

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 26

by John Wesley

Jesus delays his passion until the time is right, establishes the Lord's Supper, and is betrayed and arrested, demonstrating his calmness and dignity in the face of adversity.

Scripture: Matthew 26:26-28, Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:41, Matthew 26:56, Matthew 26:75

Topics: "The Last Supper", "Betrayal and Faithfulness"

Description

John Wesley expounds on Matthew 26, detailing the events leading to Jesus' crucifixion, including the Last Supper and Judas' betrayal. He emphasizes the significance of the Passover meal, where Jesus transforms the bread and wine into symbols of His body and blood, establishing a new covenant. Wesley highlights the disciples' struggles, particularly Peter's denial, and the profound sorrow Jesus experiences in Gethsemane. The sermon reflects on the divine plan unfolding through human actions, showcasing Jesus' calmness in the face of betrayal and suffering. Wesley encourages believers to recognize the depth of Christ's sacrifice and the importance of faithfulness amidst trials.

Transcript

XXVI. 1. When Jesus had finished all these discourses - When he had spoken all he had to speak. Till then he would not enter upon his passion: then he would delay it no longer. Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1.

Verse 2. After two days is the passover - The manner wherein this was celebrated gives much light to several circumstances that follow. The master of the family began the feast with a cup of wine, which having solemnly blessed, he divided among the guests, Luke 22:17. Then the supper began with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs; which when they had all tasted, one of the young persons present, according to Exodus 12:26, asked the reason of the solemnity. This introduced the showing forth, or declaration of it: in allusion to which we read of showing forth the Lord's death, 1 Corinthians 11:26. Then the master rose up and took another cup, before the lamb was tasted. After supper, he took a thin loaf or cake, which he broke and divided to all at the table, and likewise the cup, usually called the cup of thanksgiving, of which he drank first, and then all the guests. It was this bread and this cup which our Lord consecrated to be a standing memorial of his death.

Verse 3. The chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people -(Heads of families.) These together constituted the sanhedrim, or great council, which had the supreme authority, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs.

Verse 5. But they said, Not at the feast - This was the result of human wisdom. But when Judas came they changed their purpose. So the counsel of God took place, and the true paschal Lamb was offered up on the great day of the paschal solemnity.

Verse 6. Mark 14:3.

Verse 8. His disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying - It seems several of them were angry, and spoke, though none so warmly as Judas Iscariot.

Verse 11. Ye have the poor always with you - Such is the wise and gracious providence of God, that we may have always opportunities of relieving their wants, and so laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

Verse 12. She hath done it for my burial - As it were for the embalming of my body. Indeed this was not her design: but our Lord puts this construction upon it, to confirm thereby what he had before said to his disciples, concerning his approaching death.

Verse 13. This Gospel - That is, this part of the Gospel history.

Verse 14. Mark 14:10; Luke 22:3.

Verse 15. They bargained with him for thirty pieces of silver - (About three pounds fifteen shillings sterling; or sixteen dollars sixty-seven cents,) the price of a slave, Exodus 21:32.

Verse 17. On the first day of unleavened bread - Being Thursday, the fourteenth day of the first month, Exodus 12:6,15. Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7

Verse 18. The Master saith, My time is at hand - That is, the time of my suffering.

Verse 20. Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14.

Verse 23. He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish - Which it seems Judas was doing at that very time. This dish was a vessel full of vinegar, wherein they dipped their bitter herbs.

Verse 24. The Son of man goeth through sufferings to glory, as it is written of him - Yet this is no excuse for him that betrayeth him: miserable will that man be: it had been good for that man if he had not been born - May not the same be said of every man that finally perishes? But who can reconcile this, if it were true of Judas alone, with the doctrine of universal salvation?

Verse 25. Thou hast said - That is, it is as thou hast said.

Verse 26. Jesus took the bread - the bread or cake, which the master of the family used to divide among them, after they had eaten the passover. The custom our Lord now transferred to a nobler use. This bread is, that is, signifies or represents my body, according to the style of the sacred writers. Thus Genesis 40:12, The three branches are three days. Thus Galatians 4:24, St. Paul speaking of Sarah and Hagar, says, These are the two covenants. Thus in the grand type of our Lord, Exodus 12:11, God says of the paschal lamb, This is the Lord's passover. Now Christ substituting the holy communion for the passover, follows the style of the Old Testament, and uses the same expressions the Jews were wont to use in celebrating the passover.

Verse 27. And he took the cup - Called by the Jews the cup of thanksgiving; which the master of the family used likewise to give to each after supper.

Verse 28. This is the sign of my blood, whereby the new testament or covenant is confirmed. Which is shed for many - As many as spring from Adam.

Verse 29. I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom - That is, I shall taste no more wine, till I drink wine of quite another kind in the glorious kingdom of my Father. And of this you shall also partake with me.

Verse 30. And when they had sung the hymn - Which was constantly sung at the close of the passover. It consisteth of six psalms, from the 113th to the 118th. Psalms 113:1 &c. The mount of Olives - Was over against the temple, about two miles from Jerusalem. Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39; John 18:1.

Verse 31. All ye will be offended at me - Something will happen to me, which will occasion your falling into sin by forsaking me. Zechariah 13:7.

Verse 32. But notwithstanding this, after I am risen I will go before you (as a shepherd before his sheep) into Galilee. Though you forsake me, I will not for this forsake you.

Verse 34. Before cock crowing thou wilt deny me thrice - That is, before three in the morning, the usual time of cock crowing: although one cock was heard to crow once, after Peter's first denial of his Lord.

Verse 35. In like manner also said all the disciples - But such was the tenderness of our Lord, that he would not aggravate their sin by making any reply.

Verse 36. Then cometh Jesus to a place called Gethsemane - That is, the valley of fatness. The garden probably had its name from its soil and situation, laying in some little valley between two of those many hills, the range of which constitutes the mount of Olives. Mark 14:32; Luke 22:40.

Verse 37. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee - To be witnesses of all; he began to be sorrowful and in deep anguish -Probably from feeling the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in his soul, while God laid on him the iniquities of us all. Who can tell what painful and dreadful sensations were then impressed on him by the immediate hand of God? The former word in the original properly signifies, to be penetrated with the most exquisite sorrow; the latter to be quite depressed, and almost overwhelmed with the load.

Verse 39. And going a little farther - About a stone's cast, Luke 22:41-So that the apostles could both see and hear him still. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me - And it did pass from him quickly. When he cried unto God with strong cries and tears, he was heard in that which he feared. God did take away the terror and severity of that inward conflict.

Verse 41. The spirit - Your spirit: ye yourselves. The flesh - Your nature. How gentle a rebuke was this, and how kind an apology! especially at a time when our Lord's own mind was so weighed down with sorrow.

Verse 45. Sleep on now, if you can, and take your rest - For any farther service you can be of to me.

Verse 47. Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47; John 18:2.

Verse 50. The heroic behaviour of the blessed Jesus, in the whole period of his sufferings, will be observed by every attentive eye, and felt by every pious heart: although the sacred historians, according to their usual but wonderful simplicity, make no encomiums upon it. With what composure does he go forth to meet the traitor! With what calmness receive that malignant kiss! With what dignity does he deliver himself into the hands of his enemies! Yet plainly showing his superiority over them, and even then leading as it were captivity captive!

Verse 51. And one of them striking the servant of the high priest -Probably the person that seized Jesus first; Cut off his ear -Aiming, it seems, to cleave his head, but that by a secret providence interposing, he declined the blow. Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49; John 18:10.

Verse 52. All they that take the sword - Without God's giving it them: without sufficient authority.

Verse 53. He will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels -The least of whom, it is probable, could overturn the earth and destroy all the inhabitants of it.

Verse 55. Mark 14:48; Luke 22:52

Verse 57. They led him away to Caiaphas - From the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, to whom they had carried him first. Mark 14:53; Luke 22:54; John 18:12.

Verse 58. But Peter followed him afar off - Variously agitated by conflicting passions; love constrained him to follow his Master; fear made him follow afar off. And going in, sat with the servants - Unfit companions as the event showed.

Verse 60. Yet found they none - On whose evidence they could condemn him to die. At last came two false witnesses - Such they were, although part of what they said was true; because our Lord did not speak some of those words at all; nor any of them in this sense.

Verse 64. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man - He speaks in the third person, modestly, and yet plainly; Sitting on the right hand of power - That is, the right hand of God: And coming upon the clouds of heaven - As he is represented by Daniel, Daniel 7:13,14. Our Lord looked very unlike that person now! But nothing could be more awful, more majestic and becoming, than such an admonition in such circumstances!

Verse 65. Then the high priest rent his clothes - Though the high priest was forbidden to rend his clothes (that is, his upper garment) in some cases where others were allowed to do it, Leviticus 21:10; yet in case of blasphemy or any public calamity, it was thought allowable. Caiaphas hereby expressed, in the most artful manner, his horror at hearing such grievous blasphemy.

Verse 67. Then - After he had declared he was the Son of God, the sanhedrim doubtless ordered him to be carried out, while they were consulting what to do. And then it was that the soldiers who kept him began these insults upon him.

Verse 72. He denied with an oath - To which possibly he was not unaccustomed, before our Lord called him.

Verse 73. Surely thou art also one of them, for thy speech discovereth thee - Malchus might have brought a stronger proof than this. But such is the overruling providence of God, that the world, in the height of their zeal, commonly catch hold of the very weakest of all arguments against the children of God.

Verse 74. Then began he to curse and to swear - Having now quite lost the reins, the government of himself.

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