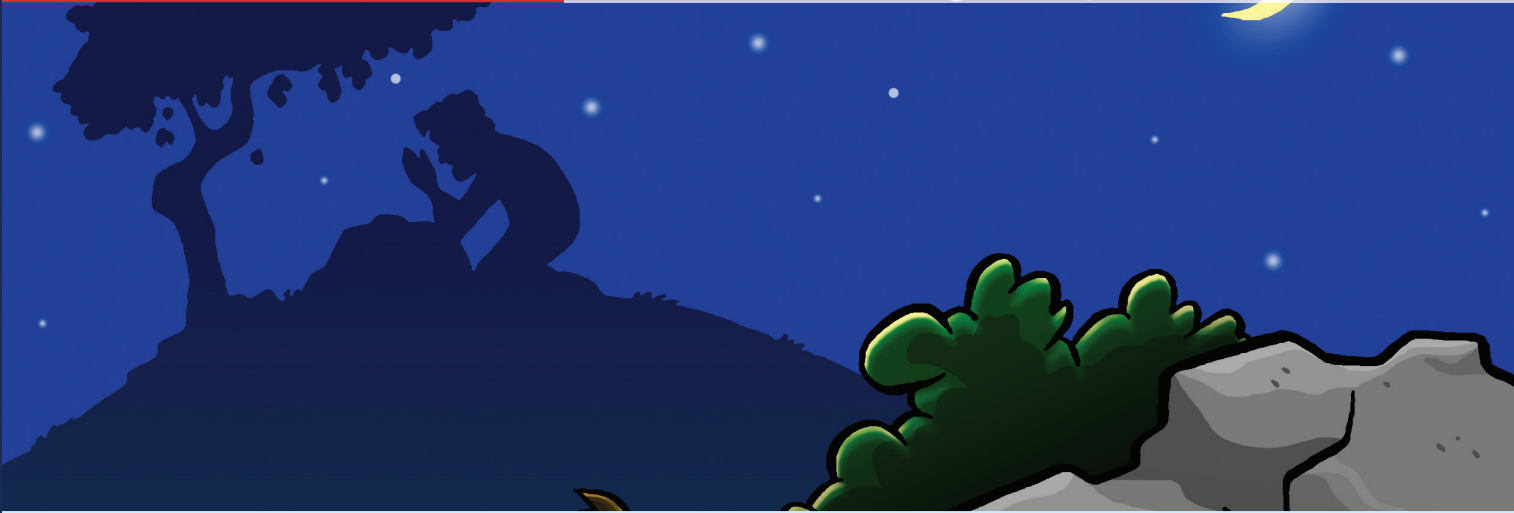


SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 21

Jesus prepares for His death

Matthew 26:1–56



DAY 1

Jesus controlled the timing of His death • Matthew 26:1–5

READ

Matthew 26:1–5

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 26:1–5

Who planned Jesus' death? Jesus announced His death several times (Matt 16:21; 17:9; 20:18), and He had just finished teaching His disciples how to live while He was away (Matt 24–25). So Jesus was in control, sovereignly planning the time of His own death. Jesus planned to be crucified on **Passover**, a celebration of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Passover was especially a reminder of how God spared the firstborn in every house marked with the blood of an unblemished lamb (Exod 12:3–6, 22–23). So Jesus would be the perfect Passover Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7), dying to deliver people from sin and death. But how could this happen exactly on Passover? Jesus' enemies tried to kill Him in Bethlehem as an infant (Matt 2:13), in Nazareth at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4:16–30), and in Jerusalem after He healed on the Sabbath (John 5:18; 7:44–46). The one day they did not want to kill Him was Passover! Yet they never had any power over Jesus' life. Instead, Jesus gave His life at the right time by His own authority (John 10:18).

ASK

1. What day did Jesus plan to die on?
Passover.
2. What is Passover?
It is a meal when Israelites killed a lamb to celebrate how God rescued them from Egypt.
3. Had Jesus' enemies tried to kill Him before?
Yes. Many times.
4. Did the Pharisees want to kill Jesus during Passover?
No. They were afraid of the crowds.

DISCUSS

1. How was Jesus able to control the exact timing of His death?
2. How was Jesus like the Passover lamb? How was He different?

DAY 2

Jesus controlled the preparation for His death • Matthew 26:6–13

READ

Matthew 26:6–13

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 26:6–13

Six days before the Passover (John 12:1), Jesus had confirmed He would die soon. He was enjoying the Sabbath in Bethany, just over the ridge from Jerusalem, when Lazarus' sister Mary anointed His head and feet (John 12:3). Her **alabaster** vial was carved out of white marble from Egypt. Inside was pure **nard**, a valuable perfume from the roots of a flower found in the mountains of India and China. It was worth almost a year's wages (John 12:5)! When the disciples saw this, they were upset: "Why this waste?" How could Jesus allow this when He had just emphasized caring for the poor (Matt 25:35–40)? Yet what the disciples called a waste Jesus called beautiful, for Mary was preparing for the most important event in all of history: Jesus' voluntary death on behalf of sinners. Her sacrificial gift was an act of pure worship, an offering that would be proclaimed throughout the whole world. This promise came true when Mary's act of devotion was included in New Testament.

ASK

1. What did Mary do for Jesus?
She anointed His head and washed His feet with very expensive perfume.
2. What did the disciples say about this?
That it was a waste. That the perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor.
3. What did Jesus say about this?
He said it was the right thing to do, because it was anointing Him for burial.
4. What did Jesus promise about what Mary did?
That what she had done would be told everywhere the gospel is proclaimed.

DISCUSS

1. What is Jesus worth to you? What are some ways you show your love for Jesus?
2. Was Judas really concerned about the poor (John 12:6)?

DAY 3

Jesus controlled Judas' participation in His death • Matthew 26:14–25

READ

Matthew 26:14–25

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 26:14–25

Mary loved Jesus more than her most precious possession, but Judas sold Jesus for a third of that. Maybe Judas was eager to follow Jesus at first, but now it's clear he never really loved Jesus. He was only following Jesus for his own earthly benefit. So it's no surprise he began stealing from the group's moneybag (John 12:6). In the end, 30 shekels of silver was worth more to him than the Lord. Yet Jesus, not Judas, was

in control. Jesus kept the place of the Passover meal secret so that Judas would not betray Him before He could explain the meaning of His death (Luke 22:8). Then at the right time, Jesus prompted Judas to act quickly and betray Him that very night (John 13:27). But how could Jesus eat the Passover meal and still die on Passover? It seems the Pharisees and Galileans celebrated Passover one day earlier than the Sadducees and Judeans. This allowed Jesus, a Galilean, to show the meaning of the Passover meal on Thursday evening, while still dying at the time the Sadducees' lambs were being sacrificed on Friday afternoon. It was all under Jesus' control.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What had Judas been doing with the disciples' money bag?
Stealing from it.
2. How much did Judas agree to betray Jesus for?
For thirty pieces of silver, worth about 4 months' wages or a few thousand dollars.
3. Why did Jesus keep the place of the Passover meal secret?
So Judas would not betray Him before He could explain the meaning of His death.
4. Why did Jesus prompt Judas to betray Him that night?
So He could die on Passover.

DISCUSS 

1. Judas' betrayal is terrible treachery, but have you ever acted unfaithfully to get even less?
2. Jesus controlled Judas' participation in His death, but was Judas still responsible for his sin (Matt 26:24)?

DAY 4*Jesus controlled the significance of His death • Matthew 26:26–35***READ** 

Matthew 26:26–35

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 26:26–35**

Jesus changed the meaning of the Passover meal. The unleavened bread used to symbolize Israel quickly leaving Egypt, but now it symbolizes Christ's body. The wine used to celebrate the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai (Exod 24:8), but now it celebrates the new covenant sealed by Jesus' blood. Despite these startling changes, the Messiah's battered body and poured-out blood had been predicted long ago (Isa 53:5–7; Ps 22:14–16). So had the new covenant which brings forgiveness of sins for many people (Isa 53:11–12; Jer 31:31–34; Matt 1:21). Jesus was doing everything according to plan. Even the disciples deserting Jesus was according to plan, prophesied long ago (Zech 13:7). Jesus was not surprised. As the good shepherd, He offered hope to His confused sheep. Unfortunately, the disciples were proud, relied on their own strength, and were doomed to failure (1 Cor 10:12). Jesus knew this, and He purposefully let them be broken and weak, so that His power could live in them (2 Cor 1:9; 12:9–10). Even in being deserted, Jesus was in control, proving that He is the good Shepherd.

ASK 

1. What did Jesus say about the bread and the wine?
He said the bread was like His body and the wine was like His blood.
2. Why would the disciples desert Jesus?
It was prophesied that the Shepherd would be killed and His sheep scattered. Also, the disciples were too confident in themselves.
3. How did Jesus prove He is the good Shepherd?
He offered hope to His confused sheep. He also allowed the disciples to be broken and weak so that they would learn to rely on His power, not theirs.

DISCUSS 

1. What did Jesus' death mean? Why did He choose to die?
2. Have you ever bragged about how well you would do something? What happened (Prov 16:18)?

DAY 5

Jesus controlled His flesh in His death • Matthew 26:36–56

READ

Matthew 26:35–56

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 26:36–56

Even though Jesus' death was God's plan and His own choice, it was still a terrible struggle. Jesus knew He was going to drink "the cup," which meant that He would bear God's awful wrath (Isa 51:17). So now He was facing His biggest test: controlling His own human nature. Unlike His disciples, Jesus knew the weakness of human nature, and He humbly depended on the Father in prayer. God did not take the cross away, but He did give Jesus victory over temptation when Judas came to betray Him. Jesus had a good excuse to resist, since His arrest was completely wrong. Judas and the mob deserved to be arrested, not Jesus. Then why didn't Jesus fight back like Peter did? Jesus could have commanded thousands of angels to fight for Him—and just one angel was enough to wipe out a massive army (2 Kings 19:35)! Yet Jesus did not resist, for He was committed to doing the will of God. Far from being a helpless victim, Jesus was in control. He was a willing sacrifice, dying to set us free.

ASK

1. What did Jesus do right before being arrested?
He prayed and submitted to the Father's will.
2. Did Jesus have good reason to resist arrest?
Yes. He had done nothing wrong. Judas and the mob deserved arrest.
3. Why didn't Jesus resist arrest?
Even though He had the power to defeat His enemies, He chose to obey Scripture.
4. Why did Jesus choose to die?
To provide forgiveness of sins and to obey the Father.

DISCUSS

1. Have you been treated unfairly recently? Was your response pleasing to God? Thank Jesus for responding the way He did for your sake.
2. Do you prepare for when temptation comes? How do you prepare? Do you pray?

NEXT WEEK

The trial and denial of Jesus

Mark 14:53–15:15

