

Matthew 26:57-68

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we just come to your word in awe, and as we approach the description of your arrest, trial and subsequent crucifixion.

And your love for us is marked by your suffering for us. And we thank you for that, Lord. And we just ask you to confirm an understanding of the depth of the meaning of this to all of us as we study it in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we're in Matthew 26. And for the benefit of those of you who've missed bits, we've been going through Matthew's gospel.

And what we have done recently showed us that in the Garden of Gethsemane, that was the first place that Jesus shed his blood. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. And we talked about that medical condition that's normally fatal that Jesus suffered from because of his anxiety, his stress, his angst.

And we saw the human side of Jesus being pushed down because he said, Father, not my will, but yours be done. And this was such a trial. And it's a condition from which under normal circumstances he would have died.

[1 : 35] But God sent an angel to support him through that so that he could get through that on to the next bit and carry on with the predicted crucifixion sacrifice that he was making, which had several facets to it.

And one of the important things we took from that is that wherever the blood of Christ was shed, it was for a reason. So that shedding of blood in that period of great anxiety was to deliver us from that anxiety, eternally speaking.

And yes, we can through prayer and through him, we can get free from those things before we die. But eternally, we will certainly be free from them because there are no such things in heaven.

And so we've come to this point where he was leaving the garden. He gathered his disciples to leave. He had said in verse 45 of the previous chapter, sorry, of the previous passage, he had said, let's go quickly.

The time is here. And having shed his blood, having been strengthened by this angel, we then have the account of the arrest. And you can read this account in all four gospels.

[2 : 55] Each gospel seems to take little different bits of it. And so if you want a full picture, you want to conflate all four accounts because some give more detail than others and some express things slightly more fully than others.

So I'm going to stick mainly with Matthew, but we will refer at least to John and maybe to Luke as well. But one of the things I want to begin with is one of the things that becomes apparent as we go through this arrest and then the subsequent bandying about of stuff using illegal means to try to convict an innocent man.

As we go through that, we realize just how much energy evil brings to bear to bring to pass its will. If you just turn briefly, obviously keep your thumb in John because we're going to need that more.

But just turn to Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 2. You might think this is a funny aside to take. But actually, we're starting verse 1 because that's where the sentence begins.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. And then there's this interesting sentence of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

[4 : 18] Now, that word working in Greek is, I'm not sure of the pronunciation, but energeo or energeo. But it's the word from which we get our word energy or to be energized.

The spirit that is in Satan energizes the sons of disobedience. And you think about these guys who are trying to deal with Jesus by night.

One of the first examples of them breaking their own law. The amount of energy they use to carry all this through. And Satan energizes the sons of disobedience.

These are people who have absolutely no reason to doubt Jesus or what he has said or who he is because he spent three and a half years showing them fulfilling scriptures and doing miraculous things.

But they are so determined that they do this thing at night and they miss a night's sleep on the eve of the Sabbath of all times.

[5 : 23] So and on the eve of Passover. I mean, we discussed last week some of the illegalities involved in this and to arrest and start legal proceedings against somebody on the day before a feast was illegal under their law.

But there was energy there to get this done. We want rid of this Jesus. How foolish. How incredibly foolish.

Go back to Matthew 26. So as we come to this bit, we're going to go from verse 47 down to 56.

So he's come out of the garden, having already shed his blood. And then he's approached by this whole bunch of people, a bunch of thugs, probably mixed in with some of the very people who are going to be judging him.

The priests and the Pharisees and the Sadducees. There's some doubt as to whether they were there or whether they just sent their henchmen. But they were certainly involved. And so let's read it.

[6 : 29] While he was still speaking. Behold, Judas, one of the twelve came up, accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs who came from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now he who was betraying him gave them a sign saying, whomever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him. Immediately, Jesus went to Jesus and said, hail, Rabbi, and kissed him.

And Jesus said to him, friend, do what you have come for. Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus struck.

Sorry, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to him, put your sword back into its place for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.

Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must happen this way?

[7 : 38] At that time, Jesus said to the crowds, have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize me.

But all this has taken place to fulfill the scriptures of the prophets. Then all the disciples left him and fled. Now, I've just read last week's passage, but that's OK because it feeds nicely into today's passage, which is where Jesus begins to face the music, so to speak.

Verse 57. Those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders were gathered together. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

Now the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward.

But later on, two came forward and said, This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. The high priest stood up and said to him, Do you not answer?

[8 : 56] What is it that these men are testifying against you? But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

And some of the versions will say, I put you under oath before the living God. Tell us whether you are the Christ, the son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said it yourselves.

Nevertheless, I tell you, Hereafter you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes and said, He has blasphemed.

What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy. What do you think? They answered, He deserves death. And they spat in his face and beat him with their fists and others slapped him and said, Prophesy to us, you Christ, who is the one who hit you?

This is the mob, whoever they were, in verse 57, tells us that they led Jesus away to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest.

[10 : 03] Now, in John's account, we get a bit more detail. And what we learn from John 18, verses 12 to 13, is that they went first to the house of Annas.

And so it's worth knowing why that was significant. Under the Jewish law, a high priest was appointed for life. So this was not a matter of election.

It wasn't a matter of being chosen or there wasn't some dignitary like a prime minister who says, I'll have you as my high priest. This was purely a hereditary post.

So the high priest would serve until he died. And there were, there's some conjecture about whether or not they could resign and so on, but we don't need to enter into that discussion.

The principle was they served till they died and they were replaced by one of their sons. And so it was entirely hereditary until about 6 AD.

[11 : 04] And in 6 AD, for the first time, the Roman government, who were not happy to have any single Jew having that amount of power over his people, they said they would appoint the high priest from then on.

And so 6 AD was the birth of the house of Annas. And Annas served, he served from 6 AD, well, until 15 AD.

But the house of Annas served as high priest from 6 AD right through to 43 AD. Because every time when Annas was either scrapped or stepped down, we're not sure which, in 15 AD, his relatives then took over.

And so he always had sons or sons-in-law who were high priests. You're going to be saying, why are you going on about this, Ray? I'll get to it, I promise.

Now, during the time of Jesus, that's his ministry right up through the crucifixion, this man Caiaphas was Annas' son-in-law.

[12:16] And he was serving as high priest. But Annas, although he wasn't high priest, he retained a massive amount of control over high priests for the whole of this period.

And so the high priests were not their own men. They were Annas' puppets. And so what Annas said went. When they were deciding what to do with Jesus, Annas would have been the decision maker and Caiaphas would have carried out what Annas said.

Okay, why is this significant? Because in the book of Genesis, I believe it's chapter 49, there's a prophecy that says that the scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes.

Now, that prophecy basically said that the words until Shiloh comes, which I won't get into the complexity of it, but it means the scepter will not depart from Judah till Messiah comes, is an interpretation of that.

Now, they've lost their control over the priesthood. Now, the scepter was the staff of authority. The scepter was the thing that said, Judah has the staff, therefore Judah has the authority over the destiny of the Jews.

[13:35] The fact that they can't appoint their own priests means there is no scepter. In addition to that, what we'll read as we progress through this is the Jews were also not allowed any longer to administer their own death penalty.

And that was the sovereignty, a sovereign nation could exercise its own law and hand out its own punishments, and in particular could hand out the death penalty.

And Israel didn't have the right under Roman law to administer their own death penalty, which is why in the end it was a Roman death that Jesus suffered.

So the scepter has departed. What they didn't get and should have got was the fact that the scepter has departed means Messiah must be here.

But they were looking for this military leader who would come and lead them out from under the jackboots of Rome and all the rest of it, when in fact, in a carpenter shop in Nazareth, Shiloh had come.

[14:37] They were just looking in the wrong place. And when he presented himself as an adult and did the messianic ministry that the scriptures had promised them, they completely ignored it.

So it's quite important to realize that this is all very much signs of the times. It was not just they didn't. They didn't only have the miracles of Jesus to rely on for the fact that he had come.

But the fact that the scepter had departed from them was also a sign that he must have come. So holding this position of high priest required obedience to Rome rather than God.

Now, this is a mistake we have repeated, is it not? I mean, in roughly 500, 450, around there, when Emperor Constantine held the reins, Rome dictated what would happen to the church.

And we finished up by devious means with the Roman Catholic Church. And it was far more obedient to tradition than it was to the leading of God and still is to this day.

[15:42] So Rome got the leadership of the Jews at that point. They had decided on the outcome already, hadn't they? As we read the passage again, the chief priest, this is verse 59.

The chief priest and council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death. Right? It's very much, we want to put him to death, let's find a way to do it, rather than he has committed a visible crime, let's put him to death for that.

An interesting little aside, during the Passover sacrifice, this is the time that they would have been examining the lambs, the Passover lambs, to see if they were perfect.

Even to the extent that they would look under the eyelids to see if there was anything there that was an imperfection. There was a very microscopic examination of the lambs of God that were set aside for Passover.

And at the self-same time that that examination was taking place, Jesus was being examined by a court who was desperately looking for imperfection and unable to find it.

[16:58] So the outcome had already been decided. He's going to die. The question is how. So they're deciding what offences he will be charged with. Now, thinking back to the last, I think it was last time, it might have been the time before, I've lost track.

But if you remember, he was arrested with no charges being brought. They didn't, you know, if we, if our police go out to get a criminal today, they know there's a crime being committed and they think they know who's done it.

So they rush out and they arrest that person. This was, we want to arrest this person and find a crime to fit him. So they're trying to find false testimony so that they can put him to death.

But the testimonies that came back were not consistent. One would say this and the other would say something that contradicted it. So it was all of the testimonies that came in were incongruous.

They didn't fit together. Eventually, these two turn up and they say, he said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.

[18:05] And just think on this for a moment. If somebody came in here and said that completely without any further context, somebody said, you know, I'm going to tear down Central Hall and rebuild it in three days.

That wouldn't be an offense for which they should be put to death. In fact, you'd probably dismiss it as the ramblings of a madman. So let's turn to John chapter 2 and see what Jesus actually said.

And I'm going to take a small amount of poetic license with this. So this is chapter 2 and verse 19. In which Jesus is having a bit of an argument with the Pharisees and so on.

And he's just driven people out of the temple. In verse 16, take these things away. Stop making my father's house a place of business. And you get to verse 19 and he says, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

So he hasn't said, I'll tear it down and I'll build it up. He said, if you destroy it, I will rebuild it. Now, I just want to, this is my bit of poetic license.

[19:22] I imagine this. This is just my imagining. So take or leave this as you see fit. He's talking to them, probably gesticulating with his hands. And I picture him going, if you destroy this temple, I will raise it up in three days.

And I picture that gesticulation of referring to himself. Because later on in the same passage, it says, verse 21, but he was speaking of the temple of his body.

So he never ever did say, I'm going to tear it down and I'm going to build it up in three days. And if he had, they wouldn't be putting him to death. They'd have been putting him in an asylum.

But actually, what he was saying was to do with his own body. If you destroy this temple, gesticulating towards himself, I imagine, I will restore it in three days.

Which is, of course, exactly what happened at the resurrection. Now, he, what we've read is that when accused, he wouldn't answer.

[20 : 29] He remained silent. And in Isaiah 53, verse 7, let's turn there. Because one of the things that we are learning through, many of us already knew this, but we're learning it and relearning it and reinforcing it, is how everything Jesus did through this time fulfilled a prophecy.

So in Isaiah 53, verse 7, it says, He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open his mouth.

And I'm told by people who are into farming that that's exactly what happens when you shear sheep. They go quiet. They're all rushing about the pen, and you grab one of them and you upend it, and you get your shears out and it goes quiet.

So this was a real-life example that Jesus, that God used to prepare people for the fact that under cross-examination, Jesus would just be quiet like a sheep before its shearers.

He was fulfilling the word of God. And remember, at the end of, or towards the end of last time, we said, if it's in the scripture, it must be fulfilled. Or we might as well throw this away.

[21 : 47] Our faith hinges on the accuracy and the inerrancy of his word. So Jesus then answers and he says, and I found this a bit confusing at first, he's put him under oath.

I adjure you, or I put you under oath. Tell me if you are the Christ. Are you the Messiah? And in Matthew's account, it says his response was, you have said it.

Now that could be, well, that's your opinion. You've said it, or it could be, you said it. Couldn't it? What's the nuance here? Well, Matthew, sorry, in Mark's account, he just says, yes.

So whatever you, however you unravel the words, the answer from Jesus to them was, yes, I am the Christ. Yes, I am the Messiah. So Mark renders it as yes. Luke says, if I answer you, you're not going to believe me.

Well, he was right because he did answer them and they didn't believe him. So the one who is, the one who was in the know here is the Lord.

[23 : 03] No surprise there, really. He says, what's the point? This is my version of what he said. What's the point in me answering you? You're not going to believe me anyway. Well, tell us, are you the Christ?

Yes. We don't believe you. You're blaspheming. So this is the first opportunity they have to accuse him of blasphemy. And what he says, when he says, you have said it yourself, or yes, or however it came out.

He then says these words, I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Now, I will put it to you that what he was saying there was more than just saying yes.

What he was doing, he was aligning himself with the Old Testament passage. And if you turn to Psalm 110, and your Bible might well have a note that says this is a quotation from Psalm 110, which, it isn't a strictly word-for-word translation, but what it is, is a translation of the concept or the spirit of what it says in Psalm 110.

So he says, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power. Psalm 110, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[24 : 34] Hmm. So the Lord says to my Lord. So David is writing, the Lord, I won't go through the long version of this, but David is writing, and he says, the Lord, Yahweh, says to my Lord, Jesus, sit at my right hand.

So when he said to them, you're going to see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, they would know, because they knew the scriptures, that he was referring to himself as the one of whom the Lord had said, sit at my right hand.

Do you follow that? So he was, he wasn't just saying yes. He was saying, I'm going to be seated at the right hand of God. But what about until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?

Now, the writer to Hebrews made large of this. If you turn to Hebrews chapter one, the key verse is verse 13.

But the writer to Hebrews spends the first chapter quoting from the Old Testament, talking about the status of Christ. So we'll get to verse 13 in a minute.

[25 : 52] But from verse five, for to which of the angels did he ever say, you are my son, today I have begotten you. So he's putting Jesus above angels.

And again, I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me. And when he again brings the firstborn into the world, he says, let all the angels of God worship him.

Now, Jesus is putting himself in this position when he's talking to his tormentors as the one whom angels will worship. And of the son, verse eight, of the son, your throne, O God, is forever and ever and the scepter and the righteous scepter is the scepter of his kingdom.

For you have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. For you, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the works of your hands.

They will perish but you remain and they all will become like a garment, like a mantle. You will roll them up like a garment. They will also be changed but you are the same and your years will not come to an end but to which of the angels has he ever said, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[27 : 18] Now this, if you look at your cross references, there will be a cross reference to Joshua chapter 10 and verse 24. There's no need to turn there but this is a military victory where Joshua instructs his leaders to get the people over whom they've had victory to bow down and put his foot on the back of their necks so that they're effectively holding them down and if you like, putting them in their rightful place and it's no mistake in scripture that it is Joshua, Joshua, God is salvation, that's doing this, putting his, or suggesting this, shall we say.

So Jesus is aligning himself with Joshua and he's also aligning himself with the Psalm of David and in such a short and succinct sentence, he gets right up their nose because he's saying, not only am I Messiah, but you're going to see me sitting at the right hand of the Father and you're going to see me coming on the clouds of heaven and you're going to see me putting enemies under my feet and you could argue and I would argue but I'm not dogmatically, he's also saying you are those enemies because if you're putting me to death, you number yourself among those enemies on whose neck my foot will be.

The other link is Daniel 7. Turn to Daniel 7 and once again the key verse is verse 13 and I just love the way the Lord uses scripture.

He teaches, he taught the Jews the Bible and then uses the Bible again and again to correct them. Now I don't know if your version has got a title.

Mine says the Son of Man presented. And Daniel is having visions and he says I kept looking in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of Man was coming and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

[29 : 37] Jesus in his use of that phrase you will see him sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. He is aligning himself with this presentation in Daniel and they would know that.

They would know the book of Daniel and in the book of Daniel it says with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of Man was coming and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

So Jesus was putting himself on the pillar of being Messiah despite the fact that he was being tormented, beaten and tried by sinful men.

What struck me about that is the incredible humility and condescension to permit yourself to experience that when you've already said to Peter don't you know that I could call twelve legions of angels to deliver me from this?

An act of unbelievable love which it is clear he did not have to go through with and therefore he chose to go through so he laid down his life a concept we'll return to in future studies he laid it down nobody took it from him just because he loved us.

[30 : 59] You understand why the writer to the Hebrews was exercised about these scriptures because the writer to the Hebrews wrote to Hebrews and this is very pertinent to Hebrews all these Old Testament quotations.

and in using these quotations Jesus was doing the same as the writer to the Hebrews he was claiming to be Messiah and using the scriptures that his tormentors and judges would know.

Now by his reference to Psalm 110 he was also laying claim to a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek and we've done previous studies on Melchizedek but in identifying with the priesthood of Melchizedek which is alluded to in Psalm 110 he was putting himself above Aaronic priests the priests of Aaron many of whom were acting as his judges during this period of time so they're all among those who were saying we need to put him to death but by associating himself with Psalm 110 he's allying himself to a higher priesthood so I'm not only claiming to be Messiah but I'm the one who is the priest after the order of Melchizedek who God has ratified as his son and one day you will see that and speaking personally

I want to see that as a believer not as one who is being judged so if any of this wasn't true of course they would be right in their allegation of blasphemy he's claiming to be God when he's not but Jesus had proved himself as their Messiah again and again and again there was he'd taken authority over sicknesses he'd taken authority over demons he took authority over the weather he turned water into wine caused the lame to walk a man born blind to see fed thousands by multiplying very meagre provisions and raised the dead back to life how much evidence do you want I mean that's not an exhaustive list I've just cherry picked those on at least one occasion a woman was healed just by touching him or touching the hem of his garment so even more offensive to them he had spectacularly claimed to be able to forgive sins and if you remember when they said who are you who are you only God forgives sins and he says well what's the hardest thing to do to tell a man he's forgiven or to tell him to get up and walk and the man picked up his bed and he walked so he used that to reinforce who he was and they had all been privy to this they'd all seen it so he established his position as Messiah and God's son over years and often by referring to these scriptures which he's now referring to again and they said this is blasphemy now the tearing of the robes it could have been sincere they could have been in genuine anguish and we have a blasphemer in the midst it could have just been dramatization for the gathered people in any event they were treating it as a gotcha moment right we've got him now keep in mind he was never ever charged with blasphemy when they arrested him or through the process up to this point nobody has leveled this charge at him until now and they leveled it at him when he told the truth if they had been able to disprove that he was Messiah then all of this could have been justified but they couldn't they just stated it was false and in the last few verses in verses 67 and 68 what we see is the beginning of the violent mistreatment of Jesus by the religious leaders now you could argue that the arrest was the beginning of that but they took him by force and I always think that's interesting because depending on which gospel you read when they came to take him by force and he said who is it that you're looking for and they said

Jesus and with that the Holy Spirit hit the lot of them and they all fell flat on their backs and I get this again mental picture right they've all fallen down and he's going so it's me you're looking for as he's looking down to a heap of bodies on the floor so sorry you wanted me and it just goes to show they had no chance of arresting him unless he cooperated and Peter lops off Malchus's ear doesn't say it's Malchus in here but you need to go to John's gospel I think to get that piece of information from which you get not only was it Malchus but it was his right ear which I think is lovely because it kind of the more detail you get the more truthful the account seems to be so he's healed Malchus's ear and now they start to abuse him by hitting him and it seems because they're saying prophesy tell us who hit you he must have been blindfolded and there's a tendency for people to think that it was only the Romans that were violent towards

[36 : 41] Jesus I've heard that in a few places it's not so the Romans aren't yet involved they're still out there somewhere on the sidelines they're not they haven't been included in this yet this is purely Jews that are doing this to him at this point but he said to Peter at the point of Malchus losing his ear how will these things come to pass if we don't go through with it so the vital thing for Jesus was that his word would come to pass he spared no thought for himself now I got to this point in the study and I thought so what's the application for us and I have to say in a sense there's only one application for us and that is to believe it because there's so much there and we're not likely to persecute Jesus and you know so what is the application for us well we need to grasp what's written in his word must come to pass it cannot not come to pass because it's truth and because he wrote it and because he knew it before the foundation of the world that it would all have to come to pass and therefore we look at his sacrifice and we think even before the world was founded he knew that it would end like this and he knew every detail about what he was going to suffer and had an opportunity to walk away and didn't so application is to understand the depth of his love for us that he would endure not only the pain and the suffering but the vilification from sinners you know being called a blasphemer we need to take to heart

Romans 5:8 which is! God demonstrates his own love towards us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and as we've been studying Matthew's gospel and cross reference it to other gospels to understand the reliability of the gospel and not make the same mistake that these religious men made it's unfortunate that a lot of the leading astray of people currently happening in the UK is being done by the so-called church because they don't take this word seriously and therefore they lead people along the world's path of good ideas rather than being able to say the word of God says and therefore that is the yardstick for our behaviour our beliefs our thoughts our prayers etc father father I thank you for this word I found it a daunting passage to study and a very emotional passage to study but I do thank you for it and I thank you that for all of us in this room

I believe this is a reality and one to which we can cling and we can have some certain knowledge of where we will spend eternity and I do pray Lord that you would bring people across our path who don't yet believe this and to whom we can introduce the gospel and our wonderful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Lord I ask that for the next week everybody here will have you in their consciousness day and night and that you will never be far from any of them and that they will all have a wonderful week I pray that you put opportunities in front of them to share the gospel with people who haven't heard it Lord touch them all I pray in Jesus name Amen in the notes when you get them there are some references to the bits of that of what we've just read that were illegal just for your interest so I will leave you to study those at your leisure now