

The Book of Matthew

Jesus's Last Days

Lesson #12 for June 18, 2016

Scriptures: Matthew 26:1-27:10; Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 5:7.

1. The events of that final week in the life of Jesus's earthly ministry are so packed with valuable lessons that we will, no doubt, be studying them forever. He arrived in the area of Jerusalem one week before His crucifixion. Our lesson for this week focuses on freedom, free will, and the choices made by four people: Jesus, Mary, Judas, and Peter.
2. What are the most important lessons that we should learn from the experiences of those individuals during that final week of Jesus's life?
3. By our use of our free will and our making bad choices starting in the Garden of Eden, we have allowed sin to multiply. At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus had to exercise His free will, even His determined choice, to answer the major questions in the great controversy and choose to die on behalf of the entire universe so that we can know the truth about Him, His Father, and the Holy Spirit and know the falsehoods perpetrated by Satan.
4. After spending so much time with Jesus, why were the disciples still so blind and ignorant? Did God—Jesus—intentionally hide the truth from them? Or, were they so set in their thinking that Jesus was to become an earthly king that they could not comprehend what Jesus was saying about His death and resurrection? Or, did the Devil work on them?
5. Jesus had explained repeatedly to His disciples that He would be going to Jerusalem where He would be handed over to the Roman authorities and would be killed, and then, three days later He would rise to life again. Why was it so hard for them to understand it?

First recorded occurrence: Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22.

Second recorded occurrence: Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:31-32; Luke 9:43-45.

Third recorded occurrence: Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; **Luke 18:31-34.**

6. And surely, there were other occasions which are not recorded in the Gospels. Why do you think that none of those occurrences were mentioned by John in his Gospel?
7. Read Matthew 26:1-16. Compare Luke 7:36-50. What do we know about Mary and what led up to this story? Are these two accounts talking about the same experience?

Christ might have extinguished every spark of hope in Mary's soul, but He did not. The Heart-searcher read the motives that led to her actions, and He also saw the spirit that prompted Simon's words. "Seest thou this woman?" He said to him; she is a sinner; "I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

Those present, thinking of **Lazarus**, who had been raised from the dead by Christ, and **who was at this time a guest in his uncle's house**, began to question, saying, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But Christ continued, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 9, 1900 par. 14-15; Compare *Daughters of God* 239.3-4.

As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. **Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the**

woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the [567] two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 566.5.

The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour.—*Ibid.* 568.1-2. [Bold type is added.]

8. So, why did Mary wash Jesus's feet with her tears and pour expensive perfume onto Him?
She had heard Jesus speak of His approaching death, and in her deep love and sorrow she had longed to show Him honor. At great personal sacrifice she had purchased an alabaster box of "ointment of spikenard, very costly," with which to anoint His body. But now many were declaring that He was about to be crowned king. Her grief was turned to joy, and she was eager to be first in honoring her Lord. Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair.—*Ibid.* 558.4-559.0.
9. Modern moviemakers have tried to make something very scandalous out of the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The Bible pictures her almost like a sister to Jesus.
10. Judas, one of Jesus's own disciples, was already plotting how to betray his Master. At the same time, Mary, her heart overflowing with love for Jesus, broke the alabaster box and poured the perfume on His body. That perfume had cost her the equivalent of salary for a common workingman for one whole year.
11. What was the most important thing that Jesus did for Mary: 1) Forgiving her sins and loving her? 2) Casting seven demons out of her? Or, 3) Giving her eternal life? What has Jesus done for you and me?
12. Read Matthew 26:17-19 and compare Exodus 12:1-17; 1 Corinthians 5:7. The Passover was a celebration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. Jesus, the real Passover Lamb, was to die on the very day on which the Passover lambs were to be eaten. The Passover was a time of great rejoicing because it commemorated their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The death of Jesus results in our deliverance from sin if we are believers. Shouldn't it be a time of great rejoicing for us?
13. On that Thursday evening as they were partaking of the Passover meal of roasted lamb and bitter herbs, Jesus introduced a new ceremony, taking the bread and the wine and telling us that they were symbols of His broken body and His spilled blood. The Passover lambs that had been offered for so many years pointed forward to the death of Jesus. We now celebrate with the bread and the wine, pointing back to the victory which came at the cross. But, the cross is certainly not the end of the story. If Jesus had not risen from the grave and gone back to heaven, what would the cross mean? There is a resurrection and a future life promised to us because of what Jesus did.
14. Why do you think Jesus told His disciples that He would not drink of the grape juice again until

He will take it with us in heaven? Does that say anything to us about the eternal humanity of Jesus?

15. After Jesus had sent Judas out of the upper room to do his terrible deed and had finished giving His messages to His disciples, they proceeded to the Garden of Gethsemane.
16. Read Matthew 26:36-46. What actually was happening in the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus was experiencing for the first time in His life the separation from His Father which is the effect of sin—not that He was a sinner. Before the creation of this world, They had agreed among the Godhead that by this demonstration of the truth about sin, humanity would be able to learn how serious and deadly sin is. It is in the very nature of sin that sin kills us by separating us from God, the Source of Life. (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; 14:23) At the present time, God is keeping sinners including Satan alive on temporary life support!

With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God....The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty?—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 687.0-690.2. [Could the plan of salvation have failed?]

All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, **He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.**—*Ibid.* 753.1. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

17. In Gethsemane Jesus pleaded with His Father to let the cup pass from Him, "If possible." (Matthew 26:39) What were the issues involved there? Was Jesus struggling primarily about whether or not we humans were worth it? Why was the death of Jesus necessary? Is it really true that there was no other possible solution to the sin problem? If there had been any other way to resolve the issues in the great controversy, do you think God would have gone through what They went through?
18. In light of Christ's incredible experience there in the garden, shouldn't we ask ourselves, "Do I feel pain when I sin and separate myself from God?" Why do we choose to sin?
19. Read John 6:70 and Luke 22:3. Why was it that Satan was able to control Judas? Satan, of course, tried to control Peter as well. (Luke 22:31) So, what was the difference between Satan's experience with Judas and that of Peter?

Judas had naturally a strong love for money; but he had not always been corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. He had fostered the evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life. The love of mammon overbalanced his love for Christ. Through becoming the slave of one vice he gave himself to

Satan, to be driven to any lengths in sin.—*Ibid.* 716.3.

Christ's discourse in the synagogue concerning the bread of life was the turning point in the history of Judas. He heard the words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." John 6:53. He saw that Christ was offering spiritual rather than worldly good. He regarded himself as farsighted, and thought he could see that Jesus would have no honor, and that He could bestow no high position upon His followers. He determined not to unite himself so closely to Christ but that he could draw away. He would watch. And he did watch.—*Ibid.* 719.1.

20. Judas made the mistake of thinking that he actually knew better what was right for Jesus to do than Jesus—God—Himself knew!
21. He was sure that Jesus was to become an earthly king, and he based his choices on that assumption. Thus, his choices made during that final week were based on a false assumption which was, in turn, based on wrong choices he had made earlier in his life.

Judas reasoned that if Jesus was to be crucified, the event must come to pass. His own act in betraying the Saviour would not change the result. If Jesus was not to die, it would only force Him to deliver Himself. At all events, Judas would gain something by his treachery. He counted that he had made a sharp bargain in betraying his Lord.

Judas did not, however, believe that Christ would permit Himself to be arrested. In betraying Him, it was his purpose to teach Him a lesson. He intended to play a part that would make the Saviour careful thenceforth to treat him with due respect. But Judas knew not that he was giving Christ up to death. How often, as the Saviour taught in parables, the scribes and Pharisees had been carried away with His striking illustrations! How often they had pronounced judgment against themselves! Often when the truth was brought home to their hearts, they had been filled with rage, and had taken up stones to cast at Him; [721] but again and again He had made His escape. Since He had escaped so many snares, thought Judas, He certainly would not now allow Himself to be taken.

Judas decided to put the matter to the test. If Jesus really was the Messiah, the people, for whom He had done so much, would rally about Him, and would proclaim Him king. This would forever settle many minds that were now in uncertainty. Judas would have the credit of having placed the king on David's throne. And this act would secure to him the first position, next to Christ, in the new kingdom.—*Ibid.* 720.4-721.1.

22. Someone in recent times came up with expression: "With friends like these, who needs enemies?" Is it possible that person was thinking about the story of Judas?
23. Read Matthew 26:47-50 and Matthew 27:1-10. Judas's love of power, position, and money led to his destruction. Are we led astray by any of those attractions?
24. In a previous lesson, we noted that Matthew mixed up the two Zechariahs mentioned in the Old Testament. Read now Matthew 27:5-10 and Zechariah 11:12-13. Notice, once again, that a quotation from Zechariah was attributed by Matthew to Jeremiah. What does this say about inspiration?
25. Try to imagine yourself as Judas, leading that contingent which may have included up to 600 soldiers through the city and down to the Garden of Gethsemane. Did it give him a feeling of power? Did he feel like he was going to finally force Jesus to respect him and his decisions?

As we know, Judas lost everything—not only the 30 pieces of silver but also his eternal salvation!

26. One of the challenging questions that many theologians and thoughtful Bible students have raised in recent years is the question of whether we can truly be free if, in fact, God can predict the future. From our limited human perspective, it might seem that if God knows the future, then it has already been determined. But, look at our stories for this week. Did Jesus's foreknowledge of Judas's decisions force Judas to make those decisions? Did Jesus's foreknowledge of Peter and his denial force Peter to make those choices?
27. Read Matthew 26:51-75. Why did Peter deny Jesus? Was it that Peter could not in that instant when the finger was pointed at him think of any good excuse for being there in the courtyard of Caiaphas?

After deserting their Master in the garden, two of the disciples had ventured to follow, at a distance, the mob that had Jesus in charge. These disciples were Peter and John. The priests recognized John as a well-known disciple of Jesus, and admitted him to the hall, hoping that as he witnessed the humiliation of his Leader, he would scorn the idea of such a one being the Son of God. John spoke in favor of Peter, and gained an entrance for him also.—*Ibid.* 710.3.

Peter had not designed that his real character should be known. In assuming an air of indifference he had placed himself on the enemy's ground, and he became an easy prey to temptation. If he had been called to fight for his Master, he would have been a courageous soldier; but when the finger of scorn was pointed at him, he proved himself a coward. Many who do not shrink from active warfare for their Lord are driven by ridicule to deny their faith. By associating with those whom they should avoid, they place themselves in the way of temptation. They invite the enemy to tempt them, and are led to say and do that of which under other circumstances they would never have been guilty. The disciple of Christ who in our day disguises his faith through dread of suffering or reproach denies his Lord as really as did Peter in the judgment hall.—*Ibid.* 712.1.

28. Was Peter just afraid? Or, was he just startled by the accusation against him? Was he beginning to understand Jesus's situation?

Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall. ...He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came vividly to his mind. The suffering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He remembered with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He remembered His solemn charge, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41. He witnessed again the scene in the judgment hall. It was torture to his bleeding heart to know that he had added the heaviest burden to the Saviour's humiliation and grief. **On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die.** —*Ibid.* 713.1-3. [Bold type is added.]

29. The truth about sin and its consequences (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23) and about God and the fact that He always tells the truth as opposed to the lying of Satan (Genesis 3:1-4) had to be demonstrated for the benefit of the entire universe. As we study the life and death of Jesus, we are given a choice: We can choose to live lives like that of Jesus; or, we will die the death—caused by sin—which He died.
30. Peter was brave enough to attack the high priest's servant using a sword despite the fact that there was a huge crowd to arrest Jesus. But, he collapsed before the scorn of a single servant woman in the court of Caiaphas. Could something like that happen to us?

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. *Ibid.* 83.4. [Bold type is added.]

31. Have you ever tried to make a timeline of the events of that final week? From Simon's place on Saturday night to the triumphal entry on Sunday morning; the two days spent in the temple courtyard—Monday and Tuesday; and then to those shocking final events from the Last Supper, to Gethsemane, to the arrest, then the phony trials, and finally the crucifixion and death on Friday. He rested over the Sabbath; and then, He arose triumphantly on Sunday morning. He had told His followers earlier as recorded in John 10:18 that He had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again.

Crucifixion constituted an intensely cruel form of execution. Bodily weight was suspended by arms and legs, securely fastened to crosses with spikes and/or ropes. Before death occurred, the skeletal system frequently suffered dislocated joints. Breathing became nearly impossible, because the collapsed body cavity compressed lung function.

Romans employed other torturous methods, including burning victims alive; feeding victims to carnivorous animals, as the Medo-Persians once did with Daniel; beating; dragging bodies behind wild horses; and branding criminals with plates of red-hot iron. None of these tortures, however, exceeded crucifixion in agony suffered. Victims typically lived several days, whereas other execution methods usually caused death more quickly. (Ironically, this cruelest of human tortures has been memorialized with gold-plated, diamond-studded jewelry. This would be tantamount to producing gold-plated electric chairs or silver-plated lethal injection chambers.) How remarkable that God's sacrifice transformed something unthinkably painful into an incredibly beautiful symbol of divine benevolence.—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, pp. 159-160.

32. Surely, no one could suggest that the experiences that he has gone through were more troubling, lonelier, or more unfair than those that Jesus faced. Surely, His physical suffering and the disloyalty of Judas and even Peter were a terrible trial to Jesus. How does Jesus feel about our lives and our experiences as He observes us from day to day?

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