

Notes from "Saint Matthew" by J.C.Fenton - Pelican Gospel Commentaries

Chapter 26 and 27

These chapters describe events of Wednesday (26.1-16), Thursday (26.17-75), Friday (27.1-61) and Saturday (27.62-66). The final chapter (28.1-15) describes Sunday. All the Gospels date these events, in contrast to the chapters that go before which are a collection of events in no particular time frame.

Chapter 26 begins with Jesus' words and the Gospel will end with Jesus speaking 28.18-20. In between, especially in these two chapters focussing on the Passion, Jesus words act as a narrative of what is happening. This is a literary tool of Matthew.

There are twelve occasions in chapters 26 - 28 when Jesus speaks but they become less frequent as time passes. Each time his words explain the significance of events. That is summarised as - it is the will of God, the scriptures are being fulfilled, God is making a new covenant with man.

These chapters may balance the texts we know as chapters 1 - 4.

- The trial by the religious leaders pair off with the temptations in the wilderness.
- The death of Jesus pairs off with his baptism.
- His journey (after resurrection) from Jerusalem to Galilee compares with his withdrawal into Galilee in chapter 2.
- His last words "*I am with you always*" is a fulfilment of the prophecy in chapter 1 "*Emmanuel (which means God with us)*".

Matthew is almost entirely dependant on Mark in this narrative although omitting, adding and changes details where he wishes. However there is nothing to suggest he had access to any other account of the Passion and resurrection other than Mark's. He does however regard the Jewish scriptures as a better authority as to what is happening.

Chapter 26 .1 - 16 (The events of Wednesday)

Chapter 26 .1,2

Chapter 25 .46 completes the teaching of Jesus. These two verses prepare the reader for what is to come and echo Matthew 20.25ff.

verse 1 - "*all these sayings*" - teaching of Jesus is now complete.

verse 2 - "*after two days the Passover is coming*" - this is the Wednesday.

"*and the Son of man is to be delivered up to be crucified*" - links Passover and crucifixion. The commemoration of the Exodus (Moses leads escape from slavery) linked with the last days when the new Moses (Jesus) leads followers into the promised land of kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 26 .3 - 5

Jesus' prediction of crucifixion starts to be fulfilled. But also fulfils scriptural prediction e.g. Psalm 2 2 "the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his anointed". Note Matthew changes Mark's text to emphasise it is the official **leaders** of the Jews that decide to kill Jesus.

- verse 3 - "*elders of the people*" (Mark has "*scribes*"). Meeting is in "*palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas*", official nature of meeting stressed. Caiaphas, not mentioned by Mark, was high priest A.D. 18 - 36 (Josephus, Antiquities, xviii, 2, 2)
- verse 4 - "*by stealth*" echoes back to 21.46 where they had "*tried to arrest him (and) feared the multitude*".
- verse 5 - "*Not during the feast*". If this is right translation it isn't fulfilled. Jesus is arrested on night of the feast 26.47. May mean "*not in the festival crowd*". i.e. "*by stealth*".

Chapter 26 .6 - 13

We return from the high priests palace to the house of Simon the leper at Bethany. This passage differs little from Mark 14.3-9.

- verse 6 - "*Simon the leper*" is mentioned only here in the Gospels.
- verse 7 - Kings are anointed on the head (see 2 Kings 9.6)
"*as he sat at table*" The literal translation is "*as he reclined at table*".
- verse 8f - Disciples only see a waste of ointment. They fail to see two other interpretations; the anointing of a king, or the anointing of the dead.
- verse 10f - Jesus defends the woman's good deed. He will not always be present with them in the flesh, but the poor will be. The woman has made the most of an opportunity that will not be present again.
- verse 12 - In Mark 16.1 three women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body after burial, but find the tomb empty. Matthew omits this (see 28.1). Jesus here claims the woman's anointing of his "*head*" has taken the place of the anointing of his "*body for burial*".
- verse 13 - Her deed will be recalled beyond Jesus' death and burial to the preaching of the Gospel "*in the whole world*".

Chapter 26 .14 - 16

A sharp contrast now occurs. The woman's elaborate gift of action and oil contrasts with Judas betraying and being paid for the deed.

- verse 14 - "*Judas Ischariot*" see 10.4 where last in the list of the twelve. See also Genesis 37.26ff where Judah (= Judas in Greek) suggested the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites for "*twenty shekels of silver*". Matthew may have this in mind but see also next verse.
- verse 15 - Matthew changes Mark's "*they promised to give him money*" to "*they paid him thirty pieces of silver*". Unlikely Matthew had additional historical information about this but instead is quoting Zechariah 11.12 "*They weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver*". Matthew also has allusions to the last chapter of Zechariah in 21.5, 24.3,30,31, 26.28 and 27.9. Matthew has taken this detail from Jewish scripture.

Week Two will be:

Matthew 26 .17 - 46

SYMBOLS OF THE PASSION (by Mike Claridge)

4. The Cross

Stark wood.

Stripped of foliage.

Twisted and gnarled.

Useless for a carpenter's trade.

Useful for a carpenter's death.

Harvests of olives had been taken from its boughs.

It had borne the fruit of new life, the oil of gladness, the black gold of the day.

Now it's fruitful days had gone.

Its bough cut back to rootstock where, in time, new life would spring.

But this old wood can be cast away useful just for the fire – except perhaps....

The Roman guard had taken it from the firewood stock as day was breaking.

They knew where it could be found.

They had used it often enough.

A piece to take a man's weight was all they needed, the olive bough would do.

Strapped to the back of the prisoner.

The rough bark rubbing the bloodied wounds.

His arms strapped to the boughs length.

You struggled under it's weight,

you a man of strength,

a working man,

but weakened by a night of torture.

You fell.

You fell again.

For a while another took your burden – a Simon.

Not your Simon though, he was long gone weeping into the night.

Now the end was in sight.

Through the gates out of the city you glimpsed your destiny.

A bare mound in the midst of the city's rubbish dump.

Not a Green Hill as some would one day sing,

but a stinking foetid place where dogs and flies abound.

Here they laid you.

Ready for the bough that bore you to be hoisted high on the stake.

Maybe they couldn't trust the ropes to hold you

Maybe they wanted to inflict still more pain.

Your hands now to be pierced.

Your blood to soak into the olive wood, death would stain the wood of healing.

Your hour had come.