

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 18

Matthew 26-27

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Matthew, Session 18, Matthew 26-27, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Craig Keener's lecture analyzes Matthew chapters 26-27, focusing on the **passion and resurrection narratives**. Keener examines the historical context of Jesus' death, arguing for Jesus' foreknowledge and orchestration of events. He explores the Last Supper's significance as a Passover meal and contrasts the devotion of Mary with Judas's betrayal. Finally, he **discusses the trial of Jesus**, highlighting discrepancies between the Gospel accounts and later interpretations of Jewish law, while emphasizing the Roman role in the crucifixion.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Matthews, Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Matthew).



Keener_Matthew_Session 18.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Briefing Document: The Passion Narrative in Matthew 26-27 (Dr. Craig Keener)

This document summarizes the key themes, ideas, and historical insights from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew 26-27, focusing on the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion.

Key Themes:

- **Jesus' Foreknowledge and Orchestration of His Death:** Keener argues that Jesus knowingly provoked his death, citing the Temple cleansing and challenges to the priestly authority as evidence. He compares Jesus to Joshua ben Hananiah, who was punished for similar actions. "You can't go in and overturn tables in the temple and publicly challenge the authority of the priestly aristocracy and not expect to get executed."
- **The Meaning of Jesus' Death:** The Last Supper serves as a crucial point where Jesus explains the significance of his impending sacrifice. Drawing parallels with Passover traditions and the language of sacrifice, Keener asserts that Jesus' death is presented as atonement for humanity's sins. "Jesus came to die for our sins. He came to atone for our sins."
- **Betrayal and Repentance:** The contrasting responses of Peter and Judas to their betrayals illustrate different approaches to repentance. Peter's bitter weeping signifies genuine remorse, while Judas' suicide reflects a despairing response lacking true repentance.
- **The Chain of Innocent Blood and Guilt:** Keener emphasizes the recurring motif of "handing over" throughout the narrative, highlighting a chain of individuals and groups complicit in Jesus' condemnation, each attempting to shift blame. "Everybody tries to pass the blame."
- **Political Expediency vs. Justice:** The trial before Pilate showcases the conflict between political pragmatism and the pursuit of justice. Pilate, portrayed as a bully vulnerable to pressure, ultimately chooses the expedient path despite recognizing Jesus' innocence.
- **The Mockery and the Reality of Kingship:** The Roman soldiers' cruel mockery of Jesus as "King of the Jews" ironically underscores the true nature of his kingship, which transcends earthly power.

Important Ideas and Facts:

- **Early Church Traditions:** Keener emphasizes the historical reliability of the passion narrative, citing multiple attestations, early church traditions, and allusions to Passover rituals.
- **Historical Context:** The lecture offers rich historical insights into Roman legal procedures, social customs (like reclining at banquets), and the political landscape of first-century Judea.
- **Corrupt Leadership:** Keener highlights evidence from Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and rabbinic literature that paints a picture of a corrupt and disunited Sanhedrin, emphasizing the injustice of Jesus' trial.
- **Cultural Misunderstandings:** The Corinthian church's misinterpretation of the Lord's Supper underscores the need for contextualization when translating religious practices and teachings into different cultural settings.

Quotes:

- "The passion narrative as we have it... There are indications that this goes back to the early Jerusalem church."
- "Jesus clearly foreknew his death. He clearly orchestrated his death."
- "This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate... There's a joke that I heard years ago where someone complained that they ate leftovers every day and they never, ever found the original meal."
- "The body of Christ is not just in the bread and the wine... but the body of Christ is also us."
- "His star disciple denies him. One of his other disciples has betrayed him to death. They don't follow the cross. The disciples back then are like some of us as disciples today."
- "They're mocking him as king of the Jews. In reality, he is the king of the Jews. And in reality, he's the rightful king of the universe."
- "Pilate was a bully, but like many bullies, he was a coward when confronted with force from another direction."

Overall, Dr. Keener's lecture provides a compelling analysis of the passion narrative in Matthew, weaving together historical insights, biblical interpretation, and contemporary relevance.

4. Matthew Study Guide: Session 18, Matthew 26-27

The Passion of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel: A Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. Why did Jesus have to foreknow his death? How does this relate to the actions he took?
2. How is the price Judas received for betraying Jesus significant? What Old Testament story does it connect to?
3. Explain the significance of the woman anointing Jesus with expensive perfume, particularly in contrast to the male disciples' reaction.
4. Describe the physical setting and posture of those participating in the Last Supper. How does this setting impact our understanding of certain events?
5. How does the Passover context influence our understanding of Jesus' words, "This is my body" during the Last Supper?
6. What issues arose in the Corinthian church regarding the Lord's Supper? How did Paul address these issues?
7. What does Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane reveal about his human nature?
8. How does the account of Peter's denial of Jesus highlight the human failings of the disciples?
9. What legal irregularities are present in Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin? What can we learn about the Sanhedrin from this account?
10. How does Pilate's decision to hand Jesus over to be crucified demonstrate political expediency over justice?

Answer Key

1. Jesus foreknew his death because he deliberately provoked it. His actions, like overturning tables in the temple and challenging the authority of the priests, made his execution inevitable unless he fled or raised an army, which he did not do.

2. Judas received 30 pieces of silver for betraying Jesus, the price of a slave in Exodus. This signifies that Jesus, the Son of God, was valued as lowly as a slave by those who betrayed him.
3. The woman's lavish act of anointing Jesus with expensive perfume demonstrates genuine devotion and a willingness to sacrifice for him. The male disciples' criticism, focusing on the monetary value, highlights their lack of understanding regarding Jesus' true worth and the significance of the moment.
4. The Last Supper likely took place in a setting with participants reclining on couches, a common practice for banquets in that era. This allows us to understand how John could lean on Jesus' chest and how the woman in Luke could anoint Jesus' feet while he was at the table.
5. The Passover tradition included the host declaring the bread as "the bread of affliction our ancestors ate." This provides context for Jesus' words, suggesting a symbolic rather than a literal understanding of "This is my body," similar to the Passover bread representing, but not literally being, the bread from Egypt.
6. The Corinthian church, influenced by Greco-Roman social hierarchy, exhibited divisions and social stratification during the Lord's Supper. Paul reprimanded them, emphasizing that such behavior contradicts the unity and selflessness embodied in Christ's sacrifice and the communal nature of the church as the body of Christ.
7. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, expressing his desire for the cup of suffering to pass but ultimately submitting to God's will, reveals his human fear and vulnerability in the face of his impending death.
8. Peter's denial of Jesus, despite his earlier bold declarations, demonstrates the frailty of human loyalty and the power of fear in the face of persecution. This emphasizes the need for divine grace and forgiveness, as Peter eventually repents.
9. The trial before the Sanhedrin was riddled with legal irregularities: it was held at night, lacked advance notice, involved false witnesses, and the trial continued despite their testimony being discredited. This paints the Sanhedrin, particularly the Sadducean leadership, as corrupt and driven by political expediency rather than justice.
10. Despite finding Jesus innocent, Pilate succumbs to pressure from the crowd and the chief priests, choosing to release Barabbas and condemn Jesus to crucifixion.

This act highlights the theme of political maneuvering and the willingness to sacrifice innocence to appease the mob and maintain power.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Consider his motivations, the symbolism of the 30 pieces of silver, and the contrasting reactions of Peter and Judas to their respective betrayals.
2. Discuss the various ways Jesus' death is foreshadowed throughout Matthew's Gospel. How does this foreshadowing build suspense and prepare the reader for the events of the Passion narrative?
3. Examine the role of the Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' arrest and trial. How do their actions reflect their motivations and their understanding of Jesus' claims?
4. Compare and contrast the portrayal of Pilate in Matthew's Gospel with other historical accounts of his governorship. What insights does Matthew's account offer into the complex relationship between Roman authority and Jewish religious power?
5. Explore the theme of discipleship in light of the disciples' actions during the Passion narrative. What challenges and lessons emerge from their failures and triumphs, and how are these relevant to contemporary followers of Jesus?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Sanhedrin:** The highest council of Jewish religious leaders in Judea during the Roman period.
- **Sadducees:** A powerful Jewish religious sect composed primarily of the priestly aristocracy. They collaborated with the Romans and rejected the resurrection and the authority of oral tradition.
- **Pharisees:** A prominent Jewish religious sect known for their meticulous observance of Jewish law and their belief in the resurrection and oral tradition.
- **High Priest:** The highest-ranking religious official in Judaism, responsible for temple worship and sacrifices.

- **Passover:** A major Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- **Alabaster Vial:** A small flask made of alabaster, a type of stone, often used for holding precious oils or perfumes.
- **Nard:** An aromatic oil derived from a plant native to the Himalayas, highly valued in ancient times.
- **Triclinium:** A dining room in ancient Roman homes, typically containing three couches arranged in a U-shape for reclining during meals.
- **Legion:** A unit in the Roman army consisting of approximately 6,000 soldiers.
- **Temple Cleansing:** The incident where Jesus drove out the moneychangers and merchants from the temple courts, denouncing their exploitation and desecration of a sacred space.
- **Messianic Secret:** The recurring motif in the Gospels where Jesus instructs his followers to keep his identity as the Messiah hidden from the public.
- **Blasphemy:** Speaking irreverently or contemptuously about God or sacred things.
- **Scourging:** A brutal form of Roman punishment involving whipping with a flagellum, a multi-thonged whip often embedded with pieces of bone or metal.
- **Patibulum:** The horizontal beam of a Roman cross.
- **Palus:** The vertical stake of a Roman cross.
- **Titulus:** A sign or inscription placed above a crucified person, typically stating their crime.
- **Ave Caesar:** A Latin phrase meaning "Hail Caesar," a common salute in the Roman Empire.
- **Gethsemane:** The garden outside Jerusalem where Jesus prayed and was arrested.
- **Blood Money:** Money received as payment for an act of betrayal or murder.
- **Praetorium:** The official residence of a Roman governor.
- **Equestrian:** A member of the Roman equestrian order, a social class ranking below the senatorial class.

- **Barabbas:** A prisoner released by Pilate instead of Jesus, likely a rebel or political agitator.
- **Syrian Auxiliaries:** Non-citizen troops recruited from Roman provinces like Syria to supplement the Roman legions.

5. FAQs on Keener, Matthew, Session 18, Matthew 26-27, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Jesus' Trial and Death in the Gospel of Matthew

1. Did Jesus know he was going to die?

Yes, Jesus clearly knew he was going to die. His actions, such as overturning tables in the temple and challenging the authority of the priests, directly provoked his execution. He did not raise an army or flee, indicating a deliberate choice to face his death.

2. How much was Jesus worth to his followers?

The value placed on Jesus is contrasted through the actions of his followers. A woman lavishly anoints him with expensive perfume as an act of devotion, highlighting his immense worth to her. In contrast, Judas betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave in Exodus, demonstrating a purely transactional relationship.

3. What is the significance of the Last Supper?

The Last Supper has deep symbolic meaning. Jesus identifies the bread as his body and the wine as his blood, signifying a sacrificial offering for the forgiveness of sins. This evokes the Passover meal where the host declares the bread as that eaten by their ancestors during the Exodus, connecting Jesus' sacrifice to God's redemption of Israel.

4. How did Jesus' disciples react to his arrest?

Jesus' disciples failed to support him during his arrest. Despite his request for them to stay awake and pray, they fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter initially attempts to defend Jesus with a sword but ultimately denies knowing him three times out of fear. All the disciples eventually abandon Jesus and flee.

5. Was Jesus' trial conducted fairly?

No, Jesus' trial was deeply flawed and violated Jewish law according to later rabbinic traditions. The trial was held at night, in the high priest's home, without proper notice, and featured false witnesses. The Sanhedrin, likely influenced by the corrupt priestly aristocracy, manipulated the proceedings to condemn Jesus.

6. Why did the Jewish leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate?

The Jewish leaders lacked the authority to execute Jesus under Roman rule. They needed a Roman-sanctioned execution. By accusing Jesus of claiming to be the Messiah, a king, they charged him with treason against the Roman emperor, forcing Pilate to intervene.

7. Did Pilate want to execute Jesus?

Pilate appears reluctant to execute Jesus, likely recognizing the political implications. He offers the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, hoping to avoid condemning an innocent man. However, pressured by the crowd incited by the Jewish leaders and fearing political repercussions, he ultimately hands Jesus over to be crucified.

8. Who bears the ultimate responsibility for Jesus' death?

The sources depict a chain of responsibility for Jesus' death, highlighting both individual and corporate guilt. Judas betrays Jesus, the Jewish leaders manipulate the trial, Pilate concedes to pressure, and the Roman soldiers carry out the execution. Each participant contributes to the chain of events leading to the death of an innocent man.