

The Final Week

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Greetings to all of you and all of you who may be watching this live or later!

We're having an erratic spring here. I saw ice on the irrigation booms of the circle, irrigation on some of the fields on the way up. I know. "Quit whining, Jack! Come back to Wisconsin or Minnesota or somewhere. We'll show you what ice looks like!" (Chuckling.)

We all believe in the Church of God that God's plan is in the holy days and each season we focus on different parts of that plan. At this time of year, in the spring, we focus on Jesus Christ. We focus on His life, towards the end of His life, and His death, as we come into the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

I'd like to begin by turning over to 1 Corinthians 11 because we're admonished to do some things here and one very important thing. Over in 1 Corinthians 11 beginning in verse 23 and this is from the New King James Version.

1 Corinthians 11:23. *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you [Paul says]: ... (NKJV)*

That's kind of interesting. Just as an aside, it's interesting to note that he tells them what he received from the Lord. A lot of times we've been... I think we've been not misled, but we've been led maybe down a wrong path by different folks' scenarios of prophecy and all of that. One thing to always keep in mind about prophecy is "Did it come from God?" Just like Paul says here. He told them what he got from God, what he got from Christ, but we need to be careful with that.

Continuing in verse 23:

1 Corinthians 11:23b. *... that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;
24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, [again] in remembrance of Me." (NKJV)*

Zodhiates' Word Study Dictionary says that that expression, "In remembrance of me," and I'll quote him. It:

... means that the participant should remember Christ and the ... sacrifice of His death. The memory of the greatness of the sacrifice should cause the believer to abstain from sin.

And that's pretty much what we believe. At the Passover service, in a sense, we'll rehearse that sacrifice.

Just as another aside, sometimes when we, in the past especially I think, we've been very solemn at the Passover. It's not a funeral service. If we think about that, there is a certain exhilaration to the fact that Christ did die for us, (He died for all mankind.) but He was resurrected. So, it's not a gloom and doom. I guess the point there is to have some... It's not a time for idle chit-chat either. I'm not advocating that at all, but we just need some balance there in the way we do that.

But this message that I have prepared today is about His suffering, the temptation, but in those events... And that takes place mostly during the final week, the final days, the final hours up to the time of His crucifixion. And I've titled this:

The Final Week

Or you could say the events of the final week. It's going to be about the lessons that are there embedded in those events that are for us, that we can learn some things from.

As we go through these, and I just have a list of points, but let's try to feel what He felt and apply it to ourselves on a personal level. He felt the same way that we might. There are scriptures that tell us that like over in Hebrews 2. If you would, turn there. You can see where I'm coming from with that statement. But He said He felt the same thing, had the same emotions that we do. In Hebrews 2 beginning in verse 17:

Hebrews 2:17. *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, ... (NKJV)*

That's physical. He had the full range of emotions, the feelings, etc. that we have.

Hebrews 2:17b. *... that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (NKJV)*

And that word "propitiation" there just means that it is a continual ongoing thing. We get that forgiveness. We get that. We can go to God continually in that. If it was expiation, that would mean it would be a one time thing, but that's not what that means there. And we can, just as a reference scripture 1 John 2 verses 1 and 2 say:

1John 2:1. *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

2) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (NKJV)

In other words, He is immensely qualified to forgive those sins. He made that sacrifice.

Continuing in Hebrews 2 verse 18:

Hebrews 2:18. *For in that He Himself has suffered, ... (NKJV)*

He felt the pain, both the physical and the emotional pain.

Hebrews 2:18b. *... being tempted, ... (NKJV)*

He was tempted to give in. He was tempted to quit. He was tempted to give up just like we are a lot of times.

Hebrews 2:18 continued. *... He is able to aid those who are tempted. (NKJV)*

And over in Hebrews 4 verse 14, it says:

Hebrews 4:14. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)

And boy oh boy! Don't we need that from time to time? Don't we need that mercy? Don't we need that help and that forgiveness?

So, again, I'd just like to look at the events leading up to His death and see the personal meaning in these things for us. Not all the events leading up to His death have a lesson for us, but some of them do as I'll try to point out as I go through here.

I think all of us use this prep time coming up to the Passover. We use these times just coming up to the spring holy days to learn spiritual lessons, to learn lessons about ourselves, if we're really looking at ourselves. And I think we do that for the most part.

Many commentaries... You can go online and you can put in Christ's death, the events leading up to His death, to the crucifixion and you can find a whole list of

events that take place. Actually I've just taken a short list. It might seem like a number of points, but some of them are short.

The first event is the persecution that He suffered.

There's a lesson there for us in that. This is about the Pharisees, the way that they treated Christ—the confrontations that began very early in His ministry and just escalated right up to the point of His unjust trial and His death. Over in John 11, and you remember in John 11? This is where Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, but that lit a fuse. That was a spark that got ignited with the Pharisees. Because it says in John 11 beginning in verse 47, after that happened, even though Christ tried to keep things quiet, a lot of times with the miracles, people just couldn't keep that to themselves. It was an exciting thing and it surely would have been for us if we would have been there. But in John 11 verse 47, it says:

John 11:47. *Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What [are] we [going to] do? ... (NKJV)*

What their real question was "What are we going to do about this man? We can't have this! How are we going to handle this? He just raised somebody from the dead. Circle the wagons! We have to have a ministerial conference. This isn't supposed to happen. This is outside of our control. We didn't approve this healing, this resurrection."

Going on in verse 27:

John 11:47b. *... For this Man works many signs. (NKJV)*

What's left unsaid there is "We don't like it. He's really rattling our cages. Our feathers are ruffled. We need to do something." Verse 48, then they begin to whine.

John 11:48. *"If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, ... (NKJV)*

"They'll believe in Him." They couldn't leave Him alone. They had to slander; they had to attack Him in every way they could; hurt Him in every way they could and eventually kill Him. That's the difference between the Pharisees' religion and true religion.

Continuing in verse 48:

John 11:48b. *... and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." (NKJV)*

"Boy, this is really sad. This is a bad deal for us." They're thinking was that if He became popular, the Romans would come in and crush the uprising. "We'll lose our

power. We'll lose our authority. We have to do something! We have to hold on to what we have. We don't want to lower our standard of living with the power and authority the Romans have given us. We can't do that." Even though the law of Moses said "You should not kill," they're going to devise a way to get rid of this man. They really wanted to have Him assassinated, but that would have been too obvious. Just follow the money on an assassination and you can find out who ordered it. But the important thing was they just had to keep their system going. They didn't want people hurt, especially them.

Continuing in John 11 verse 53:

John 11:53. *Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. (NKJV)*

They counseled. They schemed. They connived together and the persecution had already started, but then it started to intensify right up toward the final days, the final week before He was crucified. The plot thickened.

And a question comes up here. Of the chief priests and the Pharisees, you have to consider why the Pharisees were the main culprits in all of this. They were a very influential group, of course. But it says in John 12 beginning in verse 42, it explains why they were the chief instigators in all of this. In John 12:42, it said:

John 12:42. *Nevertheless even among the [chief] rulers many believed in Him, ... (NKJV)*

There were a lot of the Pharisees; we have some accounts of some of those (Nicodemus); there were others that were saying, "He's right. What He's saying is correct. It's good and it's right." But they didn't have the courage to do anything about it. They didn't have the courage to stand up for the things that were going on. They didn't want to do the right thing.

And why didn't they want to do the right thing? It goes on to say here, continuing in verse 42:

John 12:42b. *... but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; (NKJV)*

They were afraid of being put out of the Church. So, they kept quiet. They let the atrocities go on. They didn't stand up and face it. They weren't willing to do what was right. And why is that? Verse 43 says:

John 12:43. *for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (NKJV)*

There is a valuable lesson there for us really. We have to be careful that we love the praise of God more than the praise of men.

And when any of us are in a position of service or leadership, we need to always push people towards to God. I can remember the example of one time I knew a local elder that just moved into an area. And, of course, he wanted to get to know the local pastor. So, he approached him and asked him, "What do you want me to do? How do you want me to support you? What's my job?" and all that. The pastor looked him in the eye and says, "Your job is to point the people to me." You have to say, "Huh? Seriously?" But unfortunately, some have done that.

We've all been in a position... I think in the past we've kind of agonized over "Should I follow this man or should we follow that man?" We've all been through that to some degree. But the best and the safest advice is always to follow God and look for God's praise. Don't put any man on a pedestal. I know we keep saying that repeatedly, but it's very plain here in these scriptures.

There are other lessons here too with the Pharisees. You could make an entire sermon out of the Pharisees, the things that they did, but we don't want to have the same approach.

We have the example of looking around the Churches of God. We say, "Well, this group over here is Laodicean," or "That group's Laodicean. We're Philadelphian and all of that." But if you think about it, given a different time and a different place, the Pharisees would have accused Christ of the same thing. And, in essence, they did in some ways.

If you have to think about always pointing people to those in charge, to all of that, you have to consider for a minute who did Christ, when He was resurrected, who was the first person He went to? Did He run to the head guy, the head Pharisee, the head chief priest? Did He go to a Pope-like figure? Where did He go? Mark 16 tells us in verse 9 because actually it's quite significant. It tells us a lot where He went, who He saw first when He was resurrected. March 16 and verse 9 says:

Mark 16:9. *Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. (NKJV)*

Now, here is someone; here is a woman who is pretty low-class in that culture there. She had had seven demons! So, He didn't go to the higher authorities to witness His resurrection or He didn't go to the people. The upper crust Pharisees, they were celebrating His death. They had finally gotten rid of him! But He went to this woman.

And if you think about Mary Magdalene, amongst the congregation today, this was a nobody woman. She was healed of seven demons. In most Churches of God, she would be the "black sheep" of the congregation. She'd surely never amount to anything but, yet, she was the first one He talked to. She was the first one in history

actually. She became the eyewitness. She was an eyewitness of His death because she was there too, but also at His resurrection, which is more important.

The point is that He did that because He was the Savior of the people. He was not the Savior of the Pharisaical religious system, class system. He was the Savior of the people. Again, a lesson here for us is not to get locked into any kind of a religious system or a man, but to follow God, to let different people help you and to serve you.

Unfortunately, in our history for most of us that have been around any time at all, we were encouraged to do that—follow a man. Some people still want to do that.

When you think about that Pharisaical system, that system killed Christ. I'm not saying in that that all men in organizations are bad. It's just the wrong place to put your trust. Again, let men serve you; let them help you, but they have no authority to control you. Some people are there and they need to grow past that because God is, at some point, going to show them that is not what He wants.

And there is another part of the lesson here too. It's back over in Matthew 26, verses 3 and 4. Now verse 3:

Matthew 26:3. *Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people [the leaders] assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, (NKJV)*

And notice what they did there.

Matthew 26:4. *[They] consulted that they might take Jesus [subtlety], ... (KJV)*

Or some translations will say "deceitfully" because in the Greek that is what that means.

Matthew 26:4b. *... and kill him. (KJV)*

Some translations or other scriptures say "they take Him by trickery." And all this is behind the scenes, plotting to kill Him, because that is what they were trying to do. They were trying to sneak around to kill Him, to get rid of this guy.

And when you think about that, the lesson here is the persecution that Christ had to face.

Because a lot of times we face on our little lower level, we face different kinds of persecution. I know I have. You face persecution in the workplace. Sometimes we face persecution from our own families and all of that. But we need to remember in the lesson that we can learn and remember here, as we review these events, is that no matter how much that persecution is, we have a High Priest who knows exactly

what that feels like—exactly what that feels like! He felt it to a much greater degree than we do. And remember again, He was tempted in all points just like we are. It doesn't matter what we are going through, what we've gone through, what we may be going through now as far as persecution or any of that goes.

We have to remember, too, where that persecution came from. It came from the religious leaders. In this case it was the chief priests and the Pharisees. We don't want to recreate that religion that killed Christ. In Matthew 26, the last part of verse 4 says:

Matthew 26:4. ... and plotted [*This is what they did.*] to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. (NKJV)

We're called to be a part of a way of life, to emulate and follow Jesus Christ. Not to be followers of a judgmental, cruel, Pharisaical religious system.

This brings us to the second event getting towards His trial and death, the betrayal of Judas Iscariot.

So, not only did He have to face His persecution from these leaders and these so-called rulers, all this upper religious class, then His fate was to be betrayed by someone who was part his inner circle. Over in Luke 6, beginning in verse 12; remember He prayed all night. He came back and He chooses His twelve apostles, made them His apostles. They weren't even converted. You have to think about that for a second. Luke 6 beginning in verse 12, it says:

Luke 6:12. Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13) And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:

14) Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;

15) Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;

16) Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. (NKJV)

Now, Luke puts it in that term, "became a traitor," because he's writing after the fact, remember? He really wasn't there. He's a journalist. He's a reporter. He's reporting this.

But just think back to that example there, Christ's example in verse 12 where He prayed all night. When was the last time you prayed all night?

It's not even a comparison but I think years ago, one time when I was fasting, I think I prayed for a little over an hour. That's just about all I can manage.

And some people are better at that. You know? I've known widows that spend long hours in prayer. They can do that. One time a minister was telling the story. He was actually in Jerusalem. He was in the Garden of Gethsemene and he said, "Well, here is the same place that Christ prayed all night." So, he thought, "Well, I'll do that." And he didn't want to just think about prayer and just want to meditate. He wanted to do it out loud. So, he started in and he lasted three hours. He said he was just maxed out. He was exhausted. He couldn't think of anything more to say. But even three hours, that's a long ways from twelve.

So, back to the point here, which is after that all-night prayer, He picked twelve men to become apostles and Judas was one of them, but He knew this was going to happen. He knew scripture had to be fulfilled.

Then, later on He's sitting with the disciples eating and He tells them that one of them is going to betray Him. This is also in Matthew 26. Verse 14:

Matthew 26:14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests (NKJV)

He went running, again, to those leaders, to that Pharisaical system and he sold out for money. You have to think about how many people of God have actually sold out because, in one way or another, it has paid them to.

Verse 15:

Matthew 26:15. and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. (NKJV)

I don't know if you've ever looked it up but in Exodus 21:32, it says that's the price the law says that's required when a slave is killed by an ox. It amounts to \$21.60, thirty pieces of silver.

Verse 16:

Matthew 26:16. So from that time he sought [the] opportunity to betray Him. (NKJV)

And at that time, that might have been a lot of money.

But do you remember what the betrayal sign was? In that culture, at that time, it was a kiss on the cheek. They all knew Him. They knew who He was, but they wanted to make this as... They wanted to take that opportunity to actually mark Him and say, "That's the one." In Luke 22, you don't need to turn there. But for a reference in Luke 22 and verse 48, Christ looked him in the eye and said, "You betray Me, the

Son of Man, with a kiss?" He felt that betrayal of Judas at that point. He felt it deeply. And He still had to experience that and go through that.

So, what is the lesson here? You and I are going to be betrayed. It's prophesied to happen. Matthew 24:10 is the reference scripture of Christ's own words.

Matthew 24:10. *"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (NKJV)*

Brothers will turn on one another. We've seen some of that. We're going to see more of it later I'm afraid.

And when we read those prophecies, they should help us personally to change, but just knowing that is going to happen is going to be some help. But you're still going to have to—just like Christ—we're still going to have to feel it and experience it just like He did.

This brings us to the third event, the preliminary investigation.

That's found in John 18 beginning in verse 13. It says:

John 18:13. *And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.*

14) Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. (NKJV)

They knew the custom there and that was the caveat they were going to use later.

You have to ask the question: If Caiaphas was the high priest, why did they take Him to Annas? If we looked at that history there at all, sometimes—I don't know about you—but I get a migraine whenever I start reading Josephus. (Chuckling.)

There are a couple of different groups looking at this. There are the Romans looking at it. They appointed the high priest. That's why Caiaphas was the high priest that year.

But the Jews never saw it that way. They looked at the high priest's position as an appointment by God that lasted a lifetime. That's why they looked to Annas. So, the Romans even though they didn't recognize Annas, the Jews did.

And he was actually the father-in-law of Caiaphas. It says, if we go back over to Acts 6; it talks about Annas had five sons, one son-in-law. They all became high priests. This thing is all intra-family connected—the high priest appointment. But the point is the Jews saw him as the patriarch of the high priest.

What they really wanted was his endorsement of what they were doing. They wanted a name to validate their shenanigans. That's very plain from the things that are going on there.

And, by the way if we think about it, these same two people, Caiaphas and Annas, we also find them in the book of Acts. They are the same ones that later threatened the apostles. Actually they wanted to kill the apostles. But do you remember Gamaliel said, "You had better not kill them. You had better leave them alone because if this is of God, you don't want to be accused of fighting God." So, they left them alone. They actually beat them and turned them loose, but they wanted to kill them. You find that over in Acts 5. So, these same two were causing havoc later on. They didn't change anything as they went along.

But notice what happened here in John 18 verse 19. He's in the courtyard of Annas the high priest. Verse 19:

John 18:19. *The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. (NKJV)*

It's interesting that Annas says, "How many followers do you have?" It was always a big thing with the Pharisaical mind, especially the big guys. "How many people? How many people do you have? Who are they? Where are they from? Do you have any people of influence there? Do you have any big names in your group?" He [Annas] really wanted to know what He [Christ] taught. What he was doing was he was calculating the threat to the Pharisaical system. And notice Christ's answer in John 18 beginning in verse 20.

John 18:20. *Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.*

21) "Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

22) And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?"

23) Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" (NKJV)

He's our role model, but would any of us be so bold as to answer like that? Maybe someday we can ask Him why He did that because if we're to follow Him, we need to have that kind of courage.

Every speaker knows that people hear what they want to hear. A lot of people will hear a sermon and they try to get the good out of it. Other people will listen critically. Typically if someone doesn't like you or maybe like your particular group or

organization or whatever you're in, they'll try to twist what you say to suit their interpretations, their viewpoint, their opinion.

But Christ knew all of that, of course. They did it to Him all the time. Yet, He spoke the truth and people could take it any way they chose. They would anyway. There is a tremendous lesson there for us too, because if we have the courage to do it and answer truthfully, then let people do what they will with it. But in His case, that cost Him a blow to the face.

That brings us to the fourth event, which is the hurried trial and the condemnation.

This is the night time trial, but this is the fourth event in a series of events. And in Matthew 26 verse 57:

Matthew 26:57. *And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, ... (NKJV)*

They led Him away from Annas after Annas had questioned Him.

Matthew 26:57b. *... where the scribes and the elders were assembled. (NKJV)*

Read: "The kangaroo court assembled there."

Matthew 26:58. *But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.
59) Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, (NKJV)*

Again, the whole mentality is "We've got to build a case against Him. It has to be done a certain way. It's got to appear legal. Somehow it has to appear legal. And, by the way, let's not muddy the waters with facts."

Continuing Matthew 26 verse 60:

Matthew 26:60. *but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward (NKJV)*

They finally found two, probably bribed two.

Matthew 26:61. *and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"
62) And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?"
63) But Jesus kept silent. ... (NKJV)*

There's a small lesson there. He would not respond to a false accusation. And that's something we could do. If people make false accusations or false statements, just don't respond to them. People are going to believe whatever they want to believe anyway, almost no matter what they say. And we are in the same position. We have to decide if we're going to worry about that or just let people do what they're going to do. Again, there are going to be false witnesses and false accusations probably against many of us, if we haven't already experienced that to some degree or another.

But continuing in verse 63:

Matthew 26:63b. ... And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" (NKJV)

Now, he was saying something that was true.

Matthew 26:64. Jesus said to him, ... (NKJV)

He chose to answer him.

Matthew 26:64b. "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."
65) Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!" (NKJV)

I look at that and I see an Oscar winning performance there. Look at the drama of this guy. He tore his clothes, started yelling and jumping up and down. And these guys were; they were big on show. This is a performance.

Verse 66:

Matthew 26:66. "What do you think?" [he said.] They answered and said, (NKJV)

Of course, he knew what everybody thought.

Matthew 26:66b. "He is deserving of death." (NKJV)

They didn't give Him time to elaborate. If they had really been following the law, He would have been able to testify on His own behalf. This is mob rule here. He said, "What do you think, Mr. Pharisee?" or "What do you think, Mr. Scribe or Mr. Chief Priest? What do you think?" Well, he knew what they thought. It was all a big plot.

Verse 67—and not only all of that—verse 67 Matthew 26:

Matthew 26:67. *Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, (NKJV)*

That was the quick condemnation during the night.

It brings us to the fifth event, which is the formal condemnation.

Now, they have to bring it out into the light of day. Matthew 27 verse 1:

Matthew 27:1. *When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. (NKJV)*

We have that same account in Mark 15 and Luke 22. It says "morning," "next day," "daylight." They had to come back and they had to make it formal during the daylight to make it legal. And you have to think about that for a minute too, because here are people that were, they were—excuse the expression—but they were "anal" about regulations, about laws, and all that. They had done all this at night illegally. Now, they had to carry it through and pretend they were legal, that they were on the up and up.

I'd like to quote a book. I have a book. It's Robertson's [A Harmony of the Gospels](#), A. T. Robertson. Actually, this is a 1922 edition. I bought it for a buck at a used book store! But 1922 is a little before my time. Anyhow I need to put on my... This is a footnote. And here's what it says about those scriptures here (Mark 15:1, Matthew 27:1, Luke 22 beginning in verse 66), where it says, "It was daylight." It says; the footnote is:

* This ratification of the condemnation after dawn was an effort to make the action legal. But no ratification of a wrong can make it right. Some modern Jewish writers admit the illegalities and argue the ... character of the narrative. But the hate of the Sanhedrin for Jesus made them violate their own rules of legal procedure.

Which is exactly what they did!

So when morning came, now they were visible and they had to at least pretend they were following their own rule, but everything they had done up to this point was illegal. But they had to do that. They had already condemned Him, basically, but now the Sanhedrin had to do this to save face. Some Jewish writers actually say that "The Sanhedrin didn't really do that." Well, the facts are written for us in God's Word. They did do that! They did exactly that. They can't deny that record.

That brings us to the sixth event, Peter's denial.

Christ dealt with the persecution. He dealt with the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. Now He has to deal with the denial of one of His beloved friends, which is Peter.

Just before that denial is recorded in Luke, notice something else here that happened amongst the disciples. There's a lesson for us sometimes in these overlapping events and this is one here.

They had just done the Passover in Luke 22. They've just done the Passover and Christ said there's one sitting at the table with Him that is going to betray Him.

In verse 23 of Luke 22:

Luke 22:23. *Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing. (NKJV)*

Note the account differences here, because in Matthew it doesn't add this next verse but here in Luke it does. Verse 24:

Luke 22:24. *Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. (NKJV)*

One of the biggest problems in the Church of God today: "Who is the greatest?"

If we read the context carefully (And we've seen this in some of these other scriptures here briefly.), His response to that and His teaching was that they were being made apostles; it was all about service. First of all, they were to serve their King, which was Him, Christ; then, each other. It was not about competing with one other, which is the first thing they leaned to. They thought there was some competition there.

It's the same problem that was back in the Old Testament. The individuals that God raised up, there was to always be someone to challenge them, almost always. You can look at Moses' example and many others in the Old Testament.

But if we think about that, that is why there is so much squabbling, so many divisions in the Churches of God. And I know we've heard that before too, but it's always that "Who's the greatest?" If we're not the greatest, well we're aligned with somebody that's the greatest. And on and on it goes, but that thinking is purely carnal! It's not of God. It's not of Christ. Christ teaches that here.

In our society today, we have to deal with the competition. That's the bedrock of our capitalistic system. But in living God's way of life, [capitalism] it's not the ideal. It's not that we're better than someone else or some other group or any of that. My anointed is better than your anointed and that stuff. That's all carnal thinking. That's all that is. The competition, that competition, what these individuals wanted, what the

disciples (soon to be working apostles and ministry) saw right away was there was some competition with one another. And I'm not putting down the capitalistic system. That's the kind of world that we live in. I'm just saying that's not how God wants us to live and relate to each other amongst ourselves.

But again, across the board, that's probably one of the biggest problems in the Church of God. And it continued to be that way.

Someone told me one time—and you have to imagine someone saying this to me. But they said one time, "Jack, you have a power position." And I go, "What?" Four years into the Church, forty years ago, they ordained me a deacon. Well, they didn't have much of a choice back then. They kind of took what they had, but all that time and an elder now. I've never even thought of it being a power position.

As far as I'm concerned, if someone thinks that way, then they have a serious problem. If somebody wants to be greater than me, I give up. I surrender. You can be greater than me. I'll move out of the way. You can have my place. I don't care about that. It's a position of service.

So, there are kinds of these lessons in the context of the Passover, all these things that Christ is teaching us through His experience, through the things He felt, the things that He went through.

But then he [Luke] goes on. He continues getting back with this event of Peter. He continues with that in Luke 22 verse 33 after they had gone through that little ordeal with who's the greatest and all that and Christ teaches them a lesson there. Verse 33:

Luke 22:33. *But he said to Him, ... (NKJV)*

It's Peter speaking to Christ.

Luke 22:33b. *... "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." (NKJV)*

And Christ knew far better than any of us that Peter meant well when he said that, but as it turned out, his intention of support just wasn't that solid.

You know Foxe's Book of Martyrs says that thousands and thousands, maybe millions of people through the ages have made that same statement, the same proclamation. "I'll die for Christ," but when it comes time when they face that death and they face that stake or that cross whatever it might be, they back out.

Our greatest statement of support for Jesus Christ is our day to day living. That's obeying God, cooperating with one another, respecting one another, each other in love. And what's our denial? Our denial is the leaven in our lives. So, the point

there being, godly living (the way we should be doing things) is far more important than any grand political statement that we might make in support or oaths, or allegiance, any of that thing.

I heard an example one time where in the sports' world if someone comes out and they usually come out publicly. don't they?) on television or somewhere—I'm behind my manager. I'm behind my coach." The next week, the guy is fired. All they have to do is blow one game or something and he's fired. In the sports' world a loud proclamation of support is the kiss of death. And the point there being: That's from other people.

The same goes for us. We should watch out for that kind of flattery and that zealous support like Peter had here. He said he was ready to go to prison and to die for Christ, but here is what Christ told him in Luke 22:34.

Luke 22:34. *Then He said [to him], ... (NKJV)*

He told Peter the reality.

Luke 22:34b. *... "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me." (NKJV)*

Three times! Peter probably took offense at that, knowing Peter. I really like the example of Peter and we really have to appreciate his zealousness because he was zealous in everything—his support, everything he did. But sometimes that zeal can be misdirected.

I heard someone say once that he would rather be wrong in something spiritual, something correctable than have a bunch of zealots saying that they supported him. This was an individual with some authority, some power—if you want to say that. You might think, "Is that a shocking statement?"

Again, if we have to consider like Peter's situation here, if we're wrong, even if we're wrong, we can still go to God, we can get that compassion; we can get that mercy just like Peter got because Christ didn't condemn him because he failed. He failed to come through on that... Basically, that was an oath. He said he would die for him.

It's like if we have human supporters, what we really want is God's support, Christ's support because if we have human supporters and we make a mistake, we mess up somehow, they kind of fade away. Don't they? That's just what happens.

A lot of times people will get zealous. They'll get defensive about some kind of a religious position they have. They want to get in your face. What they really want is they want you to agree with them. They want you to agree with their judgment on a particular issue, on anything like that.

But we need to be very careful in trusting people's judgment. Would any of us like to sit in front of a twelve person jury? They might get it right. They might get it wrong, but you're trusting in their judgment. We really don't want to do that. We'd be much safer putting our lives in God's hands.

And then again, people will come along and they'll say, "Well, if you trust God and everything, you might be like Job. He might take everything you have. Just wipe it all away. He might even let you die." But do you know what? If Christ wants to do that, let Him do it because, still, aren't we better off trusting Him? We're trusting His standard of righteousness. We're trusting His judgment in doing that. And, frankly, we all need that just like Peter did.

People messing up can change. They can correct that. People who mess up, make mistakes, you can get help from the Father. You can get forgiveness from the Father. You can't get that from people. You can't get that from zealous people. They might say they support you.

Someone getting in our face that is really zealous about something shouldn't motivate us. Jesus Christ is the one who should motivate us. He's our savior. Not the zealot.

It's all about accountability. That's what it's really all about, about keeping it straight who we are accountable to because, sometimes, frankly, we have gotten that mixed up. By the way in some cases, the zealot may be right. Somebody trying to convince you of something, they could be right on what you should do. You should say, "Well, you know you were right. You tried to help me. I just wouldn't listen, but I wouldn't listen because I understood that I needed to put my trust in God first. I needed to take care of that relationship first. Now maybe I'm willing to listen a little bit to what you have to say." But that's where we need to put our trust is the point.

I'd rather be like Peter and deny Christ three times publicly and take my chances there because I know God's not going to give up on me. He can still use me and He won't sever that relationship that we have.

Do you know what? Among the Churches of God over the years, if you ever made a mistake like Mary Magdalene and it became public knowledge that you had had seven demons in you even though you've been healed by Christ, oh boy! You're done. Forget it. You're history! You're out of here. It's unfortunate, but that's all part of that again, that Pharisaical view, that Pharisaical system. There are some people that need that system. They need that control. They're comfortable there. And, again, God is going to show them at some point that's not what He wants.

The point, again there, is I'd rather be wrong with God than right with a lot of people that just think their way is the way it has to be.

There, again, we can see the feeling that Christ had because in his [Peter's] zealous exuberance when he said he'd die for Christ, what happened? Christ turned around, looked at him, and said, "No, you won't." And he didn't do it.

I don't know about you but I still have some carnality left. I know that I'm going to make some mistakes before my life is over and before I die. I might make a bunch of bold statements like Peter did that I'm going to do this or I'm going to do that. But I don't know when the reality, when the pressure comes, don't be surprised if we make mistakes. God gives us the room to repent, to change, to come to Him when we realize we've made those mistakes. When things get really crazy, you may fail your own personal standards. You may even fail God's standards, but hopefully we'll all realize at that point that God is still merciful. He'll work with us. He'll help us. And, again, He won't sever that relationship.

Luke 22 verse 61, we kind of get a little bit of this feeling here that Christ had, that Peter had. In Luke 22 verses 61 and 62, in the context here, somebody said to Peter, "Hey, you were with Him!" Peter swore and denied it and the cock crowed. Verse 61:

Luke 22:61. *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. ... (NKJV)*

Here's Christ. He's humiliated. He's beaten. He's bruised. He's bloody. He looked His friend right in the eye.

Luke 22:61b. *... And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 62) So Peter went out and wept bitterly. (NKJV)*

The two-way emotions there just about stagger your imagination when you think about that. Look at the pain and the hurt there. But do you know what?

All of us, maybe before the end, we're going to weep bitterly about certain things. Like Peter here we can still turn to God. Sometimes repentance is going to be bitter for us, but we can still turn to God. We can repent and change.

The fact here again is that we have on record Christ had to deal with that personal denial of his friend.

When you look at all these events, there are different accounts. A lot of people will take that opportunity to say, "Well, look. This scripture contradicts that scripture," and all that, but when you put that altogether... And you can't nail things down precisely a lot of times. But when you put that altogether, the important thing there is that these things did happen. We have that record and that's why God inspired it and caused it to be spread out through the Gospels and other places. That record is there. Sometimes there are time lapses between just the same record. And that's important.

The seventh event is before Pilate the first time.

This is where Pilate said to him, "Your own nation and priests have delivered You," but then he said, "I find no fault in Him." Then somebody said, "Hey, this guy was up in Galilee." Then Pilate said, "That's Herod's territory." He really wanted to sidestep this whole thing anyway. He didn't want to deal with it at all. He knew Christ was innocent. He wanted out of it.

Which brings us to the eighth event: Herod sees Him.

You know the account there. Herod wanted to see Him anyway. He wanted to see Christ perform a miracle. He wanted to see a magic trick is what he wanted to see. He wanted to see Him anyway, but finally, Herod just sent Him back to Pilate.

Which brings us to the ninth event: He comes before Pilate the second time.

And Pilate repeated himself. He says, "This man's innocent. I don't want to kill Him. Let me just beat Him up and maybe that will satisfy these rascals, these zealous Pharisees. That'll satisfy them."

At one point (I can't remember exactly where the scripture is, so I don't want to quote it publicly), but at one point, Pilate offered to turn his back. "If you want to kill Him, let the mob go ahead. I won't prosecute You." He actually did that, but in John 19 beginning in verse 10:

John 19:10. *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"*
11) *Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."*
12) *From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." (NKJV)*

He was stuck! The coward that he was he was stuck at this point. He couldn't weasel out of this political power play here. He couldn't do it. And there is kind of a minor lesson there too. Mixing politics and religion never works, ever.

So what they were threatening to do here is they were going to tell it far and wide that Pilate was not Caesar's friend because he was willing to let Christ go. How does that saying go? The first casualty of war in politics is truth.

John 19 verse 14:

John 19:14. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" [Pilate said.]
15) But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" (NKJV)

There's a powerful lesson there. That's where their loyalty lay.

Verse 16:

John 19:16. Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. (NKJV)

Which brings us to the tenth event, the final event that I have listed anyway.

We're not going to read about Christ being crucified. I suggest, if we haven't done it already, we go through those things before the Passover. But just looking at this individual Barabbas, he was a robber. He was a murderer. He was a troublemaker. One expositor says "He was a seditionist," caused division, did all those kinds of things. He was in prison for all these things. And if you think about the three crosses, a thief on each side of Christ, Christ took Barabbas' place on the cross (or the stake; however you want to view that). He took his place.

Matthew 27 verse 20, because this is what they did. Remember back there when Caiaphas gave them that caveat, that out? "Here's a way, if we can slip it in there, here's a way we can do it." Matthew 27 beginning in verse 20:

Matthew 27:20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.
21) The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"
22) Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"
23) Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" (NKJV)

And you will remember Pilate had some pressure going on from his wife here, too. Remember? She had seen a vision and was really troubled by it. So, he had pressure from the inside, from the outside, from everywhere.

And verse 24 says:

John 19:24. When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all [in any direction], but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." (NKJV)

He thinks he got out of everything there, but do you know what? He had to sign His [Christ's] death warrant. So, he [Pilate] didn't escape his guilt at all.

Verse 25:

John 19:25. *And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."
26) Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. (NKJV)*

And we know that scourging was part of the crucifixion procedure. One expositor said that they would scourge prisoners they were going to crucify to make them wish they were dead. And they did that to Christ.

As we read that account about Barabbas there and the events of that final week, we have to pause and think a little bit about Barabbas, because do you know what? You and I stood in his shoes. We, too, were Barabbas at one point.

I say that because there are a lot of things we know about, we know and we don't know about each other. We don't know if any one of us is a robber, murderer, a person that's filled with hate and causes division, causes turmoil and trouble. We don't know any of that.

But God knows that. Doesn't He?

The point here is we see and hear this record here and we can look at our own lives. We see a situation where one would live and one would die. Instead of facing the death penalty for what we've done, we were released because Jesus Christ died in our stead. So, when you think about Barabbas, realize that was all of us at some point. Hopefully, no more.

Also remember—and this isn't listed in the events, but it kind of comes up. I read over this. Do you remember when Christ was turned over to the soldiers after all these things? Actually, if you look at some expositors, they are going to say that He actually went through six separate interrogations/trials. All of that was illegal. He was mistreated in every way. And He was finally turned over to the soldiers.

Do you remember what they did to Him? They put the crown on His head, after they had beaten Him and all that. Then they knelt before Him. They mocked Him as a king.

The kind of lesson that is there for us is what we have to think about when we look back at all these events (denial and all of that kind of thing). We have to think "Do we mock Christ by pretending to honor Him as a king?" That's really scary just to even

think about that. But we do need to think about that because Galatians 6 says whatever we sow, we're going to reap. It is kind of scary.

So, again, when we think about the death of Christ and come together at the Passover commemorating that death, you think about some of these lessons here. As we look at these historical accounts and look at some of the details and review them and see these lessons that are embedded, I hope that each one of us will find some personal meaning in those things, in those events leading up to the death of our Savior Jesus Christ.