

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

Ch 26 .47 - Ch 27 .10 (Thursday night and Friday morning)

Chapter 26 .47 - 56 (= Mark 14 .43 - 50)

Jesus is arrested

Since mentioned in 26.25, Judas has left the supper and assembled a mob of armed men and briefed them to arrest the man he will indicate with a kiss. Jesus rebukes someone who seeks to defend him by force and speaks of force being self-destructive. He rebukes the crowds for coming to apprehend him, as they would a robber, when they could have arrested him openly in the temple. But it is the will of God, fulfilled as predicted by *'the sheep of the flock will be scattered'*.

verse 47 - Matthew emphasises the "great" size of the crowd.

verse 48 - The "kiss" should be a sign of love (the Greek "to love" and "to kiss" are the same). Here Judas uses the same action to betray.

verse 49 - "Master" cf 26.25. The only two places in Matthew where Jesus is addressed as "Rabb". Both times by Judas.

"and he kissed him". A different word to v48 possibly meaning *"he kissed him repeatedly"*.

verse 50 - Matthew adds *"Jesus said to him, Friend, why are you here"*. The word "friend" (Gk: *hetaire*) is used in the New Testament only by Matthew, and is only used where the person addressed is in the wrong; 20.13, 22.12. The meaning of *"Why are you here?"* is uncertain, it may mean *"do that for which you have come"*.

verse 51 - Matthew changes Mark's *"one of those who stood by"*, to *"one of those who were with Jesus"*. i.e. It is a disciple. In John 18.10 it is Simon Peter.

Verses 52 - 54

These verses have been added by Matthew and have no parallel in Mark or Luke.

verse 52 - *"All who take the sword shall perish by the sword"* may have been a proverb cf Gen 9.6, Rev 13.10. Jesus taught his disciples not to resist evil in 5.39ff

verse 53f - Jesus could appeal to angelic powers, but it would disobey the purpose of God declared in scripture eg Zech 13.7 (quoted at Matthew 26.31)

verse 55 - See notes on 26.4 for the decision to arrest Jesus in secret. Matthew adds the word *"sa"* cf 5.1, 13.1,2 and 24.3

verse 56 - Matthew adds *"all this has taken place"* and also adds *"of the prophets"* possibly because he has Zechariah's prophecy in mind. However he may have Isaiah 53.12 in mind (as in Luke 22.37) as Jesus is arrested as a "robber" (v.55) and Isaiah has *"the servant was arrested with transgressors"*. The flight of the disciples them fulfils the prediction of Jesus is v.31. Matthew omits the account of the young man running away naked (Mk14.51ff)

Chapter 26 .57 - 68 (= Mark 14 .53 - 65)

Condemned by Sanhedrin

The crowd take Jesus to the palace of the high priest. The Sanhedrin are waiting to condemn him but need two witnesses according to the Law *"A single witness shall not prevail against somebody ... only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained"* (Deuteronomy 19.15). Two agree that Jesus said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it again in three days. Jesus remains silent *"like a sheep that before it's shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth"* (Isa 53.7). Jesus, on oath, is

asked whether he is the Christ. He confirms it and predicts in scriptural words his enthronement and return in judgement. The high priest asked the Sanhedrin whether this is blasphemy. They condemn and mock him and spit on him.

- verse 57 - Again Matthew the name of the High Priest as *Caiaphas* (not in Mark).
- verse 58 - Mark says Peter enters the courtyard "*warming himself at the fire*" but Matthew has his reason for being there "*to see the end*". It may be ironic as Peter, unlike the reader, doesn't know that Jesus' death is not the end.
- verse 59 - Matthew changes Mark's "*sought testimony*" to "*sought false testimony*".
- verse 61f - Jesus has predicted the destruction of the temple 23.38, 24.2 and 27.40. No action is taken on this evidence but Matthew includes it as an interpretation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. cf John 2.21.
- verse 63 - Matthew has added this further attempt to secure a conviction "*by an oath*".
- verse 64 - "*You have said so*" (Mark has "*I am*"). Cf Jesus answer to Judas v.25. "*hereafter*" may mean "*soon*".
"*seated at the right hand of power*" Power is a description of God and the words are a quotation from Ps 110.1. The '*son of man... coming on the clouds of heaven*' is from Daniel 7.13.
- verse 65 - The rabbis had laid down that, when anyone heard blasphemy, they should tear their robes.
- verse 67 - An allusion here to the LXX (the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures) where in Isa 50.6 "*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting*".
- verse 68 - Matthew adds this verse, to show how the Sanhedrin, like the soldiers later, (27.27-31) mocked Jesus for being what, in fact, he was.

Chapter 26 .69 - 75 (= Mark 14 .66 - 72) **Peter denies Jesus**

We return to Peter in the courtyard. A girl challenges Peter directly about him being a disciple, another then discusses the question in his hearing, then he is accused directly. On each occasion he denies it and, after the third, a cock crows and 26.34 is fulfilled, "*this very night before the cock crows you will deny me three times*".

- verse 70 - Matthew adds "*before them all*" although only one challenges Peter. Matthew is stressing 10.33 "*whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my father in heaven*". Peter denies in front of witnesses.
- verse 74 - "*to invoke a curse on himself*" e.g. "God smite me if I am not telling the truth".
- verse 75 - The reference is to v.34, the prediction of Peter's denial.
"*And he went out and wept bitterly*" replaces two words, of uncertain meaning, in Mark's text.

It may be we are asked to compare Peter's penitence with Judas' despair (27.4f). Much later, Paul will speak of two kinds of grief in 2 Cor 7.10, "*godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death*".

So how are we to reconcile Peter's denial with 10.33 "*whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my father in heaven*"? We are called to recognise that God's mercy is greater than anything we can do wrong. Even the words of Jesus don't limit God's grace.

It is now the Friday morning.

Chapter 27 .1 - 2 (= Mark 15 .1)***Delivered to Pilate***

There's a second meeting of the Sanhedrin who decide to hand Jesus to Pilate. Judas has delivered him to the Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin now deliver him to the Romans. Jesus has foretold these in the second Passion prediction of 20.18f, "*The Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles*".

- verse 1 - Matthew adds "*against Jesus to put him to death*" repeating v 26.59. But both Matthew and Mark have this second meeting, the purpose of which is unclear, but may be a rabbinic regulation requesting two trials before imposing a death sentence.
- verse 2 - Matthew adds "*the governor*", to explain who *Pilate* was. This is the first mention of him in Matthew. Pontus Pilate was Procurator in Judea from AD 26 - AD 36 when he was recalled because of his cruelty (Josephus, Antiquities, xviii,4,1f)

Chapter 27 .3 - 10***Death of Judas***

This is only in Matthew. Mark has no further mention of Judas after Jesus' arrest. Matthew's intention isn't to satisfy morbid curiosity but rather to show scripture again being fulfilled. Judas is shown changing his mind when he sees Jesus condemned. He tries to return the money and confesses his sins. They have nothing to say to him by way of comfort. He puts the money in the temple treasury and then hangs himself. The chief priests reject the money from the treasury and instead use it to buy land for a cemetery. This, says Matthew, fulfils a prophecy (although Matthew misquotes it). The death of Judas is also described by Luke in Acts 1.18f who either has a different source or changes detail.

- verse 3 - "*he repented*" A weaker word than the one usually used. More like "*regret*".
- verse 4 - "*innocent blood*". Manuscripts vary. May be '*righteous blood*' cf 27.19 "*blood*" as used here means a living person (see also verses 8 and 24f) "*See to it yourself*" See 27.24 where Pilate uses the same words, also in a passage not in Mark.
- verse 5 - "*throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple*" This may allude to Judas offering the money to the temple treasury. See Zech 11.13 "*I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them into the treasury in the house of the Lord*".
- verse 6 - The chief priests may be rejecting the money on the basis of Deut 23.18.
- verse 7 - "*potter's field*" (See below 9f)
- verse 8 - "*the Field of Blood*". Because it was bought with *blood money* (vv4 and 6)
- verse 9f - "*fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah*" This isn't from Jeremiah but from Zechariah 11.12f). It may be a confusion because Jeremiah bought a field and visited a potter (Jeremiah 32.6-15 and 18.2ff). The quotation from Zechariah existed in different forms, explaining the alternative interpretations in v5 and here.

Week Four : Matthew, Chapter 27, verses 11 - 37
Trial before Pilate - Crowned with thorns - Mocked - Crucified.

NB: The evening session is on Thursday 19th, not the Wednesday.

SYMBOLS OF THE PASSION (by Mike Claridge)

2. The Whip

The humiliation.

Bound helpless to the stone cold pillar of the guardhouse.

Naked before your torturers.

A whip does its cruellest work.

A whip used for the dogs detested by Romans.

Now used to humiliate a detested man, but a man they hardly know.

How the night had changed.

Arrested as night fell by the hired thugs of the regime.

Betrayed by a friend, and abandoned by others.

Taken to the torturers.

Alone - but in the midst of those who persecuted you.

The foul language of the torturers couldn't hurt you, you'd heard it all before.

But the blows were hard to take.

Fists and sticks beating against your body.

And the whip tearing flesh and biting to the bone.

A cruel instrument of lead tipped cords.

Wielded by someone who knows his trade – his brutal trade.

Passed from man to man throughout the long dark night.

Those who you had challenged now reeked their revenge.

Rulers and religious leaders, foreigner and Jew.

Not knowing what to do with you, but fearing.

Deeply fearing.

Fearing your people who might riot in your cause if you were freed.

Fearing your people who might riot in your cause if you were condemned.

What to do? Who to do it?

They washed their hands and passed you on.

To find a way out, the people must condemn, your people compelled by force of arms.

Everyone fears the threat of violence.

Threats to their family by those who come with clubs and swords.

The people came, they had no choice if those at home are to be spared.

They did as the thugs demanded.

Crucify you?

If that is what they want.

With tears in their eyes their voices signed your death warrant.

You saw them, you loved them.

Hard as it was you knew you must die for them.

Their freedom could be won at a price.

You were that price.