesus is turned over to be crucified.
 - * Matthew records the dream by Pilate's wife. As in the case of Joseph's dreams earlier in Matthew, dreams are conduits of divine instruction. Joseph heeds the messages while Pilate does not.
- Via Dolorosa
 - ◇ Jesus is mocked and struck by the Roman soldiers who sarcastically call him "king of the Jews". The Magi are the only ones in Matthew's Gospel who use this term as one of reverence.
 - ◇ The purple cloth is an outward sign of Jesus' royalty as is the scepter of reeds and the crown of thorns.

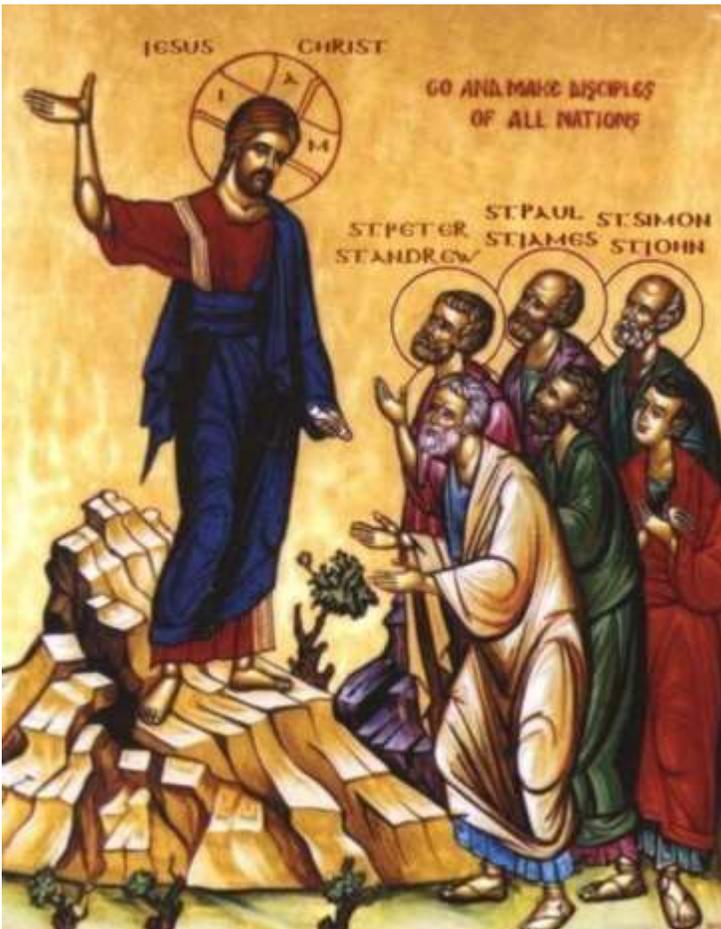
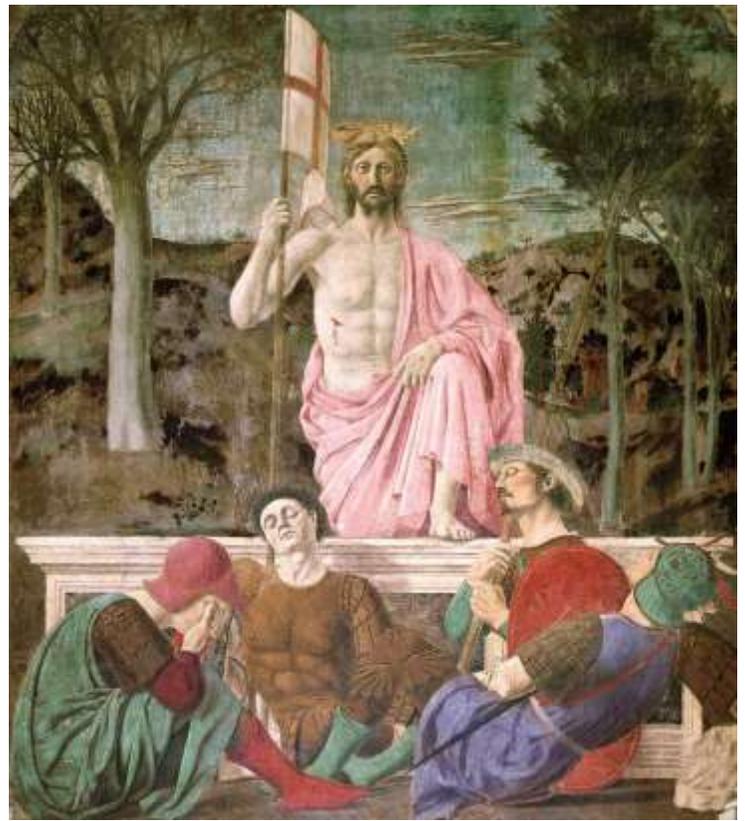


- The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

- ◇ Jesus is led out to Golgotha (Hebrew for skull, or in Latin word Calvariae). It lies outside of the city walls and probably got its name from being the place where criminals are executed.
- ◇ The casting of lots refers back to Psalm 22:18-the psalm Jesus quotes before his death and summarizes his death.
- ◇ He is offered gall which is a narcotic made of herbs and myrrh. His refusal to dull his pain signifies his total acceptance of the Father's will.
- ◇ Jesus is on the cross from noon until about 3pm. Under typical circumstances, those crucified could spend days on the cross. Jesus' quick death is a result of the beating that severely weakened him prior to being nailed to the cross.
- ◇ The darkness Matthew refers to during the crucifixion is from Amos 8:8-10 in which the day of the Lord brings about an earthquake and the sun going down at noon.
- ◇ At Jesus' death the curtain of the Temple is torn. The veil was a sign that humanity could not approach God. Jesus' sacrifice has removed the obstacle between God and man. The gate of heaven is now open.
- ◇ Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus' body. He puts it in a tomb not far from the place of crucifixion.
 - * Jesus is wrapped in a clean linen cloth.
 - * He is placed in a new tomb.
 - * A rock is rolled over the tomb and is later sealed by Roman soldiers.
 - * A guard of Roman soldiers is placed at the tomb.

- The Resurrection

- ◇ This is the central Christian belief. Our belief in Jesus as the Messiah is contingent upon his resurrection.
- ◇ Evidence for the resurrection:
 - * The empty tomb
 - * The Roman soldiers
 - * The change in the Apostles
 - * The miracles that accompany the preaching of the Apostles.
 - * Pentecost
- ◇ He has risen as he said. Jesus had told his followers what was to happen to him and that he would be raised.
- ◇ The women are invited to see his tomb as evidence of the resurrection.
- ◇ The Roman soldiers are bribed by the Jewish leaders. This illustrates the extreme measures we go to in order to ignore uncomfortable truths.



- Jesus meets his apostles in Galilee as he promises. Although they had fled, they are now reconstituted as he promised.
- Jesus gives them the Great Commission
 - ◇ Make disciples of all nations.
 - ◇ Teach them to observe all I have commanded you.
 - ◇ Jesus gives them the baptismal formula that is acceptance into the Church.
 - ◇ Although this task is difficult, Jesus promises that he will be with them.
 - ◇ The fruits of this are seen in history as these 12 men (including Matthias) bring Christ to far flung corners of the world.
 - ◇ A sign of Christ's promise is that the Roman Empire who brought about his death will be won over by the Christian message.
 - ◇ Jesus remains present in his Church and in the Eucharist.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 26-28

What do you think is important about Judas' betrayal?

What in the Last Supper narrative of Matthew stands out to you?

Where does Jesus drink each of the four cups of the Passover?

What stuck out to you from the trial of Jesus?

Why is the resurrection the most important Christian belief?

How is the Great Commission a call to all disciples of Christ?