

Dr. David Turner, Matthew

Lecture 11B – Matthew 26: Jesus' Passion I: Betrayal, Arrest, and Jewish Hearing

NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, FAQs

1) Abstract

This academic lecture focuses on **Matthew chapter 26**, initiating a two-part series on the **Passion Narrative**. The speaker highlights how this chapter details the **climactic events** of Jesus's betrayal, arrest, and initial Jewish hearing, all of which were **repeatedly predicted** throughout Matthew's Gospel. It examines key passages including the **anointing at Bethany**, Judas's enigmatic **betrayal**, the **Last Supper** (interpreted as the inauguration of the Lord's Supper), Peter's **denial predictions** and subsequent failures, Jesus's **prayer in Gethsemane** demonstrating his obedience to God's will, and the **trial before Caiaphas** where Jesus affirms his messianic identity. Throughout, the lecture emphasizes **God's sovereignty** and the fulfillment of **Old Testament prophecy** even amidst human sin and weakness.

2) Briefing Document: Detailed Briefing Document: Matthew 26 – Jesus' Passion I: Betrayal, Arrest, and Jewish Hearing

This briefing document summarizes key themes and important facts from Dr. David Turner's "Matthew Lecture 11B – Matthew 26: Jesus' Passion I: Betrayal, Arrest, and Jewish Hearing," focusing on the climactic events leading to Jesus' crucifixion as depicted in Matthew's Gospel.

I. Overview of Matthew's Passion Narrative

- **Climactic Events:** Matthew 26 initiates the "climactic events which have repeatedly been predicted since the Galilean ministry" (p. 1). These

predictions of Jesus' crucifixion in Jerusalem have been present throughout the Gospel (e.g., 12:38-40, 16:21, 20:17-19).

- **Theological Motivation:** The Gospels, particularly Matthew, are not mere historical chronicles or biographies but "theologically motivated literary works" (p. 1). This is evident in the extended treatment of Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, which occupies "roughly one-third to one-fourth of the Gospel of Matthew" (p. 1). The Gospels are sometimes described as "passion narratives with extended introductions" (p. 1).
- **Narrative Flow in Matthew 26-28:** Preparation of disciples (Matthew 26, beginning)
 - Arrest at Gethsemane (Matthew 26, end)
 - Trial before Caiaphas and Peter's denials (Matthew 26, end)
 - Trial before Pilate (Matthew 27, beginning)
 - Mocking of Jesus (Matthew 27, second half)
 - Burial by Joseph of Arimathea, resurrection, and the Great Commission (Matthew 28).

II. Key Events and Themes in Matthew 26

A. The Plot to Arrest Jesus and Kill Him (26:1-5)

- **Conclusion of Jesus' Teaching:** Matthew 26:1-2 signifies "the end of all that Jesus has taught in this Gospel" (p. 2). Jesus anticipates being crucified during the Passover feast.
- **Leaders' Motivation:** The chief priests and elders, motivated by "conflicts in the temple," plot to "apprehend Jesus secretly and kill him" (p. 2).
- **Need for Secrecy:** Secrecy is crucial due to "Jesus' popularity with the multitudes of pilgrims who have arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover festival" (p. 2). Judas's betrayal expedites their plan.

B. The Anointing of Jesus at Bethany (26:6-13)

- **Woman's Foresight:** An "obscure, unnamed woman" demonstrates greater recognition of Jesus' approaching death than his disciples.

- **Disciples' Misunderstanding:** The disciples, despite Jesus' "repeated passion predictions," focus on the financial "waste of money" from the expensive perfume, suggesting a lack of focus on the urgency of Jesus' final days.
- **Care for the Needy:** Jesus' comment that "the poor are always present" (alluding to Deuteronomy 15:11) is *not* a "substantiation for a callous attitude about their needs" but a reminder of "an ongoing responsibility" (p. 3). However, this responsibility "pales in comparison with the urgency of caring for Jesus during his last days on earth" (p. 3).

C. Judas's Betrayal of Jesus (26:14-16)

- **Enigmatic Motivation:** Judas is a "pathetically and enigmatically evil person" (p. 3). Possible motivations include greed (due to payment offered and his disgust at the anointing's "waste of money"), disillusionment with Jesus' "spiritually oriented message," or "satanic influence" (p. 3).
- **Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Judas's betrayal subtly alludes to Zechariah 11:12-13, connecting his action to "Old Testament prophecy and thus supports the themes of Matthew 26 that God is in control even of the betrayal of Jesus" (p. 3).
- **Call for Reflection:** The lecture emphasizes that every follower should "reflect on the monstrous treachery of Judas" and ask, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord? 26:22" (p. 3).

D. Passover and the Lord's Supper (26:17-30)

- **Theological Purpose:** Matthew's interest is to "associate these events with a historical Passover meal," but his primary focus is "theological purpose" (p. 4).
- **Beginning and End:** The Passover meal is "both a beginning and an end." It is the "Last Supper" before Jesus' passion and the "First Supper, the inauguration of the remembrance of Jesus by his new community" (p. 4).
- **Remembrance and Future Hope:** The Lord's Supper is divinely ordained to remind followers of Jesus' past redemption through his shed blood and his "promise to share at the table with them in the future kingdom" (p. 4). It

"dynamically strengthens the people of God as it proclaims the central truth of the gospel of Jesus" when "received in faith" (p. 4).

- **Historical Context:** While the Lord's Supper is associated with Passover, the precise details of the New Testament meal's order are "not really known" (p. 4). Attempts to read later Jewish Seder liturgy back into the New Testament, though "edifying," rest on "a weak historical foundation" (p. 4).

E. Jesus Predicts His Disciples Will Desert Him (26:31-35)

- **Peter's Arrogance:** Jesus predicts Peter's denial three times (26:31-34), and Peter "strongly denies it" (26:33-35), affirming he will "never desert Jesus" and will "die first" (p. 5).
- **Peter's Failure and Restoration:** The narrative shows Peter to be "just how wrong" he is (p. 5). However, Peter "has been wrong before, and he has nevertheless overcome his failings" (p. 5). His restoration is highlighted as a future event (John 21).

F. Jesus' Prayer in Gethsemane (26:36-46)

- **Jesus' Submission to Father's Will:** Jesus "puts the Father's will ahead of his own," anticipating suffering but "resigned to obeying the Father's plan" (p. 5). This models the "God-centeredness" of prayer and his own exhortation to "pray alertly and recognize the weakness of the flesh" (p. 5).
- **Jesus' Humanity and Deity:** The Gethsemane prayers reveal Jesus' "distress," underscoring that he was "truly divine and truly human" (p. 6).
- **Disciples' Weakness:** The "three cycles of Jesus praying and the disciples sleeping" (p. 5) highlight the disciples' "lack of perception," "unanimous denial that they would desert Jesus," and "sinful self-confidence" (p. 6). Their inability to "keep watch with Jesus" foreshadows their desertion. This serves as a reminder of "the necessity for spiritual alertness in the face of moral testing" and "our own weakness" (p. 6).

G. The Arrest of Jesus (26:47-56)

- **Jesus in Control:** Despite the escalating events, "one gets the unmistakable impression that Jesus, or rather his Father in Heaven, is really in charge" (p. 6).

Jesus' actions demonstrate that he and his disciples "were not subversives or zealots" (p. 6).

- **Disciples' Failure:** The disciples offer "only token resistance" to Jesus' arrest and then "all run away" (p. 7).
- **Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:** The passage strongly emphasizes "God's predetermined plan" (26:2, 18, 24, 31, 39, 42, 54, 56), demonstrating "the scriptural pattern of the compatibility between divine sovereignty and human responsibility" (p. 7).

H. Jesus' Trial Before Caiaphas (26:57-68)

- **Sordid Nature of the Process:** The "first stage of his trial or his hearings" (p. 7) reveals the "sordid nature of the whole process" (p. 7).
- **Climactic Claims of Christ:** More importantly, Jesus "climatically pressed before the leaders of Israel" his "claims to be Israel's Messiah" (p. 7).
- **Jesus' Affirmation:** Jesus acknowledges his messianic identity as the "Son of Man who will return to judge his false accusers and judges" (26:64), a clear allusion to Daniel 7:13.
- **Leaders' Rejection and Condemnation:** The leaders reject Jesus' testimony, accuse him of "blasphemy," and treat him with "sarcasm and utter contempt" (p. 7). Jesus' affirmation of his future judgment infuriates them.
- **Vindication and Reign:** Jesus' "resurrection vindicates Jesus' claims and seals the doom of his enemies" (p. 8). His reign, inaugurated by the resurrection, will be "consummated by his return to judge and rule the earth" (p. 8).

I. Anti-Semitism and the Trial Narrative

- **Historical Discrepancies:** The trial "was not carried out according to just legal procedures which are found in the Mishnah" (p. 8), such as trials not being held at night or capital cases decided in one day.
- **Misinterpretation of Matthew's Intent:** Accusations that Matthew invented the story to "blame the Jews and exonerate the Romans" (p. 8) are refuted. Matthew's goal is not to "indict Israel as a nation" but to highlight the "corrupt

leaders who leave Israel like scattered sheep without a shepherd" (p. 8) within the Jerusalem establishment of Jesus' day.

- **Condemnation of Anti-Semitism:** Christians who "support their own anti-semitic bias by appealing to Matthew should be roundly condemned in the strongest possible terms" (p. 9).
- **God's Plan:** Ultimately, "it was not ultimately the corrupt Jewish leaders or the weak Roman governor who were responsible for killing Jesus. Rather, it was God's plan being accomplished by the deeds of sinful men, Jews and Gentiles alike, so that sinners from every ethnic group might believe in Jesus the Messiah and be forgiven by the shedding of his blood" (p. 9).

J. Peter's Sad Three Denials (26:69-75)

- **Vindication of Jesus' Prophecy:** Peter's denials directly "vindicate" Jesus' prophetic insight.
- **Increasing Intensity:** The three denials become "increasingly intense" with "oaths and expletives" as Peter moves further away from Jesus (p. 9).
- **Disciples' Weakness:** This passage serves as "another blunt testimony to the weakness of the disciples" (p. 9), emphasizing that "the disciples who left all to follow Jesus have now all deserted him" (p. 9).
- **Comparison of Peter and Jesus:** "As Jesus confesses his messianic identity before the supreme leader of Israel, Peter denies any knowledge of Jesus before a servant girl" (p. 9).
- **Comparison of Peter and Judas:** Both felt remorse. However, Judas's "remorse is not accompanied by deeds fitting true repentance" and leads to suicide, while Peter's "momentary failure" is followed by restoration and resumption of his leadership role, reflecting his "pattern of Peter's life was one of discipleship" (p. 10). Peter is presented as the "representative disciple both then and now" (p. 10).

III. Summary and Transition

- **Interweaving Plots:** Matthew 26 interweaves "Jesus preparing his disciples for his death and the Pharisees' scheme to hasten that death" (p. 10).

- **Jesus' Control:** Jesus remains "in control as he repeatedly predicts his death" (26:2, 12, 21, 23, 24, 28, 32, 45, 54) and remains "obedient to the will of the Father" (26:39, 42, 44) even in Gethsemane (p. 10).
- **Sovereignty of God:** A strong theme is "the sovereignty of God, especially as it relates to the fulfillment of the Old Testament" (26:24, 31, 54, 56, 64).
- **Compatibility of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:** The chapter profoundly testifies that "the monstrous treachery of Judas and the evil machinations of the Jewish leaders are both culpable acts and divine necessities that graciously provide forgiveness of sins" (p. 10). This demonstrates "the sovereignty of God and the responsible agency of people are compatible biblical truths" (p. 10).

3) Study Guide: Study Guide: Matthew 26 – Jesus' Passion I: Betrayal, Arrest, and Jewish Hearing

I. Overview and Context

- **Theological Motivation of Gospels:** The Gospels are not mere historical chronicles or biographies but are theologically motivated literary works. Their focus on Jesus' last week in Jerusalem (roughly one-third to one-fourth of Matthew's Gospel) highlights their theological purpose.
- **Passion Narrative's Significance:** The events in Matthew 26-28 are climactic, repeatedly predicted since Jesus' Galilean ministry. They culminate in Jesus' crucifixion, fulfilling God's plan to exalt him.
- **Matthew's Distinctives:** While largely parallel with Mark, Matthew's Passion narrative (26-28) includes unique material, particularly in chapters 21-25 (temple conflicts and eschatological discourse).
- **General Flow of Events:** Preparation of disciples (Matt 26)
- Arrest at Gethsemane (end of Matt 26)
- Trial before Caiaphas and Peter's denials (end of Matt 26)
- Trial before Pilate (beginning of Matt 27)

- Mocking of Jesus (Matt 27)
- Burial by Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27)
- Resurrection and Great Commission (Matt 28)

II. Key Sections and Themes

A. The Plot to Arrest Jesus (Matthew 26:1-5)

- **Completion of Jesus' Teaching:** Matthew 26:1 signifies the end of all Jesus' teaching in the Gospel, mirroring 28:20.
- **Jewish Leaders' Motivation:** The chief priests and elders, led by Caiaphas, plot to apprehend Jesus secretly and kill him due to existing conflict and his growing popularity, especially during Passover.
- **Judas's Role:** Judas's offer to betray Jesus allows the leaders to expedite their plan.

B. The Anointing at Bethany (Matthew 26:6-13)

- **Contrast in Perception:** An unnamed woman demonstrates greater recognition of Jesus' approaching death than his disciples.
- **Disciples' Misunderstanding:** The disciples, despite hearing Passion predictions, are corrected for their misplaced concern for the poor over immediate care for Jesus.
- **Jesus' View on the Poor:** Jesus' allusion to Deuteronomy 15:11 (the poor are always present) is a reminder of ongoing responsibility to the needy, not a justification for indifference. However, caring for Jesus in his final days is of greater urgency.

C. Judas's Betrayal (Matthew 26:14-16)

- **Judas's Character:** Portrayed as a pathetically and enigmatically evil person.
- **Motivation for Betrayal:** Inscrutable, but theories include greed (John 12:4-6), disillusionment with Jesus' spiritual message (Luke 22:3, John 6:70-13:2), or satanic influence.

- **Prophetic Fulfillment:** The subtle allusion to Zechariah 11:12-13 connects Judas's betrayal to Old Testament prophecy, reinforcing God's sovereignty even over this act.
- **Call to Self-Reflection:** The treachery of Judas should prompt followers of Jesus to self-examine: "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?" (Matthew 26:22).

D. Passover and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:17-30)

- **Four Parts:** Preparation for Passover, prediction of betrayal, institution of the Lord's Supper, transition to the main plot.
- **Theological Purpose:** Matthew associates these events with a historical Passover but focuses on theological significance rather than extraneous historical details.
- **The Last/First Supper:** Jesus' final meal with disciples before his arrest and crucifixion.
- **First Supper:** Inauguration of the remembrance of Jesus by his new community, fulfilling Old Testament patterns with new meaning.
- **Meaning of the Lord's Supper:** A divinely ordained reminder of Jesus' past redemption (shed blood for forgiveness of sins) and future return (sharing at the table in the kingdom).
- Not an impotent memorial or magical source of grace, but a dynamic strengthener of faith when received in faith, proclaiming the gospel's central truth.
- **Historical Context of Seder:** Attempts to read later Jewish Passover liturgy (Mishnah Pesachim 10, redacted after 200 CE) back into the New Testament are on weak historical foundations, though Jesus used the Passover as the context for his Supper.

E. Jesus Predicts Disciples' Desertion (Matthew 26:31-35)

- **Peter's Arrogance:** Peter repeatedly denies Jesus' predictions of desertion and denial, asserting his loyalty even unto death.
- **Peter's Weakness:** The ensuing narrative proves Peter wrong on both counts, highlighting his lack of self-knowledge.

- **Future Restoration:** Despite his failings, Peter will be restored (John 21) and continue in ministry, eventually dying for Jesus.
- **Resurrection's Impact:** The resurrection will transform grief to joy, defeat to victory, and desertion to renewed allegiance.

F. Jesus' Prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46)

- **Three Cycles of Prayer and Sleep:** Jesus prays alone, finds disciples sleeping, and returns to prayer three times, emphasizing their weakness and his resolve.
- **Jesus' God-Centeredness:** Prioritizes the Father's will over his own suffering, modeling the "God's will be done" prayer.
- Exemplifies spiritual alertness and recognition of fleshly weakness.
- Echoes his temptations (Matthew 4) by demonstrating obedience to God's Word even in suffering.
- **Jesus' Humanity and Deity:** Gethsemane highlights Jesus' true humanity, distress, and weakness (Hebrews 2, 4, 5), compatible with his divine nature. He is truly divine and truly human.
- **Disciples' Weakness:** Lack of perception regarding the anointing's significance.
- Unbelief caused by sinful self-confidence in denying desertion.
- Failure to stay awake and share Jesus' burden, despite earlier boasts of drinking his cup (Matthew 20:22).
- Their sleep underscores the necessity for spiritual alertness in moral testing.

G. The Arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56)

- **Climax of Preliminaries:** The arrest marks the end of Jesus preparing his disciples and the beginning of his suffering.
- **Jesus' Control:** Despite appearances, Jesus (and the Father) is in control, indicated by his repeated predictions.

- **Jesus' Nature:** He is not a subversive or zealot; he is resigned to God's will and teaches against violence.
- **Disciples' Cowardice:** Their boasts of resistance are hollow; they offer token resistance then flee.
- **Aggression of Arrest Party:** The large, armed group and their secret, nighttime arrest highlight their unsympathetic nature.
- **Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:** The passage powerfully illustrates the compatibility of God's predetermined plan (26:2, 18, 24, 31, 39, 42, 54, 56) with the voluntary actions of Judas, the disciples, and the arrest party.

H. Jesus' Trial Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68)

- **"Hearing" vs. "Trial":** The term "trial" may be too strong given the irregular proceedings.
- **Literary Purposes:** Exposes the sordid nature of the process (lack of just legal procedures per Mishnah).
- Climactically presses Jesus' claims as Israel's Messiah before the leaders.
- **Jesus' Messianic Affirmation:** Jesus acknowledges he is the Messiah, the Son of Man who will return to judge his accusers (allusion to Daniel 7:13). This infuriates the leaders.
- **Leaders' Rejection:** They accuse him of blasphemy, treating him with sarcasm and contempt, refusing to contemplate eschatological reversal.
- **Contrast with Roman Soldier:** The Roman soldier's confession in 27:54 contrasts with Jewish leaders' rejection, aligning with Matthew's Gentile mission emphasis.
- **Vindication of Jesus' Claims:** Jesus' resurrection inaugurates his glorious reign (Matthew 28:18), vindicating his claims and sealing his enemies' doom. His return will consummate his reign and bring final judgment.
- **Anti-Semitism Clarification:** The trial did not follow Mishnahic procedures (e.g., night trials, capital cases decided in one day were forbidden).

- Matthew is *not* blaming all Jews or excusing Romans for propaganda. If Matthew was a Jew writing to Jews, this argument breaks down.
- Instead, Matthew exposes the corruption of the Jerusalem establishment of Jesus' day, who broke their own rules for expediency.
- Attributing anti-Semitic bias to Matthew's text is a serious error; God's plan was accomplished by sinful Jews and Gentiles alike for the forgiveness of sins for all ethnic groups.

I. Peter's Three Denials (Matthew 26:69-75)

- **Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Peter's denials validate Jesus' prophetic insight, mocking the Sanhedrin's earlier dismissal.
- **Increasing Intensity:** Three accusations, three increasingly vehement denials, punctuated with oaths and expletives, as Peter moves further away from Jesus.
- **Disciples' Weakness:** Matthew, like other biblical authors, presents his heroes "warts and all." Peter's denial, and the desertion of all disciples, highlights their collective weakness and sinful self-confidence.
- **Comparison: Peter vs. Judas: Similarities:** Both betrayed/denied Jesus as predicted, both felt remorse.
- **Differences:** Judas's remorse led to suicide and was not true repentance; Peter's momentary failure was part of a pattern of discipleship, led to restoration (John 21), and he resumed his leadership role.
- **Peter as Representative Disciple:** Peter's unique position (first among disciples, spoke for the group, followed Jesus into courtyard) makes his failure and subsequent restoration a powerful lesson for all followers of Jesus.

III. Overarching Themes of Matthew 26

- **Jesus in Control:** Jesus repeatedly predicts his death and suffering, demonstrating his obedience to the Father's will even in Gethsemane.
- **Sovereignty of God:** God's predetermined plan unfolds through the actions of sinful men (Judas's treachery, Jewish leaders' machinations), fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

- **Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:** This chapter is a profound testimony to the compatibility of these biblical truths – culpable human actions also serve as divine necessities for the accomplishment of God's plan of salvation.
- **Weakness of Disciples:** The disciples' lack of understanding, self-confidence, inability to stay awake, and ultimate desertion underscore the need for spiritual alertness and reliance on God's power.
- **Fulfillment of Old Testament:** Numerous allusions and direct fulfillments of prophecy (e.g., Zechariah 11, Daniel 7:13, Deuteronomy 15:11).

Quiz: Matthew 26 – Jesus' Passion I

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How do the Gospels, particularly Matthew, demonstrate they are "theologically motivated literary works" rather than mere historical chronicles or biographies?
2. What was the primary reason the Jewish leaders needed to apprehend Jesus secretly before or during the Passover festival?
3. Explain Jesus' teaching regarding the poor in the context of the anointing at Bethany, including its connection to Deuteronomy 15:11.
4. Beyond greed, what other theories are suggested for Judas's motivation in betraying Jesus, and what spiritual influence is cited?
5. In what two significant ways does the Lord's Supper function as both a "beginning" and an "end" for Matthew's theological purpose?
6. How does Peter's response to Jesus' predictions of desertion highlight Peter's self-perception versus his actual character?
7. What two key aspects of Jesus' character are modeled in his Gethsemane prayers, particularly concerning his will and his teaching?
8. According to the lecture, what two literary purposes does Matthew's narrative of Jesus' "trial" before Caiaphas achieve?

9. Address the accusation of anti-Semitism in Matthew's trial narrative. How does the lecture argue against this, and what is Matthew's actual theological point?
10. Beyond the obvious act of betrayal/denial, what is the key difference in the "deeds fitting true repentance" that distinguishes Peter's outcome from Judas's?

Answer Key

1. The Gospels are theologically motivated by their extensive focus on Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, which occupies roughly one-third to one-fourth of the narrative. This emphasis, along with the omission of material from Jesus' early life, shows their purpose is to convey theological truths about his Passion rather than merely historical facts.
2. The Jewish leaders sought to apprehend Jesus secretly because of his immense popularity with the multitudes of pilgrims who had arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. They feared a public outcry or riot if they arrested him openly, especially during such a crowded and sensitive time.
3. Jesus' allusion to Deuteronomy 15:11 (the poor are always present) in the context of the anointing at Bethany is a reminder of an ongoing responsibility to care for the needy, not a stoic statement about an inevitable situation. However, he emphasizes that the urgency of caring for him in his last days transcends that ongoing responsibility.
4. Other theories for Judas's motivation include his disillusionment with Jesus' spiritually oriented message, as he may have been looking for a military, politically oriented Messiah. Luke 22:3 and John 6:70-13:2 also cite satanic influence behind Judas's action, suggesting a supernatural component to his inscrutable evil.
5. The Lord's Supper is the "Last Supper," Jesus' final meal with his disciples before his Passion, marking an end to their former fellowship dynamic. However, it is also the "First Supper," inaugurating the remembrance of Jesus by his new community, signifying a new beginning and fulfilling Old Testament patterns with new meaning.

6. Peter's response highlights his sinful self-confidence and lack of self-knowledge, as he strongly denies Jesus' predictions that all disciples would scatter and that he himself would deny Jesus three times. He boasts he will never desert Jesus, even if others do, and would die before denying him, proving himself wrong in the ensuing narrative.
7. Jesus' Gethsemane prayers model putting the Father's will ahead of his own, even in the face of immense suffering. They also model his own exhortation to pray alertly and recognize the weakness of the flesh, demonstrating both his resolve and his human vulnerability.
8. Matthew's narrative of the trial before Caiaphas achieves two literary purposes: first, it clearly exposes the sordid and unjust nature of the entire process, highlighting how the Jewish leaders broke their own legal procedures. Second, and more importantly, it climactically presses Jesus' claims to be Israel's Messiah before the leaders of Israel.
9. The lecture argues against anti-Semitism by explaining that Matthew, as a Jew writing to Jews, is not indicting all Jews but specifically the corrupt Jerusalem establishment of Jesus' day. Matthew shows these leaders did not follow their own standards. His theological point is that God's plan was accomplished by sinful men, both Jews and Gentiles, for the forgiveness of sins for all ethnic groups.
10. The key difference lies in the nature of their remorse: Judas's remorse was not accompanied by "deeds fitting true repentance," leading him to suicide after being rebuffed by the Jewish leaders. Peter, despite his momentary failure, eventually demonstrated true repentance, leading to his restoration by Jesus and a resumption of his leadership role among the disciples.

Essay Questions (No Answers Supplied)

1. Analyze how Matthew portrays Jesus' agency and control throughout Matthew 26, even amidst betrayal, arrest, and trial. Discuss specific instances that highlight his awareness and intentionality in fulfilling God's plan.
2. Compare and contrast the characterizations of the disciples in Matthew 26. Discuss their collective failings (e.g., misunderstanding, sleeping, desertion)

and Peter's individual trajectory, explaining how Matthew uses their weaknesses to highlight larger theological truths.

3. Discuss the theological significance of the Lord's Supper as instituted in Matthew 26. Explain how it relates to and fulfills the Passover, and what it communicates about Jesus' past and future work.
4. Examine the concept of "divine sovereignty and human responsibility" as it is presented in Matthew 26. Using examples like Judas's betrayal and the Jewish leaders' actions, explain how the text reconciles these seemingly contradictory truths.
5. How does Matthew's portrayal of Jesus' "trial" before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68) challenge traditional notions of justice and authority? Discuss the accusations of anti-Semitism in light of the lecture's explanation of Matthew's specific critique of the Jerusalem establishment.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Passion Narrative:** The sections in the Gospels that describe Jesus' suffering, arrest, trial, crucifixion, death, and burial. In Matthew, this primarily covers chapters 26-28.
- **Galilean Ministry:** The period of Jesus' public ministry primarily conducted in the region of Galilee, preceding his final journey to Jerusalem.
- **Eschatological Discourse:** Jesus' teaching about end times, future events, and the coming of the Son of Man, found in Matthew 24-25.
- **Caiaphas:** The High Priest who presided over the Jewish hearing/trial of Jesus in Matthew 26.
- **Bethany:** A village near Jerusalem, the setting for the anointing of Jesus with expensive perfume (Matthew 26:6-13).
- **Deuteronomy 15:11:** An Old Testament verse alluded to by Jesus, which speaks about the ongoing presence of needy people and the responsibility to care for them.
- **Zechariah 11:12-13:** An Old Testament prophetic passage subtly alluded to in connection with Judas's betrayal and the price of his treachery.

- **Lord's Supper:** The Christian sacrament instituted by Jesus during his last meal with his disciples, symbolizing his body and blood given for the forgiveness of sins and a remembrance of his sacrifice and future return. Also referred to as the "First Supper" or "Eucharist."
- **Passover:** An annual Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Jesus' last meal with his disciples (the Last Supper) took place in the context of the Passover.
- **Mishnah Pesachim 10:** A tractate within the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish oral traditions and laws) that details the Passover Seder liturgy, redacted after 200 CE.
- **Gethsemane:** An olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prayed intensely before his arrest and where his disciples failed to stay awake with him.
- **High Christology:** A theological perspective that emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus, often stressing his pre-existence and equality with God.
- **Divine Sovereignty:** The biblical truth that God is supreme and exercises ultimate control over all things, including human actions and historical events.
- **Human Responsibility:** The biblical truth that human beings are moral agents, accountable for their choices and actions.
- **Sanhedrin:** The supreme Jewish council or court in Jerusalem, which conducted Jesus' hearing after his arrest.
- **Mishnah, Tractate Sanhedrin 4-7:** Sections of the Mishnah that lay out the detailed legal procedures for trials, including capital cases, highlighting how Jesus' trial deviated from these standards.
- **Anti-Semitism:** Hostility to, prejudice toward, or discrimination against Jews. The lecture explicitly condemns any use of Matthew's text to support such bias.
- **Representative Disciple:** A term used to describe Peter, who often speaks for the group of disciples and whose successes and failures are presented as lessons for all followers of Jesus.

- **Remission (Sabbatical Year):** In Deuteronomy 15, the sabbatical year refers to every seventh year when debts were to be forgiven, and land was to lie fallow.

4) FAQs

1. What is the primary focus of the Gospels, particularly Matthew, regarding Jesus' life?

The Gospels, especially Matthew, are not primarily historical chronicles or biographies in the modern sense. Instead, they are "theologically motivated literary works" focused on the climactic events of Jesus' passion. This is evident from the "almost total omission of material about Jesus' life before his public ministry" and the extensive treatment given to his last week in Jerusalem. Approximately one-third to one-fourth of the Gospel of Matthew is dedicated to this final week, leading to the idea that the Gospels are "passion narratives with extended introductions."

2. How does Matthew portray Jesus' awareness and control during his final week?

Matthew consistently portrays Jesus as being fully aware of the forces arrayed against him and the suffering he would endure, yet he willingly submits to the Father's will. This is highlighted by repeated predictions of his crucifixion, his composure during his arrest, and his obedience in Gethsemane. Even the "monstrous treachery of Judas and the evil machinations of the Jewish leaders" are presented as part of "God's predetermined plan," demonstrating Jesus' and ultimately God's control over events, even amidst human culpability.

3. What is the significance of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany, particularly in contrast to the disciples' understanding?

The anointing of Jesus at Bethany (Matthew 26:6-13) reveals an "obscure, unnamed woman" with a greater recognition of the "shortness of Jesus' remaining time on earth" than his own disciples. While the disciples rightly emphasized caring for the needy, their timing was "all wrong," showing a misunderstanding of the immediate urgency of Jesus' mission and impending death, despite his repeated predictions. This contrasts the woman's sympathetic service with the disciples' lack of focus.

4. What are the various interpretations of Judas's motivation for betraying Jesus?

The motivation behind Judas's betrayal remains "one of the more inscrutable matters in the Bible." Some theories include greed, due to his concern about the waste of expensive perfume during Jesus' anointing. Others suggest he might have been disillusioned with Jesus' "spiritually oriented message," perhaps expecting a "military, politically oriented Messiah." Additionally, satanic influence is cited in other biblical texts. Regardless of the precise motivation, Matthew emphasizes that Judas's act fulfills Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 11:12-13), underscoring God's control even over this profound treachery.

5. How does the Lord's Supper connect to and differ from the Passover meal in Matthew's theological purpose?

In Matthew's theological framework, the Passover meal serves as a context for the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is simultaneously the "Last Supper," marking Jesus' final meal with his disciples before his passion, and the "First Supper," inaugurating a new remembrance for his community. While "associated with the Passover," the Lord's Supper is distinct. It serves as a reminder of Jesus' "shedding his blood for them through the forgiveness of their sins" and his promise to share a future kingdom meal. It is a divinely ordained sacrament that, when "received in faith," "dynamically strengthens the people of God" by proclaiming the central truth of the Gospel.

6. How does Peter's denial of Jesus highlight the disciples' weaknesses, and what is the broader implication for believers?

Peter's three denials of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-74) powerfully illustrate the weakness of the disciples, despite their initial boasts of unwavering loyalty. Peter, the "representative disciple," is intimidated by a "mere servant girl" and his denials intensify as he moves away from Jesus. This portrays the disciples' "unbelief caused by sinful self-confidence" and their failure to "keep watch with Jesus through the night." Matthew leaves the reader with this "blunt testimony to the weakness of the disciples" to remind us of our own vulnerabilities in the face of "moral testing," while also hinting at future forgiveness and restoration.

7. How does Matthew address potential accusations of anti-Semitism in his portrayal of Jesus' trial before Caiaphas?

Matthew acknowledges that Jesus' trial before Caiaphas was not conducted according to just legal procedures outlined in the Mishnah. However, he refutes the idea that he invented the story to blame Jews and exonerate Romans for propaganda purposes. Instead, Matthew, writing as a Jew to Jews, preserves accurate historical information to demonstrate that the "Jerusalem establishment of Jesus' day" were "corrupt leaders" who "did not follow their own standards" due to expediency. He emphasizes that "it was not ultimately the corrupt Jewish leaders or the weak Roman governor who were responsible for killing Jesus. Rather, it was God's plan being accomplished by the deeds of sinful men, Jews and Gentiles alike." He strongly condemns any anti-Semitic interpretations derived from his narrative.

8. What is the "profound testimony" regarding divine sovereignty and human responsibility in Matthew 26?

Matthew 26 presents a "profound testimony that the sovereignty of God and the responsible agency of people are compatible biblical truths." This is demonstrated by Jesus' consistent awareness and submission to God's predetermined plan for his suffering and death, despite the culpable actions of individuals like Judas and the Jewish leaders. The "monstrous treachery of Judas and the evil machinations of the Jewish leaders" are viewed as both morally blameworthy acts and "divine necessities that graciously provide forgiveness of sins." This highlights that God's plan is accomplished even through the sinful choices of humanity.