**Survey of New Testament**

**Matthew 26:1–75**

Three people stand out in the account of the last hours of the Lord before Calvary: Christ, Peter, and Judas. It is interesting to see how Peter and Judas are contrasted in this chapter, each one teaching us spiritual lessons by his failures. Judas is a warning against resisting the Word of God and rejecting Christ; Peter is an illustration of how a believer may backslide and lose his testimony. Note the different places where these events took place.

**At Bethany (26:1–19)**

1. This is also given in John 12, where the woman who anointed Christ is definitely called Mary. While the “religious” Jewish leaders were plotting to kill Christ, the believers at Bethany were honoring Him! We don’t know who Simon the leper was, but he must have been cured by the Lord, for the Jews would never feast in the house of a leper. This was not the home of Mary and Martha, although they were there and Martha served (John 12:2).
2. Mary’s act of love was accepted by Christ and criticized by the disciples, Judas being the chief accuser (John 12:4–6). John explains why Judas criticized her: he was a thief and wanted the money for himself! It is sad to see Peter agreeing with Judas and walking “in the counsel of the ungodly” (Ps. 1:1). Soon he would be standing in the way of sinners (John 18:18) and then sitting in the seat of the scornful (Luke 22:55), where he would deny his Lord three times.
3. It is a dangerous thing for Christians to judge one another, for that judgment always comes back on our own heads (Matt. 7:1–5). Judas called Mary’s worship “waste,” but Jesus said it was a lasting memorial! This stinging rebuke from Christ made Judas all the more anxious to betray Him. He left Bethany and went to plot with the Jewish leaders how to arrest Christ. They agreed for thirty pieces of silver, as the Scriptures said (Zech. 11:12). Peter, on the other hand, went with John to prepare the Passover feast for Christ (Luke 22:8).

**In the Upper Room (26:20–35)**

1. Here we see Judas as he deceives and Peter as he boasts. Jesus announced that one would betray Him, as Ps. 41:9 prophesied. When Judas asked, “Master, is it I?” his language suggests he expected a negative reply. In other words, he was pretending that he was faithful to Christ, when he had yielded himself to the devil (John 13:2, 27).
2. It was as they were leaving for Gethsemane that Peter boasted and all but denied the words of Christ (and Zech. 13:7) that the disciples would forsake Him.

**In the Garden (26:36–56)**

1. Here we see Judas pretending to honor Christ by kissing Him, and Peter failing Christ by sleeping when he should have been praying, fighting with a sword when he should have been yielding, and fleeing when he boasted he would die for the Lord. “The cup” (v. 39) was the price Christ would pay by being made sin on the cross.
2. Peter, a fisherman, tries to be a soldier and win spiritual victories with a carnal weapon! We need to remind ourselves that Christ does not need to be defended.

**In the High Priest’s Home (26:57–75)**

1. Peter should not have followed “afar off” (v. 58). Christ had warned Peter that Satan was after them (Luke 22:31–34) and that he would deny his Lord that night.
2. It was illegal for the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) to meet and pass sentence at night, so they met again the next morning (27:1) to make their decision “legal.” Christ’s silence before His accusers fulfilled Isa. 53:7. His statement in v. 64 goes back both to Dan. 7:13 and His words to the Pharisees about sitting at the Lord’s right hand (22:41–46). He was claiming to be God, and this led the high priest to pronounce Him guilty of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16).
3. Peter now reached the end of the rope as he joined Christ’s enemies and warmed himself at the fire (John 18:18). Peter had a cold heart, and because his heart was not right, he had difficulty answering those who questioned him. When the cock began to crow, Peter remembered the Words of Jesus. It was forgetting the Word that got him into sin, and now by remembering the Word, his cold heart was warmed again (Luke 24:32) and he wept in repentance. What a contrast to Judas who confessed his sin to the priests and then went out and hanged himself! Peter’s sorrow was a godly sorrow that results in repentance and forgiveness; Judas’ sorrow was the “sorrow of the world that worketh death” (see 2 Cor. 7:10).

**Matthew 27:1–10 Jesus and Judas**

1. Judas’ love of money took his heart from Jesus. He said, “I have sinned” (v. 4) to the leading priests and the elders but he did not say that to God. He had rejected the truth and believed a lie, and Satan had taken possession of him (John 13:3, 27). Judas took his own life because Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). But note that Judas did confess that Christ was innocent (v. 4).
2. The purchase of the “Potter’s Field” fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. 11:13. Jeremiah 18–19 also has to do with a potter’s field; so it is possible that Jeremiah spoke the prophecy in his time but that it was written by Zechariah later on. Christ’s death purchased the redemption of the world; Judas’ death purchased a cemetery for strangers!

**Matthew 27:11–32 Jesus and Pilate**

1. You must read all the Gospel accounts to see the restlessness and indecision of the Roman governor. Time after time he went out to the crowd, then came in to question Jesus, all the while seeking some way to avoid making a decision. But no man can avoid making a decision about Christ! Pilate was warned by his wife and his own conscience, yet he deliberately gave Christ over to be crucified.
2. The request of the Jews in v. 25 was answered; Christ’s blood has been upon them and their children and will be until the nation “shall look upon Me [Jesus] whom they pierced” and repents (Zech. 12:10). The ruin of Jerusalem in 70AD, the scattering and persecuting of the Jews, and the future wrath of God on the land of Israel during the Tribulation, are all answers to this request.
3. It was customary for the convicted criminal to bear his own cross as a testimony of guilt (John 19:17); but along the way, the soldiers “drafted” Simon to bear it for Him.

**Matthew 27:33–54 Jesus and the Spectators**

1. Read Ps. 22 for a graphic prophecy of the crucifixion, and notice how many of these prophecies are fulfilled in this chapter. While the Son of God suffers for man’s sin, the soldiers gamble for His earthly possessions; the Jews revile Him; the people sit and stare at Him; yet one Roman soldier confesses, “Truly this was the Son of God” (v. 54).
2. The darkness mentioned here (v. 45) was clearly supernatural. It could not have been an eclipse, because the Passover season was at the full moon. It was God’s way of veiling the cross while His Son bore the sins of the world and tasted the wrath of God for humankind. The mystery of God the Father forsaking His only begotten Son is too deep for us to fathom and understand.
3. The three events at His death are striking. (1) The veil was torn, because His blood opened a new and living way to God (Heb. 10:19–25). (2) The tombs opened because His death conquered death (Heb. 2:14–18). The saints did not come out of the tombs until after His resurrection because Christ is the “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). (3) Judas and Pilate confessed Christ’s innocence, as did the Roman soldier (v. 54). Even the wrath of man praises God.

**Matthew 27:55–66 Jesus and His Friends**

1. Once He had finished His work of redemption, note that Jesus Christ was not again touched by enemy hands. While Christ was being made sin for us, God permitted people to do their worst. But when the work was finished, God permitted only Christ’s friends to handle Him. Joseph and Nicodemus were certainly believers, otherwise they would not have defiled themselves on the Passover by burying the body of Jesus. They no longer needed a Passover lamb; they had discovered forgiveness in the Lamb of God. Thus did God in His providence care for the body of His Son, and thus was the prophecy of Isa. 53:9 fulfilled.
2. The Jewish leaders remembered what the disciples forgot: that Christ promised to come out of the tomb after three days. “Make it as sure as you can” (v. 65), was all Pilate could say. But no earthly seal could hinder Christ from coming out of the tomb as He promised.

**Matthew 28 The Empty Tomb**

We must admire these women for their dedication to Christ. God rewarded their love by allowing them to see the empty tomb and hear the message of the Resurrection from the angel. The stone was not rolled away to allow Christ to come out; it was rolled away to allow men to look in and see that He was gone! The true Easter message is “Come and see … Go and tell!” Every Sunday is resurrection day for the believer. The empty graveclothes lying in the tomb were in the shape of the body of Christ, like an empty cocoon. This proves His body was not stolen, but that He arose through the graveclothes and left them behind as testimonies of a miracle.

Matthew 28:11-15 The Proof of Christ’s Resurrection

1. The resurrection of Christ is an accepted historical fact, and the person who questions or denies it must offer the proof that He did not arise from the dead. The same Satan who tried to destroy Christ on the cross now wants men to believe that He is still dead!
2. Christ’s Person demands that He be raised from the dead. As the Son of God, He could not be held by death (Acts 2:24).
3. Christ promised He would be raised from the dead. His virtuous life proved that He always told the truth, and even His enemies could find no fault in Him. Either He came out of the tomb, or He was a liar.
4. Eyewitnesses testified that they had seen Christ (Luke 24:33–36; John 20:19, 26; Acts 1:3, 21–22). At one time, over 500 people saw Christ alive (1 Cor. 15:6).
5. Paul’s conversion (Acts 9) proves that Christ was alive. No “delusion” or “myth” could change this dedicated Jewish rabbi into a fiery Christian preacher.
6. Of course, the best proof is the conversion of a sinner. “You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!”

**Matthew 28:16–20 The Great Commission**

1. “**All power**” (v. 18, authority). In His death and resurrection, He had conquered Satan, sin, and death. God had given all authority into His hands. In Matt. 4:8–10, Satan had taken Christ to a mountain and offered Him all the kingdoms of the world. Here on this Galilee mount, Christ proclaimed that He now had all authority and that Satan had been defeated!
2. “**All Nations**” (v. 19). “Teach” is actually “make disciples.” This is a commission to take the Gospel to all nations, and is a definite change from 10:5–6, where the commission was limited to the Jews only. Please keep in mind that our commission is not simply “to win souls.” It is to “make disciples” which includes winning them, bringing them into a Christian fellowship, and building them up in the faith.
3. “**All things**” (v. 20). A disciple is a learner, and he is to be taught “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” This includes the whole Word of God. Man is to live by every word of God (4:4). All Scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16).
4. “**Always**” (v. 20). What a tremendous assurance. “I am with you always!” In Matt. 1:23, He was called “Immanuel”—God with us, and here He reaffirms that name. He is with us through His Spirit, in His Word, by His providential care, and with His divine presence.