

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 26 (PART 1)

As we come to Matthew 26, it's helpful to recognize that this moment marks a major turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. Throughout the Gospel, Matthew has been organizing Jesus' teaching into structured sections, each one ending with a similar phrase: *"when Jesus had finished..."* This isn't accidental. It shows us that Matthew is intentionally guiding us through Jesus' teaching ministry before bringing us to the cross. There are five major teaching sections, each marked by this transition:

1. **Matthew 5–7: The Sermon on the Mount** - *"When Jesus had finished these sayings..."* (7:28)
2. **Matthew 10: The Mission Discourse** - *"When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples..."* (11:1)
3. **Matthew 13: The Parables of the Kingdom** - *"When Jesus had finished these parables..."* (13:53)
4. **Matthew 18: Teaching on Community and Forgiveness** - *"When Jesus had finished these sayings..."* (19:1)
5. **Matthew 24–25: The Olivet Discourse (End Times and Judgment)** - *"When Jesus had finished all these sayings..."* (26:1)

As we begin this 6th and final section of Matthew, Matthew records that Rabbi Jesus' verbal teaching is finished. Now his students will no longer simply listen, but will watch and learn as he moves towards the cross.

Matthew 26:1-5 - Plot to Kill Jesus

- v. 1 - Jesus finished saying **"all** these things"
- v. 2 - 4th and final time Jesus predicts his arrest and crucifixion (16:21, 17:22-23; 20:17-19).
- v. 2 - **"Son of man"** is to be handed over for crucifixion.
Q – What is the significance of that title being used in this context?

The Passover "festival" (v. 5) would have had pilgrims from all over. Some estimate a population increase of 5x. Jesus was very popular with the people. The religious leaders are concerned about a riot if they kill Jesus while Jerusalem was populated by supportive masses.

Q - How did we get here?

Matthew 26:6-13 - Ointment

v. 6 - “Simon the leper” (formerly)

Who was the woman? Matthew doesn't tell us. But John's account identifies this woman as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

John 12:1-3 - Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Alabaster vial (v. 7) - An alabaster jar was a sealed container used to store expensive perfume. It often had to be broken to use fully.

Value of the perfume - Mark 14:5 - “more than 300 denarii” - 1 years wages for worker

Purpose of the perfume - Perfume like this (likely nard) was often connected to burial preparation. Sometimes this sort of thing was part of a dowry or of precious value.

When Jesus says she did this “to prepare me for burial,” He is interpreting her act prophetically. Whether she fully understood or not, her act aligns with what is about to happen. The enemies of Jesus are preparing to kill him while Jesus is being prepared to die.

Matthew 26:14-16 - Judas' Betrayal

Who was Judas?

1. Judas Iscariot - All four Gospels call him “Judas Iscariot” (Matthew 10:4). “Iscariot” likely means: “Man of Kerioth” (a town in Judea). If that's correct, it would make Judas the only one of the twelve from Judea, while the others were mostly from Galilee.

2 - One of the twelve - Judas is not only referred to throughout the gospel as “the one who betrayed him” but more often “one of the twelve.” Judas was a legitimate disciple of Jesus and one who was in his close circle and also one who was not only on the front lines of seeing Jesus' ministry, but also taking part in it himself!

3 - He was trusted with responsibility - From Gospel of John 12:6: Judas kept the money box, meaning for the group. He was likely known as capable and trustworthy. There isn't a suspicion about Judas throughout the gospels. He didn't look like an obvious movie villain.

4 - He had a pattern of hidden sin - John tells us plainly that Judas was a thief and used to take money from the money box. So before the betrayal ever happens, there is already a

pattern of dishonesty and a heart drifting away from Jesus. I say this because it's important to remember that this betrayal didn't come out of nowhere. It was the culmination of something already growing.

In John's telling of Mary's act of love, we see an interesting reaction from Judas Iscariot of all people:

John 12:4-8 - But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

This gives us a window into Judas' heart just before his betrayal.

Q - Why did Judas betray Jesus?

I don't think we know for sure. But here are some things to consider:

1 - Greed - (from what we read in John 12:4-8)

2 – Disillusionment & Disappointment - throughout the gospels many people question the pace and function of Jesus' Messianic claims. Even the disciples are misinformed about whether Jesus will assume a military and political position soon. It's possible Judas is one who expected a different kind of Messiah, one who would move more quickly or politically. As Jesus continues talking about suffering and death, that may have led to disappointment or disillusionment. Some have even suggested that Judas' intention was to surround Jesus with authorities, to "force his hand" to take the throne.

3 - Spiritual Reasons - There was also a spiritual dynamic to these events, but not to the exclusion of Judas being a willing participant. He was open to being used by the Devil because of the division of his heart. Satan's influence is mentioned in Luke 22:3 and John 13:27.

v. 15 - 30 Pieces of Silver - ESV Study Bible: "thirty pieces of silver. In the OT, this was the penalty paid by the owner of an ox that gored a slave to death (Ex. 21:32). Equivalent to about four months' wages for a laborer (about \$7,500 in modern terms), this meager sum suggests the low esteem in which Jesus was held by both Judas and the chief priests."

Exodus 21:32 - "If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

So, **thirty pieces of silver** becomes a symbol of the value of a slave and therefore a picture of how little Jesus is valued. There's another Old Testament use of this in Zechariah:

Zechariah 11:4-13 (NLT) - This is what the LORD my God says: "Go and care for the flock that is intended for slaughter. 5 The buyers slaughter their sheep without remorse...7 So I cared for the flock intended for slaughter-- the flock that was oppressed...8 I got rid of their three evil shepherds in a single month. But I became impatient with these sheep, and they hated me, too.

9 So I told them (the sheep), "I won't be your shepherd any longer. If you die, you die. If you are killed, you are killed. And let those who remain devour each other!"

11 That was the end of my covenant with them. The suffering flock was watching me, and they knew that the LORD was speaking through my actions. 12 And I said to them, "If you like, give me my wages, whatever I am worth; but only if you want to." So they counted out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-- this magnificent sum at which they valued me! So I took the thirty coins and threw them to the potter in the Temple of the LORD.

Zechariah is acting as a shepherd over a flock, symbolizing God's care for His people Israel. But the flock rejects him. Instead of receiving him as a faithful shepherd, they resist and devalue him. So Zechariah stops shepherding them and asks for his wages (v. 12).

They weigh out **30 pieces of silver**, which was already known from Exodus 21:32 as the price paid for a dead slave. In other words, this isn't just a payment, it's an insult. It shows how little they think he is worth. Then, instead of keeping the money, Zechariah throws it into the house of the Lord, to the potter (v. 13). This isn't like giving a tip or spare change. It's a symbolic act. The money is being rejected and discarded in God's presence, highlighting the contempt behind it. In the same way, when Judas accepts 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus, it reveals not just betrayal, but how little value is placed on the true Shepherd.

As we step back and look at this passage, we see three very different responses to Jesus unfolding at the same time. The religious leaders reject him and plot his death. Mary honors him with extravagant devotion, giving what is most valuable because she sees his worth. And Judas, one of the twelve, moves toward betrayal, exchanging Jesus for the price of a slave. The question this passage quietly places before us is not whether we will respond to Jesus, but how.

And at the center of it all is the question of value. What is Jesus worth? To some, he is a threat to be eliminated. To others, he is worthy of everything. And for Judas, he becomes something to be traded. As we move into the final section of Matthew's Gospel, we are invited not just to observe these responses, but to examine our own hearts. Because the difference is not simply in what people say about Jesus, but in what they are willing to give up for him... or give him up for.