

47While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him." 49Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 50And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

51And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. 52Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 53"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54"How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

55At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56"But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

57Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. 58But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

59Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see **THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.**"

65Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

67Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

Something happens in our narrative between vss. 46 last week and 47 this week. It is being prayed over in the garden by our Lord, and it occurs just at this point.

I need to be careful here to not say something incorrect, because Jesus never once relinquishes control of the events, but a permission is given just here for a sequence of events.

The prince of darkness seizes on the opportunities allowed but every act is still under the ultimate control of God. Jesus hour has come, and Satan is given the power to seize, arrest, mock, judge, and murder Jesus, via his accomplices.

Judas is the first player in this new movement of the symphony. Darkness descends on the light of life. And every move is still under the control of the master of the universe. It's interesting to watch.

When Satan tempted Jesus after the 40 days in the wilderness, at the end when Jesus rebukes him, and says be gone satan, it says he departed from Him until an opportune time.

That is in Luke 4, and also in that very same chapter, just at the beginning of His ministry, you'll recall He's at His home town synagogue in Nazareth, and the people become enraged and drove Him from the synagogue and took Him to the edge of a cliff which they were going to throw Him over, and the next verse just says He went His way.

Satan has been trying to kill Him from the time He is conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit until now. Over and over and it's always the same. It's not the right time. His hour had not yet come. And the guys about

to throw Him from a cliff are suspended in freeze motion while Jesus goes His way. Something like that.

Between vs. 46 at the close of the Gethsemane scene and 47 where Judas enters, the time, which has been controlled to the nano second, is at hand. This is the time for darkness to ensue. For Satan to have his way.

47 While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Notice the sad words. One of the twelve. The synoptic writers all say that. Many years later when John writes his account, he says the angry mob arrived and Judas was *standing with them*.

He had been one of the 12. This night he stands with the angry mob. He has sold the Saviour for the price you owe if your ox gores someone else's slave.

This awful thought has troubled people for centuries. How do you have the privilege of being one of the 12, and ultimately wind up on the side of the angry mob.

It's a conundrum that can make your brain hurt if you dwell on it. Judas is just a pawn in a chess game that's out of his control. Judas is the one who fulfils all of the prophetic utterances of the betrayal of messiah. Every act, preplanned from eternity past.

And yet he is more guilty than any other man. Every nano second under the plan of God, but the guilt is on Judas. Our brains get sore trying to understand the foreknowledge of God and the responsibility of sinners.

Nick always wants to talk about limited atonement. The L in TULIP. I always shift the conversation to limited intelligence. My brain isn't big enough to understand it. But I'm happy to leave the problem with God. He has told me ahead of time, He is righteous, He is just, He is love. Those things I can understand. That's all I need to know.

If you go beyond that you become God's judge, or you re-invent God into someone you like better?

All of that to say . . . Judas is a pawn of Satan, helping to carry out the plan of Satan to murder Jesus. But Judas is 100% guilty of selling the saviour for 30 pieces of silver and setting Him on the course of death.

48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him." 49 Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

We are thankful for the harmony of the other gospel writers. They give us detail and color that Matthew did not include.

Luke tells us that when Judas gave Jesus the kiss, Jesus said, Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?

I was thinking about all of the conundrums in these events. Peter and Judas. Both men will fail Jesus on this night, but we happily would name a grandson Peter. Never Judas though. Traitor! Why is Judas a traitor and Peter isn't?

As I pondered, meditation on God's word is productive, a verse came into my mind. From 2 Tim. 2 *If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*

Peter's faith failed. That night, fear got the better of him and he fled with the other 10 disciples, fulfilling prophecy. He was faithless, but it was momentary.

Judas on the other hand did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. His actions give evidence that his heart denied the deity of the messiah. He bailed out. He sold Him for what little he could recoup of his 3 year investment. *It is inevitable that these things come, but woe to that man through whom they come.*

49Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 50And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for."

Just here John tells us that Jesus said, Who do you seek? And the officer said Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus said, I AM (he). And when He said those words the soldiers and others with their clubs and swords all fell down like domino's.

Never a man spake like this man. Then after they pick themselves up He asks it again and they repeat, Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus says, let these others go then, and the disciples take their leave at that moment.

Notice who's in control of the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth. It isn't Judas. And it isn't the soldiers. It isn't even Satan. Jesus is in control of this and all of the following events. I AM is in charge here. *50And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for."*

No one can touch Him until God permits it.

Then (and only then) *they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.* Really? After He knocks you over with two words? You still seize Him? More afraid of Annas the high priest than you are of a man who can knock your feet out from under you with 2 words?

51And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

This story appears in all 4 gospels. Only John fills in the names. Peter is the one who takes a whack at Malchus, the slave of the high priest.

I give Peter credit. The old testament is full of heroes who kill an entire philistine regiment with the jawbone of an ass. They kill giants with river pebbles. Those who are the heroes of faith who say, "If I perish, I perish."

He has made the boast that he will never fall away, and this is logical to him, if not to us. He pulls out his sword and would have followed in Elijah's footsteps slaying all of the false prophets with God's help. But

his timing was wrong.

52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

There is so much in these words for the church to ponder. First and foremost is that God's kingdom will spread and progress by His power, not by men with swords.

Not by power, or by might, but by my spirit saith the Lord. Zech. 4:6
God is fully capable of winning His battles without help from men with swords. Put that thing away Peter.

. . . for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.

What does Jesus mean here. I had to muddle over this for a while this week. Because in Luke, Jesus says, you better buy yourself a sword, within hours of this event. So we know He is not saying, do not defend yourself.

The Bible is clear, there is a time for peace and a time for war. A time to take up arms and a time to lay down arms.

Looking down through the centuries when the Roman Catholic church was killing protestants, there are many times when the protestants took up arms and fought defensively.

But that fight was never to advance the Kingdom. It was never spiritual offense. It was physical, defense. Here, Jesus is saying His Kingdom will not be advanced by the power of the sword. take up the sword, the Kingdom dies. God does not need men with swords to advance His purposes, His ongoing work to defeat Satan.

In fact Paul tells us we need a different kind of sword. He says take up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. We go and do battle

on the offense in Satan's territory, with the word of God. Not steel swords.

53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

The second part of Jesus argument. Peter, I have 12 legions of angels at my immediate disposal. That's 12 times 6000 although it's just figurative, I'm sure. 72000++ angels. 1 angel killed 185,000 Syrians in the old testament. You do the math. Jesus does not need Peter's sword added to that.

54 "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

Third part of Jesus argument. We mentioned it last week. Take Peter's sword to it's ultimate conclusion. He wipes out all the hostile jews and Romans. Jesus goes free. No crucifixion. No forgiveness of sins. No resurrection from the dead. No christian faith. Thanks for that Peter.

Every part of what was going down was not only in the plan of God, it was foretold by the prophets of old and must happen just this way. Get in the middle of that with your broad sword Peter and you'll become collateral damage. God's plan will be on schedule. With you or without you.

The other gospels tell us, Jesus put Malchus' ear back on. Perfect, as before.

One thing to note here is something we see on TV on the news all the time. In gang warfare, once someone takes the first whack, like Peter just did, it's game on. Pandemonium ensues. But not here.

Jesus is in total control. He tells Peter to put the sword away, puts Malchus ear back on, good as new, and tells Judas, OK . . proceed with what you came to do. Incredible power! Every nano second acted out by the predeterminate council and plan of God.

55At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56" But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

The inconsistency of evil. The previous 3 or 4 days he was present in the temple teaching. This cowardly act of a gang of rabble with swords and clubs coming to arrest Him as if He were armed and dangerous. How absurd, and His remark points them to their absurd inconsistency.

Then He tells them that they are in fact dupes. Actors enlisted by Satan to carry out pre-written history. Their own prophets had described these events. Now they carry them out.

This is the juncture where the believers take flight. It was pre-told in Zechariah's prophecy. Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will scatter. And so they do.

Mark's gospel includes the strange story of a young man, some say it was probably John-Mark himself, who was covered only by a wrap of linen. The rabble grabbed him and he escaped, naked, the linen left in the hands of those who sought to detain him along with Jesus.

This bit of color leads us to believe they would have detained followers along with Jesus. Time to take flight. And that's exactly what they do.

John also alludes to this very thing in his account in John 18

3Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." 8Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if

you seek Me, let these go their way,”

The disciples taking flight is also directly under the control of Jesus. He tells the rabble and the officers and soldiers, *let these go their way*.

57Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.

The phony trials of Jesus are well recorded. Annas and Caiaphas get used almost interchangeably in the accounts of the Jewish phases.

Annas would have been high priest, but Rome had deposed him, so his sons and sons-in-law are the legal figureheads while Annas is very much in the background calling the shots.

The Romans have taken capital offense authority away from the Jews. Only the Romans can give a death sentence, so the Jews, which is this group here, will do their trial first and then try to get Rome to do their wishes.

Caiaphas and Annas and the scribes and the elders are the religious ruling body in Israel. Pilate and Herod represent Rome's interests. This is kangaroo court, and it's going to happen at the courtyard of Annas and Caiaphas' house where the scribes and elders have gathered.

58But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

We know that this information is setting us up for a familiar parallel story of Peter who will deny Jesus 3 times before the trial phase is over.

59Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.

The verdict and ruling are already in. Jesus must die. But now they need to fill in the blanks with phony evidence to support their verdict.

We see this too often. Begin with the wanted verdict and fill in the gaps to try to make it seem like a legitimate case. Their consciences were seared. Darkness has fallen. Murder is in their hearts. So they are trying to obtain false testimony about the spotless Son of God.

60They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"

Time is of the essence and the clock is ticking. Jewish law says that you need two credible witnesses. They've long since walked away from credible. They're just needing any two rabble rousers that agree at least on something. Anything.

Now they have two witnesses that accuse Jesus of words. He did in fact say those words. Well, most of them. In a different context.

The account is very early in His ministry in John 2. The first cleansing of the temple, right at the beginning.

*18The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" 20The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21But He was speaking of the temple of His body.*

The Jews accuse Him of saying He would destroy the temple. He never said that. He told them if they were to destroy the temple, His body, His life, He would raise it up in 3 days and that would be the sign they seek.

So then, they've taken words and twisted them to suit themselves for their purposes. Rome has a stake in that temple. Herod used Roman authority and money and power to rebuild it into a show place. Rome owns a piece of this property they are accusing Jesus of saying He will destroy.

Caiaphas gives evidence that he understands the claim Jesus made was not directed at the physical temple, but is rather a claim to deity. He

perceives he can cover both the Jewish base and the Roman one with these words of Jesus. Twisted for his purpose.

Destroying Roman property will be a threat to Rome and claiming deity will be a crime against the Jews, and God. It's a stretch, a longshot, so he needs to add some theatre. Some outrage. Some phony thing we see on TV every day. A Hollywood talent scout would jump on this guy.

62The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63But Jesus kept silent.

We will see Isaiah 53 fulfilled both here and before Pilate. *7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8By oppression and judgment He was taken away;*

The question did not dignify an answer. Neither did the rank of the person asking it rise above the person asked in authority. This is theatre, not an attempt at any justice.

And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

Now the bull dog goes for the throat. His case is thin and he's using theatre to give it any credence. Raising his voice and acting as though something dreadful has overtaken the nation! Dancing around as though the truth of the situation were actually dangerous or grave. Like a lawyer on the offense. Good theatrics.

The high priest does in fact hold the card he is playing. *"I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us . . .* This is an authority of the office he holds. To demand the whole truth by the authority of the power of the living God. Caiaphas knows the answer Jesus will give and he knows what the next act in the theatrical play will look like.

"I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

There it is. Right out in the open. Just like Caiaphas has demanded. Clearly a blasphemer without a shred of evidence other than curing an entire country of illness, raising the dead multiple times, calming the seas at his command, and feeding several thousand people a couple of times with food He created.

And then that little thing with Malchus his slave just an hour ago. And mowing down the officers and rabble with words. Nothing really.

We look at the evidence and cringe at the willful dis-belief. The sin of rejecting the massive evidence is astounding. For them, and for the world today. It's all written down by credible witnesses, and the world today stands eyeball to eyeball with these that rejected Jesus and murdered Him on that day. They are equally guilty because the same evidence is available to men today.

We shudder at the guilt of this man, Caiaphas and his father-in-law, Annas who are in control of this massive miscarriage of justice because they hate God and desire to murder His son. Awesome sin.

But your neighbors that live up and down your block are just as guilty. The word of God is ubiquitous. Available at literally no cost. Your neighbors have closed their minds to the same evidence that Caiaphas and Annas had closed their minds to. It's available, and the guilt of rejecting it is the same.

Out where I work there's a day room in the dormitory area with a bunch of easy chairs and a large screen TV. A place to consume some beers and have a few laughs a few times a week. Stress relief.

And for most of last year, and this year to this day, on the arm of one of the chairs at the back that doesn't get used is a New King James version of the Bible, placed by the Gideons, that apparently someone could not

tolerate to be in their room, so they placed it on a chair in the day room. It remains untouched.

Why? Why didn't the guy that didn't want it in his room just place it in the trash receptacle. It's an amazing thing to me, that even the people who hate God and reject His book seem to know deep inside themselves somewhere, you don't just throw this book away. It can't help me. I've closed my mind. Perhaps it can help someone else. So it gets placed by the door in the day room. And there it lays.

The evidence is ubiquitous. I like that word. It means it's everywhere, available, and without cost. Ubiquitous. And the guilt is, likewise, therefore, ubiquitous.

Well, Caiaphas has some good theatre going in his faux trial and he's on a roll, so here comes some more.

65Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

In their economy, other people tore their clothes to show over the top emotion, but it was considered un-dignified for the high priest to do that. But this high priest is also in the midst of high theatre, and this act will cause his audience to gulp deep breaths in shock and awe.

I picture him shouting at the top of his lungs here. Nothing so disastrous or shockingly offensive has ever been seen before in Israel than this man Jesus saying he will destroy Rome's temple and then saying He is the Christ, the son of God. Nothing! This is entirely over the top. It is un-endurable. Untenable. Intolerable! It cannot remain!

What think ye?? Such theatre can only cause the same answer they went into the room with in the first place. *They answered, "He deserves death!"*

The decision of the rulers of Israel, the scribes and rulers, along with the

high priest, is unanimous. He must die. Deservedly! It is their duty before God whom they serve, to kill this offender. This Jesus. Somehow they've got to get Rome on board. That's next. For them, the verdict is in.

67Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

Isa. 53 1 *Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

*2For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*

*3He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*5But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.*

67Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

As I was thinking about these things this week, the final verses here kept

taking me back to Matthew 12 where Jesus says; 36 *“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

Some guys are spitting on the Son of God and punching Him and having a good laugh. *“Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”*

They will here those very words from their mouths again, some day, in judgement. He is the Christ. And He knows which fist punched and which mouth spoke those careless words. Not forgotten.

But for those who embrace Jesus, who ask that He cleanse their sins, that He take their offences to the cross and leave them there on the other side of the resurrection, there is forgiveness and He will forget the offence.

Psalms 103:11 - 13 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. 12As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him....

Hebrews 8:12 says very simply; *12 For I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.”*

Forgiveness is available. Only the blood of Jesus can forgive sins and remove them. No other way under heaven is possible for men.

Acts 4:12 which I just partially quoted states; *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

Jesus, and Jesus only, can make the sin go away.