

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MARK 13:1-14:26

News anchorman, Brandon Brooks, worked for a television station in Pennsylvania. He was hosting a segment on how to protect your house against burglars. He chose to use his own home as a demo.

Brandon walked through all the security precautions he'd personally installed in his house. *What he didn't realize was that burglars were watching his program...*

Through the newscast, they learned of his house's floor plan, security features, even the location of his valuables. A couple of nights later - while Brooks was on the air - the thieves broke in and cleaned him out.

The Bible teaches us that the Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. Life on earth will be interrupted.

It won't be *business as usual* forever. God will have His say in human affairs. *History is His story*. Jesus has the final word. And **He knows where we live!** He has the layout of our lives. *Are we ready for His return?*

The rapture has but one departure time. There are no later flights. Let's all make sure we're ready!

Jesus had been debating in the Temple. Pharisees and Sadducees tried to trap Jesus in their theological snares. But when you try to match *wits* with the Master you end up the *dimwit*. Jesus outfoxed the trappers, and the Jews were left wiping egg off their faces...

It was a devastating day for Judaism. The die was cast. The nation's leaders had formally rejected Jesus.

The fig tree - the ancient symbol of Judaism - had been cursed and withered away. Jesus predicted that God's vineyard would be taken from the Jews and given to the Church. Since the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as Messiah, the future of Judaism looked bleak.

Yet the disciples were not ready to give up on their Jewish heritage. They still saw a lot of good left in Judaism. *That's their thinking as they exit the Temple...*

Verse 1, "Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" Jesus and His disciples are east of the Temple, headed up the Mount of Olives, back to Bethany. The top of the mountain is 150 feet above the city. From its peak you get this jaw-dropping, panoramic view. And the scenic centerpiece would've been the Temple sparkling in the sunshine.

The Jewish Temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and refurbished by King Herod. The renovations had taken 46 years. Herod invested vast wealth to transform the Temple into one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote this of the Temple, "The exterior of the building lacked nothing. It astounded both mind and eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching

strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was purest white."

Today, you can still see the huge stones used to construct the retaining wall around the Temple Mount. Some of them are the size of a railroad boxcar. The construction of the Temple was an engineering marvel.

Herod's Temple was a source of pride and patriotism for all Jews. And now as the disciples leave Jerusalem, they look back on this magnificent structure - and essentially say to Jesus, *"Cheer up Lord, all is not wrong with Judaism, just look at its incredible Temple."*

But verse 2, *"Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* What a shocking response! Jesus is saying, *"The source of your pride is about to be pulled-down and pillaged."*

And that's what happened. Forty years after Jesus uttered these words the Roman General Titus brought his legions against Jerusalem to end the Jewish revolt.

When he captured Jerusalem the remaining Jewish dissidents held out in the Temple. Titus didn't want to destroy the structure, so he ordered his troops to wait until hunger forced a Jewish surrender. But one of the soldiers disobeyed the general's command, and threw a torch into the Temple. The heat from the fire was so intense the Temple's golden plates melted, and liquid gold ran into the crevasses between the stones.

The greedy Romans toppled the stones to retrieve the gold. It fulfilled Jesus' prophecy, "*not one stone shall be left upon another.*" Judaism had become spiritually bankrupt, and God instituted the foreclosure.

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

Here Jesus' answer is the longest He gave to any question ever asked Him. Since He's on the Mount of Olives what follows is called *The Olivet Discourse*.

And in it, Jesus gives us signs of His second coming and the end of the age... Jesus knew the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, would be the first of many military campaigns against the holy city. In fact, in Revelation 19, when He returns to earth it happens in response to a battle over Jerusalem. And the Temple's destruction in 70 AD stirred Jesus thinking about *the end times*...

“And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many.”

Prior to Jesus' first coming, there was a great Messianic expectancy - *yet no pretenders*. There were no counterfeit Messiahs before Jesus, for the same reason there's no such thing as a counterfeit \$200 bill.

You can't counterfeit something that never existed. The real thing has to come, before you can copy it...

But *after* Jesus, there's been a long train of false Christs. Historians say that in the century after Jesus no less than 64 men claimed to be the Messiah.

Even in our day, there've been many false Messiahs. Here Jesus warns us to expect counterfeit Christs.

“But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.” Jesus says, “*Wars and rumors of wars*” will be common. Historian, Will Durant, calculates that in the last 3400 years of history there've been only 268 years without war - that over the last 3½ millenniums there's been a war in the world 92% of the time.

It's interesting whenever a new war erupts people get antsy - even Christians get eager. They ask, *is this the war to end all wars? Is Jesus coming back?* Here Jesus is telling us, “Chill out, a new war is no big deal.”

As long as sinful, greedy men are in charge, there'll be constant conflict between nations. War is a given.

It's when you see an escalation, verse 8, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.” Wars are no big deal, just standard fare. But there are *signs* that alert us to when God is turning up the heat, and judgment is imminent.

First is **an escalation of warfare** - *war on a global scale*. It took 6000 years to produce our first world war. Now we've had two, and we're on the brink of a third.

Today, there are 65 million regular and reserve soldiers in all the earth's armies. And they're armed to the teeth. Several years ago I read where there was the equivalent of 40 tons of TNT for every person on the planet. Warfare and conflict is intensifying... It's what Jesus said would signal the beginning of the end.

The Greek word translated "*sorrow*" means "*labor pangs*." As an increase in the frequency and force of a woman's contractions signals the birth of a child, these signs indicate the end of the age and return of Jesus.

Other early warning signals include "*earthquakes in various places... famines and troubles...*" We've just endured one of the worst hurricane seasons in years.

Add to the devastating storms, the earthquakes in Mexico and Iraq. In the last 60 years quakes around the world have grown in frequency and intensity.

And "*famine*" - every 10 seconds in this world a child starves to death. Every day 9000 folks die from hunger. One of nine people in the world go to bed hungry.

When you see an increase of global conflicts, and earthquakes, and famine it's a wake-up call. The end isn't yet, but these signs mark a "*beginning of sorrows*."

Verse 9, "*But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.*"

Remember, the Olivet Discourse was a private conversation addressed to Jesus' Jewish disciples.

In verse 3, this is a rabbi speaking to His followers - Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Jesus speaks to Jews about Jews, **“watch out for yourselves.”** He warns them, you **“will be beaten in the synagogues.”**

Gentile Christians didn't go to the synagogue. Synagogues were Jewish places of worship. Here's the point, Mark 13 doesn't address the Church. It speaks to Jewish believers who are alive after the Church is raptured, and living on earth before Jesus returns.

Remember the Bible predicts a final seven year period of history known as **“The Great Tribulation.”**

Daniel 9 gives specific landmarks that pinpoint this period. It begins when Israel signs a treaty with a Roman ruler - and it ends when Jesus returns.

Today, Christians experience tribulation - this world wants to persecute the Church. But in that day, a tribulation will come from God upon this wicked world.

The Tribulation will be a devastating time for planet earth. Revelation 6-19 depicts cataclysmic judgments. God's purpose for this Great Tribulation will be twofold. He **punishes the wicked** and He **purifies the Jews.**

So an escalation of warfare, earthquakes, famines are all **“the beginnings of sorrows”** - but the Tribulation period will also be characterized by two other events...

Verse 9 notes an increase in Anti-Semitism. Particularly, Jews who embrace Jesus, and are loyal to God, will be brought before councils - they'll be beaten and persecuted.

And then verse 10 tells us, “**And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.**”

I've heard folks use this verse to teach that before the Church is raptured, we have to spread the Gospel to every corner of the earth. But that's not its meaning...

According to Revelation, after the Church is raptured an unprecedented revival will take place on the earth. God will use special means to spread the Gospel...

He starts with 144,000 supernaturally-protected Jewish evangelists. Imagine 144,000 Billy Grahams let loose on the planet... Along with them are two special witnesses who are raised from the dead in the streets of Jerusalem... In Revelation 14 an angel flies through the sky proclaiming the everlasting Gospel...

In the Tribulation, even without the Church on earth, God will see to it the Gospel is preached in all the world. And where the Gospel goes, folks get saved.

But if you come to faith in Jesus during this time, you will be persecuted. Verse 11 warns Jewish believers, “**But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak.**

But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” I think we can apply this verse to believers today - **God's Spirit always gives bold words to quivering lips.** In a tight spot He gives a witness exactly what needs to be said.

“Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” Again, the Great Tribulation will be a difficult time to follow Jesus.

Persecution becomes intense. Families turn on one another. It'll be easy to fall away. Only those believers who maintain their faith until the end will be saved.

The only escape from this terrible time is at its beginning - ***the rapture***. Jesus snatches up His Church. That's why it's best to give your life to Jesus now. Besides, if you can't live for Jesus today, how are you going to live for Him when it really gets tough?

In verse 14, Jesus continues to address Jews alive in the Tribulation, "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Daniel 9 predicts that the last seven years of Tribulation will be marked at its midpoint by a decisive event called "***the abomination of desolation.***"

There were Jews living in Jesus' day who assumed this event had already taken place. A Syrian tyrant named Antiochus had assaulted Israel and all things Jewish. He even slaughtered a pig on the temple altar.

Antiochus forced the Levitical priests to drink its blood, and eat raw pork. He smeared the rest of the fowl blood on the walls of the Temple, and set up a statue of the Greek idol, Zeus, in the Holy of Holies.

The Jews actually abandoned the Temple for a time thereafter. In their minds, it was *the abomination that caused desolation*. But this is NOT the event to which Jesus refers. He speaks of an abomination *yet future*.

What Antiochus did was a foreshadowing of the actions of a future Roman ruler. At the middle of the Tribulation the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and enter the Temple to proclaim himself a god.

Here, Jesus issues the warning, when you see this happen *get out of Dodge, "flee to the mountains"* - run for your life. Again, Jesus is not talking to Gentiles, but to Jews. He specifies, *"let those who are in Judea..."*

Isaiah 16:1 predicts that Jews alive in the end will flee to the rock city of Petra in the mountains east of the Dead Sea, and hide out until the Tribulation is over.

Today, if you visit Petra in Jordan you realize the enormity of the site. There is more than enough room there to accommodate these future fleeing Jews.

Jesus continues His warning in verse 15, *"Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house."* In Israel, people lounged on rooftops. It served as a back deck.

"And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter." When the world turns on the Jews the consequences will be severe.

They'll flee to the desert as fast as possible.

Verse 19, “For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.”

After the global flood of Noah’s day, God promised to never again judge the earth with water. Since that time God has shown amazing restraint with our rebel planet.

From time to time, and place to place - God judged specific nations: *Sodom and Gormorrah, or Babylon, or the Canaanites*. But those were isolated judgments.

The day is coming when God will once again punish on a global scale. This time though, His judgments will be with fire, not water. He’ll singe the globe. Revelation 8 says a third of the earth will be scorched. Apparently, there are limits to God’s patience. Judgment is coming!

“And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved...” If God doesn’t limit this day of reckoning to 3½ years all humanity will be annihilated.

“But for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.” There’re NT verses that refer to the Church as “the elect” - but we’re not the only group given that title. In the OT, Jews were called “the elect.”

Recall, the purpose of the Tribulation - it’s to *punish* the wicked and to *purify* the Jews. This *punishment* would have no boundaries, if not for the goal of *purification*. These incredible, cataclysmic, global judgments will be shortened - *or tempered* - not for the sake of the wicked, but in order to spare the Jews.

Verse 21, “Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.” The Bible teaches that during the Tribulation a sinister figure will arise. He’s the ultimate false christ. The Bible calls him *“The Antichrist.”*

He will rule the world and claim to be its savior.

Revelation 13 tells us Satan gives him miraculous power to perform signs and wonders. He’ll be very convincing. And despite Jesus' warning - even many of *“the elect”* - or the Jews - will end up believing in him.

Verse 24 hits the fast forward button, and describes how this Great Tribulation ends... *“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in heaven will be shaken.”* Suddenly, outer space becomes Earth’s enemy. The Greek word translated *“stars”* can refer to any celestial object - a meteorite, or asteroid, or a comet. Stars will fall...

I believe the final judgment before Jesus returns includes a cosmic projectile that strikes the planet, and causes geological upheaval... *And don’t think the idea is far-fetched.* Survey the earth’s surface - craters have peppered our planet. It’s happened. Most astronomers believe it will happen again. It’s only a matter of time.

For the last 30 years Hollywood movies like *“Deep Impact”* and *“Armageddon”* have exploited this theme.

In 2013 a 60 foot meteor exploded over a city in Russia injuring 1500 people, and damaging 7200 buildings in six cities... Last month, October 12, a 90 feet long asteroid dubbed TC4 buzzed our planet an eighth of the distance between us and the moon...

It's as if God is firing warning shots across our bow...

Rolf Densing, head of the European Space Program, said he didn't lose any sleep over latest near collision, but, **"It makes you wonder what will happen next time."**

June 30 each year is **Asteroid Day**. Astronomers are trying to raise awareness around the world of this very real cosmic threat. Jesus warned us 2000 years ago...

And Jesus tells us, as the earth is reeling from these cataclysmic judgments, **"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."**

Messiah follows this meteor. In its aftermath, Jesus returns. Revelation 19 says He'll be riding a white horse. He's called Faithful and True. He comes to judge and make war against His enemies. His robe is dipped in blood. His eyes are a flame of fire. His head holds many crowns. And written on His robe and on His thigh is the name, **"King of kings and Lord of lords."**

"And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven." Jews driven from Israel will be regathered back to their land.

Today, more Jews live in New York City than in Israel. But when Jesus returns the world's Jewry will be brought home - *not on El Al - but on wings of angels.*

Verse 28, "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near - at the doors! *There are two interpretations...*

One, a fig tree blossoms and produces in the spring.

Thus when you see a fig tree bud you know winter is almost over, and summer is near. All Jesus is saying, is as the fig tree is an indicator of spring - the signs He's mentioned are indicators of the end of the age.

But there is another more provocative interpretation.

In the OT the fig tree was a symbol for Israel. Recall, just the day before, Jesus cursed a fig tree as a symbol of Israel's spiritual barrenness. It withered and died...

Thus, some see this parable, and the budding of the fig tree, as the rebirth of the nation Israel. Jesus may be saying... "When you see the rebirth of Israel, know that My Coming, and the final judgments, are near."

Of course, even if this is not what He means here, it's taught in other Scriptures. The rebirth of the Jewish nation - after 2000 years in dispersion - is a modern miracle - and a sure sign that Jesus is returning soon.

But what's most provocative is what Jesus says next.

Verse 30, “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” In other words, the generation that sees the fig tree bud will be the last generation. *And Israel has risen from the ashes in our generation!* This could mean that you and I may be *the rapture generation!*

And verse 31 reminds us His promises are sure. He says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” It’s more likely the sun won’t rise tomorrow, than for Jesus’ promises to fail.

Now beware lest we make a common mistake...

There’ve been folks who’ve taken this parable as the rebirth of the nation Israel and tried to calculate the day of the Lord’s return. But you can’t do that, for nowhere does the Bible tell us what constitutes a generation...

Is it 40 years, 70 years, even 100 years? I could make a case for all three. And when do you start to count? On May 15, 1948 when Israel declared statehood? Or June 6, 1967 when she regained control of Jerusalem? When it comes to Jesus’ return, 1 Thessalonians 5:1 says we can know “the times and the seasons” - but nobody knows the “*day and hour.*”

He says, verse 32, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” While on earth, not even Jesus knew.

Jesus was against *date setting*, but He wants us to *get set*, and be ready. The Bible assures us, before Jesus returns to Earth, He will return for His Church.

This is why Jesus says in verse 33, **“Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.”** *Get ready - get set - for we don't know the **go time!***

Remember, Mark 13 records a sermon called, **“The Olivet Discourse.”** Jesus isn't laying out a timeline, He preaches a sermon. He discusses the judgments that precede His return - *and then gives an invitation.*

Some folks read this chapter as a chronology, and feel forced to place the rapture after His return. They mistake it for the ingathering of the Jews in verse 27.

But the text doesn't require that interpretation.

Jesus tells us what will happen, and then He invites us to be ready to escape. You don't have to endure the Tribulation. He says, **get right, and you won't get left.**

In verse 34 Jesus tells a final parable. **“It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.**

Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming - in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning - lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Let's stay awake. Let's be alert. Let's be ready to meet Jesus at a moment's notice... *It might be today!*

Chapter 14, **“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the**

scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

Recall what Jesus did that week to anger the Jews...

He drove out the priestly crooks from the Temple... embarrassed the Jews who tried to trap Him with their theological brain-teasers... told them God was going to take away their authority and give it to others... Then with a parting shot, Jesus blasted their hypocrisy...

It was an embarrassing week to be a Jewish leader. These powerful men left the Temple Tuesday, *defeated and discredited*. They now were plotting a murder.

There was one problem. The common people loved Jesus, and at the time Jerusalem was full of His admirers. A city with a typical population of 50,000 swelled to a quarter of a million during the Passover.

Jesus' enemies needed to strike before the feast, at night, under the cover of darkness. Fly under the radar.

They figured Jesus would be dead by morning light.

The scene shifts in verse 3, "And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard." John 12 says this was Mary, sister of Lazarus - *who's always worshipping at Jesus' feet*.

At the time it was a common custom to invest your wealth in costly perfumes. These expensive fragrances were imported from India, and were very, very spendy.

The vial that hung from Mary's neck was probably worth a year's wages. There's the possibility it constituted Mary's dowry - or her ticket to marriage. A dowry was the treasure that accompanied the bride.

When love wasn't enough to motivate a man to marry a woman - a dowry sweetened the pot - it was a downpayment on her upkeep. She came with a 401K.

But notice what Mary does with her vial, "Then she broke the flask and poured it on (Jesus') head."

If the perfume was her dowry, Mary is telling Jesus she's willing to forego marriage if necessary, and pledge all her love to Him. Mary's heart - her allegiance and loyalty - was reserved wholly and only for her King.

"But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply." Understand, what's happening here. *Pragmatism* is trying to snuff our Mary's *praise*.

You can hear the mumbling, "With all the needs in the world? Hospitals, and soup kitchens, and missions, and homes for unwed mothers, and political action committees... Why waste this money on worship?"

We need to realize the value of our worship is never measured *practically*, but *spiritually*. Like buying roses for your wife. On a practical level it's a terrible waste of money, but relationally *what a gesture!* The value of worship is only understood or appreciated by lovers.

It's love, not logic, that drives true worship.

Jesus understood Mary's heart, and comes to her defense, verse 6. "But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me.

For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial." Perfumes were placed on a corpse to mask the odor of rotting flesh. But Mary believed Jesus' body would not deteriorate. She trusted His promise to rise the third day, so she anointed Him *before* His burial.

Jesus had told His disciples many times that He'd be crucified and three days later rise from the dead, but this idea seems to have sailed over everybody's head except Mary. She seems to be the lone believer.

And we wonder why? Could it be that there's a close association between *revelation* and *adoration*? The person who sits at Jesus' feet in worship, is the person who sees truths that other folks miss! Worship breeds communication *with God*, and insight *about God*. It's worship that opens our eyes to the things *of God*.

Jesus said of Mary's act... "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." We're fulfilling His prophecy tonight.

The smell soon dissipated in the room, but the deed became a sweet fragrance that emanates forever.

“Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them.” John 12 tells us Judas was the chief antagonist of Mary’s worship.

Ironically, “*Judas*” means “praise,” but he knew nothing of it. Author Kent Hughes labels Judas as “The man who knew the price of everything and the value of nothing.” He was the antithesis of a true worshipper.

John 12 informs us it was Judas who suggested the money from the perfum should be given to the poor.

But that wasn’t his real motive. John tells us, “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.” Judas was ripping off the kitty.

Apparently, Mary’s worship made Judas so mad, he thought, “*If I can’t get the money one way I’ll do it another.*” He goes to the priests to betray Jesus.

Verse 11, “And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.” If Judas couldn’t have the 300 denarii he’d settle for 30 pieces of silver.

“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?” A Passover Seder doesn’t just happen. Like a Thanksgiving Dinner a lot of preparation goes into the feast... You take a lamb to the Temple to be slaughtered. Then go to the market to purchase unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Then you need a meeting room, and you purge it of leaven.

The meal has to be cooked, and the table readied...

Here Jesus makes preparations, "And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him." It was women, not men, that carried water carriers in those days. This man was conspicuous.

"Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" 'Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover." Tradition says the house belonged to the family of a man named *John Mark* - author of this book.

"In the evening (Jesus) came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me."

And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "Is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?"

Notice, everyone didn't immediately point to Judas...

And this speaks volumes about how Jesus treated His enemy. He knew from the beginning Judas was the man who would betray Him, yet Jesus loved Judas.

If it had been me in Jesus' place there would no doubt as to the culprit's identity. The disciples would've concluded, "Well let's think... For three years now Judas has been on permanent latrine duty. He's the one who always has to

collect wood for the fire. He gets the cold food, and rides in the back of the bus.”

Judas would've been in my doghouse from the start.

But apparently, that's not how He treated him. Jesus even honored Judas by making him the treasurer. Apparently, Jesus cared for Judas, and tried to give him every opportunity to repent, and avoid his destiny.

It's interesting, rather than suspect Judas, the disciples doubted their own hearts. More than one man asked, *“Is it I?”* They were conscious of their own evil, and suspected themselves before they thought Judas.

But *“He answered and said to them, “It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish.”* For Judas to dip his bread in oil at the same time Jesus dipped His, it means Judas was sitting adjacent to Jesus at the table.

Imagine, Judas is sitting in the place of honor - at the Master's right hand - when his treacherous heart gets revealed. As Judas walks out into the darkness to do the dirty deed, Jesus says, *“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”*

Jesus' betrayal and death fulfilled divine prophecy - it was God's will - but *His sovereignty* doesn't eliminate *man's responsibility*. Judas was responsible for his rejection of Jesus. Today, he sits in a hot spot in hell.

Verse 22, *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat;*

this is My body.” Unleavened bread is cooked on a griddle, which makes it bumpy. The griddle also leaves stripes, and tiny pin holes. It was and is the perfect picture of the crucified Christ. If you want to see a portrait of Jesus look at the matzah...

He’s without leaven - a symbol of sin... Isaiah 53 says His face was beaten and bruised... His back was striped by Roman rods... Holes were made by the nails the executioners drove through Jesus’ hands and feet, and from the spear they thrust through Jesus’ side...

The bread Jesus and His men shared was part of a 1500 year tradition. It reminded the Jews of the faith they had in Egypt. God promised they would leave the next day, so when they cooked the bread they left out the leaven - trusting God it wouldn’t have time to rise.

Now Jesus is giving new meaning to an old tradition.

He is the bread of life! Jesus Himself is the satisfier of our soul. He’s our hope, and the object of our faith. Through His broken body we find an exodus from sin.

In the Passover Seder unleavened bread is called the *“Afikomen”* or **dessert**. It’s eaten after the lamb, as a treat. *And this is true of Jesus.* Usually what’s good for you tastes like cardboard. *Like the diet plan - if it tastes good spit it out.* But not so with Jesus. He isn’t just what’s good for us, He’s also what tastes good.

“Then (Jesus) took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.”

This was the third of four cups in the Seder. It's "the cup of redemption." For 1500 years this cup looked back to the eve of the exodus. A lamb's blood was spread on the doorposts and headers of the homes.

Death saw the blood and *passed over* the house.

But now Jesus *redefines* the wine... Verse 24, "And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many." From now on, the wine will speak of the blood of Jesus. For when His blood is applied to our hearts death passes over us...

And realize, for the Hebrews living in Egypt it didn't matter the worthiness or the morality of the folks within the house - all that mattered was their faith. Did they believe enough to smear the blood over their door?

And in the exact same way, you and I are granted salvation - not because we're moral, or religious, or worthy... *But are we trusting in the blood of Jesus?*

Notice Jesus said of His sacrifice, "*This is My blood of the new covenant.*" In the OT whenever God entered a special relationship, or covenant with His people, He ratified it with blood. In Ezekiel's day, while the Jews were still in Babylon, God promised to forgive their sin, and be their God. It was called, "the new covenant."

Now Jesus pays for this New Covenant with His blood. The means we enter this ultimate covenant is not by our good work, but by Jesus' work on the cross.

Let's remember it's not what we do, but what He's done. Godliness is not the result of *trying* but *trusting*. It's not grit and elbow grease - but grace through faith.

Our status with God is no longer dependant on our goodness and good works. We stay right with God because of the goodness and good work of Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 25, "Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." When a baseball team wins 4 of 7 games, and a pennant, the locker room erupts in a champagne celebration.

But they've got to win those four games first. If they win three, then the other team wins one, they **put the champagne on ice**. *And this is what Jesus does here.*

On the cross He paid the price and won the victory, but our enemy is still at work. There're battles that still need to be won - until then the champagne is on ice.

The corks won't start popping until we get to heaven.

Finally, we read in verse 26, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

This is an intriguing verse to me. Jesus sang a hymn. *What a thrill it would've been to hear Jesus sing!*

That's one more reason I'm excited about heaven.