

# Matthew 26:36-27:26 - The Trials of Jesus

To Read:

1. Jeremiah 25
2. Jeremiah 19

## I. Introduction

### A. Last week we started the last part of Matthew, what I'm calling the Grand Finale

1. We saw that the five sections of Matthew serve as a new Torah for the new people of God, and this Grand Finale seals this new Torah for this new people
2. So, in this section, we are going to see the story of the Passover fulfilled, the story of the covenant making fulfilled, and all of the promises to Abraham, to Moses and to David are going to be fulfilled in Christ
3. And the glory of the gospel is that all of these promises are fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus - the cross will serve to deliver God's people from bondage, seal them in covenant with Him, enthrone an eternal king over the people of God and send the promised blessing to all nations

### B. So last week we started to study the path to the cross

1. And, in Matthew 26, we saw that Matthew wanted to prepare our hearts and our minds for the glories of the cross - He wanted us to feel the awe of the cross and to know the meaning of the cross
2. And particularly, Matthew wanted us to see that the cross would be the fulfillment of the Passover story, the price to redeem dead slaves, and the seal of a New Covenant for the people of God
3. This week we are going to continue studying the path to the cross, picking up where we left off in Matthew 26:36 and continuing to the end of Jesus' trial in Matthew 27:26

### C. Let's read Matthew 26:36-27:26

### D. As we study our text this week, we see that Matthew keeps the same organization that he did in our study last week

1. We see alternating sets of stories: one story focused on Jesus and another story focused on betrayal
  - a. Whereas last week we saw predictions of betrayal, this week we see the betrayal acted on
  - b. We see Judas betray Jesus, we see Peter deny Jesus, we see Judas reap the fruit of betrayal, and we see the crowd choose a notorious murderer over the perfect Son of God
2. But, as I studied the passage this week, what struck me was the different actors in the story - there are three different people or groups of people in this passage that have distinct stories as we approach the cross
  - a. First, the cross clearly involves Jesus - Matthew gives us a portrait of Jesus approaching the cross showing us His attitudes and actions as He nears and enters His suffering and Matthew continues to teach us what Jesus' cross meant
  - b. But, in stark contrast, the cross also involved the Jewish nation, embodied primarily in the chief priests and elders but by the end, the entire Jewish crowd is crying out for Jesus' death - what does the cross mean for the Jewish nation?
  - c. And, third, we see that the cross involves the disciples, especially represented in Peter - what should the disciples response to the cross be?

### E. So, as we study this last section of text before the crucifixion, I want to focus on these three groups of people

1. Proposition: Matthew highlights three people or groups of people as we approach the cross and he calls us to consider ourselves - what will our response to the cross be, what will we do with Jesus?
  - a. Jesus and the cross
  - b. The Jews and the cross
  - c. Disciples and the cross

## 1 II. Jesus and the Cross

- Matthew's main character on the road to the cross is obviously Jesus, and he wants us to see Jesus as He goes to the cross
- How did Jesus go to the cross and why? And what does this teach us about the cross?
- So, I want to look at four things about Jesus and the cross from our passage

### 1 A. First, Jesus faced the depths of God's wrath at the cross

1. As we start our passage this morning, we pick up where we left off last week - Jesus and the disciples left the Passover meal and are singing Psalms as they go out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus place of residence for the last week
  - a. But, as they reach the Mount of Olives, Jesus turns aside and enters a place called Gethsemane, the oil press
  - b. And as He enters we see the humanity of Jesus on display as the full weight of what is about to happen descends on Him - we see Him weak and in distress, even fearful of what is about to happen
  - c. And so Jesus seeks the aid of His Father, He pleads earnestly with His Father three times that His impending doom be turned aside, He seeks to see if there is any other way other for Him to go
  - d. Three times He prays, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"*
2. And as we see Jesus broken and weeping, seeking to prevent His death by any means possible, we have to ask, why?
  - a. Have not men throughout the ages faced death with more aplomb, have not men stood stoically and even laughed in the face of death? Did not Nathan Hale part this world saying, "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country"? Did not Paul say that he preferred death to life?
  - b. So, why was Jesus, the eternal and infinitely powerful Son of God, reduced to weeping, even to sweating blood, as He approached His death? Was He less of a man than many who have come before and since?
  - c. Clearly, the answer is 'no!' and this calls us to see the significance of what is about to happen
3. The wording of Jesus' prayer was no accident but a reference to Scripture
  - a. The Old Testament had promised that God's wrath would fall on His enemies, wrath so great that none could endure it and yet God would pour out its fullness on those who scorned Him, and the image is a cup of wrath
  - 1 b. Psalm 75:6-8 - *For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.*
  - 2 c. Jer. 25 - *Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them." ... "Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you.' "And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink! For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of hosts.'*
  - d. Jesus was not merely facing death, He was not even facing death and the judgment of God on the sins of a man - He was facing the wrath of God poured out against all the sin of His people, and Jesus would drain the cup to the dregs
4. Jesus death would be a death under the wrath and curse of God, and Jesus rightly was terrified of such a death, He knew the depth of His Father's wrath and He knew that He was about to absorb the full blow

### 2 B. And yet, second, Jesus went as a willing sacrifice

1. Before we leave Gethsemane, we need to examine the second half of Jesus' prayer
  - 2 a. Jesus prayed, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"* but He also prayed, *"not as I will, but as you will"* or again, *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."* and yet again a third time
  - b. Jesus was rightly terrified of the infinite depths of the wrath of God, but that doesn't mean that Jesus turned away from His purpose - if there was any way to fulfill His purpose and accomplish His Father's will apart from the cross, He would, but if not, He would go willingly, His Father's will would be His delight
2. And having received strength in prayer, Jesus' resolve to fulfill His Father's plan only grows as He approaches the cross
  - a. So, in rebuke to the disciples, Jesus says, *"Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"*
  - b. Jesus could have turned away, at His plea the Father would have sent armies worth of heavenly beings to destroy Jesus' enemies and to abolish mankind from the earth - Jesus could have turned aside and forfeited salvation
  - c. But Jesus wanted to keep God's promise, He wanted to fulfill Scripture, He would not turn aside but He would willingly advance to the cross
3. The depths of God's wrath were infinite and terrible beyond measure, yet Jesus' obedience to His Father's desire was deeper yet He set His face again like flint to go meet it, He obeyed His Father's will
  - 1 a. Hebrews 5:8 - *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*
  - 1 b. Philippians 2:8 - *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

**2 C. And third, in even greater contrast, Jesus went as an innocent sacrifice**

1. As the betrayer betrays Jesus and the guards take hold of Him, Jesus challenges His foes to see Him for who He was
  - 1 a. *"Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me."*
  - b. Jesus called them to see what they were doing - they had ambushed Him and arrested Him at night because they knew that He was innocent and that any charge brought in the light of day before the people would fall short
  - c. And, as Jesus enters a series of trumped up trials, each trial only serves to highlight this fact - Jesus was innocent
2. So, the guards bring Him to the first trial in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest and they sought any testimony that would allow them to declare Him guilty and destroy Him, but they found none
  - 1 a. *Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.*
  - b. In the end, the best they could do was an illegal oath placed on Jesus to declare if He was the Son of God, they condemned Him for His affirmation of the truth under oath and not for any crime that He had committed
3. And then, in the morning as the Jews ratified His sentence of death, Judas, his betrayer comes and testifies to the truth
  - 1 a. Judas says to the priests, *"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,"* and the priests reply, *"What is that to us?"*
  - b. Even Jesus' mortal enemies knew that He was innocent - Judas was wracked by guilt under the conviction that Jesus had done nothing wrong, and the priests don't disagree, they merely cast the testimony aside saying that His innocence would mean nothing to them - their verdict has nothing to do with Jesus' guilt
4. And then, in a third trial, Jesus stands before the Roman governor who had to approve any sentence of death
  - 1 a. Pilate, far from finding anything wrong with Jesus, is amazed at Jesus and His verdict is clear - *For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.*
  - 1 b. And not only Pilate, but his wife also declared Him to be righteous - *"Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."*
  - 1 c. So Pilate cries out to the crowd as they call for His death - *"Why, what evil has he done?"* but, in fear and cold calculation, the best Pilate can do is wash his hands saying, *"I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."*
5. There's not a single character in the story that finds Jesus guilty - even His betrayer, His accusers, His judges, and those who condemn Him find Him innocent - they declare Him guilty, but find Him innocent
  - a. Jesus was going to die under the full wrath of God, but it wouldn't be for anything that He had done
  - b. Jesus did not deserve to die under God's wrath, He was innocent

**2 D. And fourth, all of this was because Jesus went as a substitutionary sacrifice**

1. The end of Jesus' trial is a poignant picture - *Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ... Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"*
2. Barabbas was an insurrectionist and a murderer, a traitor against Rome and against the Jewish people
  - a. Barabbas rightly and richly deserved judicial execution, he had no plea to make - his suffering and death was unavoidable - the cross was reserved for people like Barabbas, the worst of the worst, 'notorious prisoners'
  - b. Barabbas stood condemned, there was no hope for him, but something amazing happens
3. Somehow, under God's sovereignty, even the Romans picked up some small understanding of the Passover story, so they had a habit of releasing a prisoner at Passover - judgment would pass over them
  - a. Pilate decides that this is a good way out of having to deal with Jesus, so he takes his most innocent prisoner and his most guilty prisoner and offers one of them to the crowd to go free - obviously he thinks they'll choose Jesus
  - b. But the crowd chooses Barabbas - at first Pilate starts to argue with them, but they shout him down for Barabbas
4. Barabbas the guilty went free because Jesus the innocent went to death - Barabbas was passed over because of the blood of the Passover Lamb
  - a. But Matthew, and all of the Gospels, include this story because it is a picture of what is happening at the cross
  - b. Jesus was innocent and yet He willingly faced the depths of God's wrath because He did it in place of another - Jesus went to as a substitute, the Passover Lamb, the blood that exhausted God's wrath and turned it aside
  - 1 c. Jesus traded places with His people - His people were guilty and He was innocent, but - *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (II Corinthians 5:21)
  - 1 d. I Peter 3:18 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,*
5. Jesus faced all of God's wrath as a substitute; He would drain the cup of God's wrath to the dregs so that none would be left for His people; He would be the blood of the Passover Lamb providing deliverance to His people

### 1 III. The Jews and the Cross

- Jesus and what He is doing at the cross is the most important part of Matthew's story, but there is another group that is focused on as well - the Jewish nation represented in the chief priests and elders and the crowd that gathers at the crucifixion
- Remember that Matthew is righting to a largely Jewish audience, a group of Christians that was probably struggling to understand the relationship of Judaism to Christianity, a group that may have been tempted to go back to the old ways
- So Matthew not only declares what Jesus has done for a new people of God but also shows that the time of the old people of God, the Jewish nation, is at an end - and Matthew's climax for this story also comes at the cross

#### 1 A. In fact, Matthew has been preparing us to see the cross as the final nail in the coffin of the Jewish nation

1. Remember Jesus' parable in Matthew 21:33-40 - *"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."*
2. The tenants, the temporary holders of the title 'God's people', the Jewish nation had continually rejected God's word and killed His prophets and the last straw would come when they kill God's Son
3. Whatever else it meant, Jesus' death would serve to stoke the wrath of God against the failed Jewish nation and usher in a new people of God - the Jews would not always be God's people, they had merely been tenants and they were being kicked out - the vineyard would be given to someone else

#### 2 B. So, as we approach the cross, Matthew makes it clear: while the cross would be the salvation of a new people of God, it would also be the destruction of the old people of God - the cross would declare the end of their tenancy

1. We see this in several ways in our passage this morning, first at the trial at the house of Caiaphas
2. The council has been seeking for satisfactory witnesses to declare a verdict against Jesus and they are failing in their mission - if something doesn't happen, they may have to release Jesus
3. So Caiaphas puts Jesus under an oath, saying *"I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."*
1. 4. Jesus answer is twofold, first He carefully affirms the truth of the statement, but He throws the truth back in judgment at Caiaphas, *"You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*
5. The *'You have said so,'* is significant - Jesus is telling Caiaphas that he very well knows who Jesus is, so when Caiaphas condemns Jesus it will only serve to bring judgment against Him
6. So we see that phrase once more, the phrase we tried to carefully deal with in Matthew 24, *'coming on the clouds of heaven'* - Jesus was the Son of God and His wrongful death would bring the wrath of God represented in the armies of the north down on Jerusalem, with Jesus, the Son of Man, directing Caiaphas' destruction
7. For the Jewish nation, and I want to be careful here, I'm saying the Jewish nation, not individual Jews, this truth is no justification for anti-Semitism and I'm not suggesting that in any way - but for the Jewish nation, the group that held the title 'the people of God', Jesus' death would call down the wrath of God against them

#### 2 C. But Jesus isn't the only one who calls the wrath of God down on the Jewish nation, the Jews also call destruction down on their own heads

1. So, as we come to the Roman trial, Pilate, unable to find any reason to condemn Jesus, washes his hands, declaring himself innocent of Jesus' blood
1. 2. And, in reply, all of the people answered, *"His blood be on us and on our children!"*
3. The Jewish nation willingly and even eagerly assumes the blood debt for Jesus' death - God's condemnation and expulsion of the Jewish nation would not be capricious, without reason, but for open and acknowledge rebellion against Him
4. For ethnic Jews who joined the new people of God there should be no reason to go back to the old people or the old ways - the former and temporary people of God now stood under God's judgment and were soon to be destroyed
5. And for ethnic gentiles who joined the new people of God there would be even less reason to assume the pictures and patterns of the Jewish nation - the plan of God had used them to be a picture of His people and to be the ethnicity of the Christ, but their time had come to an end - the new people of God, the church of Jesus, was what should be clung to

**2D. In a way, this condemnation and expulsion of the old people of God is at the heart of Matthew's thoughts here**

1. Matthew talks several times in general about Jesus' death fulfilling Scripture, but in our passage this morning He only specifically quotes prophecy one time in reference to Judas' death
  - a. Matthew 27:5-10 - *And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."*
2. Now, this is one of the more confusing quotations of prophecy in the New Testament because Matthew attributes the prophecy to Jeremiah the prophet
  - 1 a. The quote, though, comes from Zechariah 11:12-13 - *Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"---the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*
  - b. The prophecy in Zechariah is a promise of judgment against the false shepherds who condemned the true Shepherd
  - c. Now some would say that Matthew was likely working from memory and just got the reference wrong, and that would be a very easy way to reconcile the passage because the quote obviously fits
  - d. But as I meditate on this problem that answer doesn't seem to fit my understanding of inspiration - assuredly Matthew could make mistakes and misattribute a quote, but God would not and either this word is inspired in such a way that it can truly be called God's Word or it is not - so, maybe Matthew was wrong and just misattributed a quote, but for my part, I'm going to look for something deeper that Matthew is trying to point us to here
3. While the direct quote comes from Zechariah 11, many of the same words are used several times in Jeremiah
  - a. In Jeremiah 18, Jeremiah goes to the potter's house where the potter takes a misshapen pot and destroyed it, reworking it into another vessel and God declares that He is the potter who is sovereign to build up a people and to destroy a people in order to fulfill His sovereign plan
  - 2 b. And in Jeremiah 19, Jeremiah buys one of the potter's vessels and takes it to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom or the Kidron valley and casts the pot into the valley breaking and says, *'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind--- therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter... "Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, and shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. Thus will I do to this place, declares the LORD, and to its inhabitants, making this city like Topheth.'*
4. So, what I think Matthew is saying is that the clear fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah is pointing us back to an earlier prophecy from Jeremiah that is also fulfilled here
  - a. Zechariah's prophecy had been very clearly fulfilled and it promised a coming judgment, but Jeremiah helps us understand this judgment better
  - b. The prophecy of Zechariah actually prepares us for Jeremiah's prophecy, because after the money is thrown into the house of God, to the potter a vessel is taken to the Kidron valley and destroyed - Judas himself - and, as we see from the other gospels, he literally is cast down into the valley and burst open just like Jeremiah's pot
  - c. And then the field in which he fell was renamed 'the field of blood' a clear reminder of Jeremiah's 'valley of slaughter' - they are not the exact same words but the idea is exactly the same - the pattern of Jeremiah's prophecy is being enacted in Judas himself - Jeremiah's prophecy is being fulfilled here
5. But, if Jeremiah's prophecy is being fulfilled, then the destruction promised by Jeremiah is also about to happen
  - a. Jeremiah said that the vessel being cast into the Kidron valley and burst open would be the symbol that Jerusalem and Judea were about to be completely destroyed - as the vessel had been destroyed so would the old people of God be destroyed
6. God's people were ripe for judgment and the cross would be the last straw - the cross meant salvation for the world but it also meant destruction for the Jewish nation
  - a. Matthew wants us to see there is a new people of God - the old people of God were only temporary and were soon to be destroyed - we do not need to become part of them or emulate their ways but follow our Lord

## 1 IV. Disciples and the Cross

- There's one last group that Matthew deals with in this passage and as I close I want to take this passage and apply it to us
- How should a disciple approach the cross? What does all of this have to do with us?
- So, I'm going to go back through the passage one more time and pick out a few things we've overlooked, primarily dealing with the disciples and their actions as we approach the cross, but actually I want to start our application this morning with Pilate

### 1 A. A disciple is called to choose Jesus

1. Pilate is an interesting figure in all of the gospels - you get the sense that he thinks what is happening to Jesus is wrong, but in the end he doesn't stop it - probably because he was a harsh and calculating ruler who just wanted to keep order
  - a. But it is from Pilate that I want to draw our first and main application this morning because Pilate understands more than he thinks - he understood Jesus' innocence, he understood the priests envy, he understands that Jesus should be set free and so he asks the right question - he gets the answer wrong, but he asks the right question
- 1 b. As Pilate offers Barabbas or Jesus to the crowd and the crowd chooses Barabbas, Pilate is clearly confused - he expected the opposite choice, so he calls out to the crowd, *"Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"*
  - c. This is the question that faces every man, woman and child of all time in all places - what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? I have seen how everyone else has responded to Jesus, but how am I going to respond?
2. As we've approached the cross, Matthew has clearly drawn two sides here - Jesus and the Jews - and he calls the reader to ponder this question - which side will I choose?
  - a. Will I side with Jesus, acknowledging His claims of kingship and of deity and accepting His offer of forgiveness and restoration, or will I side with Jesus' enemies, despising His claims and refusing His offer? Will I embrace Jesus or will I reject Him? Matthew draws these two sides so clearly because you can only belong to one side or the other
3. So Matthew is calling us to evaluate the claims that are made in this section and determine how we will respond
  - a. Is God's wrath terrible beyond measure and did it need to be satisfied? What does that mean for me?
  - b. Was Jesus completely sinless, innocent of any and every charge and yet go to death? What does that mean for me?
  - c. Did Jesus willingly offer Himself as a sacrifice to God? What does that mean for me?
  - d. Did I need a substitute to stand in my place? Did I stand condemned with no hope of rescue? Has Jesus offered to trade places with me, to take my condemnation and give me His freedom? What does that mean for me?
4. A disciple is called to choose Jesus and to embrace His claims for themselves - a disciple is called to make the opposite choice of Pilate, to neither actively nor passively join those who scorn Jesus but to fully embrace Him for themselves
  - a. But how do we do this? How is this lived out in light of the cross? What does embracing Jesus look like?

### 2 B. What does this mean? First, a disciple is called not to fight for Jesus

1. If a disciple is called to embrace Jesus, to evaluate His claims, bow to His kingship and accept His offer of substitution, then as we live out the life of a disciple, this ought to be reflected in our lives
  - a. But we could be misled as to what embracing Jesus' claims means for our day to day lives
  - b. If Jesus is in the right, if He is the innocent Son of God and the rightful ruler of the universe, then should not disciples take up arms and fight for Him? Shouldn't they be trying to overthrow the rulers of this world?
- 1 2. But consider what happened when the guards came to arrest Jesus, Matthew 26:50-51 - *Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.*
  - a. One of the disciples, Matthew keeps him anonymous but John tells us that it was Peter, he chose Jesus - even in the face of overwhelming odds, Peter decided that he was going to keep his vow and stay with Jesus to the end
  - b. It wasn't like Peter had any sort of chance in defeating the guard that came to arrest Jesus, Matthew says it was a great armed crowd that came to take Jesus, Peter showed great bravery and great dedication to Jesus by standing alone by Him and fighting for Him when clearly the fight was futile
  - c. If we didn't know what Jesus was about to say, I'd wager that many would hail Peter as a hero, opposing the corrupt system that would condemn Jesus
- 1 3. But Jesus rebukes Peter - *"Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."*
  - a. Jesus says that Peter's bravery and his dedication was not right - Peter chose the right side, but in completely the wrong way - disciples aren't called to militancy, disciples aren't called to fight the world to defend Jesus
  - b. Our opposition to the world, our choosing sides with Jesus, is not an opposition that fights - the new people of God is not a worldly kingdom where we must have the ascendancy and we will fight those who oppose us - siding with Jesus will never mean fighting for Jesus with the weapons of this world
4. And we can't ignore what Jesus says, claiming that was a one-time remark to Peter, because Jesus Himself turns it into something like a parable - *For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.*
  - a. Yes, Peter can't fight for Jesus right now because if by some wild chance Peter wins the plan of salvation will go awry - but Jesus doesn't leave it at that, He calls all of His followers to consider this truth
  - b. The kingdom of heaven is never advanced using worldly weapons, that's not what it means to side with Jesus

## 2 C. What does this mean? On the other hand, a disciple is called not to deny Jesus

1. Not to minimize Jesus' suffering at all on this night, but I feel for Peter here - Peter has a very hard night this night
  - a. He vows to stick by Jesus even to death even against Jesus' warnings and then he tries to keep his vow by drawing his sword and fighting for Jesus only to be rebuked by Jesus and told to put his sword away
  - b. At this point, Peter is probably confused and scared - Jesus won't let me fight for Him but I also just clearly identified myself with Jesus and the crowd is very angry with Jesus, what do I do now?
  - c. This is looking more and more like a situation where I might die with nothing to gain, so what now?
  - d. To His credit, Peter doesn't just run away and hide, maybe hightail it back to Galilee and hope everyone forgets about him - that would have been high on my list of options I think - but instead he tries to stay near Jesus
2. So, as we follow Peter, we find him again in the courtyard of the high priest as Jesus' trial is taking place
  - a. Peter's confused, he wants to stay with Jesus but he also doesn't want to stick out - if he can't fight, being identified as being with Jesus might be very dangerous, so Peter wants to stay close to Jesus but reside in the shadows
  - b. Unfortunately, he's recognized, and not just once, but three times someone asks him if he is a follower of Jesus
  - c. Now Peter is faced with a difficult choice - do I try to hide my connection with Jesus so that I can stay involved with what is going on or do I confess Jesus and likely get arrested, maybe even die? Especially if I can't defend myself, the confessing option is probably looking pretty weak at this point - better to try to deflect the questions and hide in the shadows
- 3 d. And this is what Peter does - his first denial is more a deflection than an outright denial - *I do not know what you mean*, but his denials become more and more harsh as the night goes on - *I do not know the man* - and finally he invokes a curse on himself saying - *I do not know the man!*
3. But then the cock crows and Peter realizes what has happened, just as Jesus had told Him, He had denied His Lord three times, and Peter went out and wept bitterly
  - a. A disciple is called not to deny Jesus - siding with Jesus may not mean that we are fighting for Jesus, but it does mean that we confess Jesus, we make our choice of Jesus public before the world
  - b. To embrace what Jesus is for us means to confess Him as Lord unashamedly

## 2 D. A disciple is called to suffer with Jesus

1. I've been building to this through this section, but these two negatives leave us in an interesting situation - if we aren't called to fight for Jesus and we aren't to deny Jesus, we're left in a hard and potentially dangerous place
  - a. We're left in a place that none of us in our sinful flesh wants to be - a place where we might have to imitate Jesus in His suffering and imitate His attitude in His suffering, because the world may hate us, in fact the world will hate us if we confess Jesus but we aren't going to fight back
  - b. And I know that I understand well Peter's feelings here because I feel them in myself - I feel pulled between the two poles of fighting back or hiding my association with Jesus, but we are called to reject both of those options - we don't fight back and we don't hide our association with Jesus, instead we are called to embrace Jesus in suffering
- 1 2. In fact, Jesus told disciples that this is what His cross would mean for their lives, Matthew 16:24 - *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*
  - a. If we are going to side with Jesus it means following Him on the path of the cross
  - b. Now, I don't meant that we go around looking for ways to suffer for Jesus - suffering will find us easily enough - we simply do these two things: we freely confess our association with Jesus and then we don't fight back and then we embrace the suffering that happens to us because we bear Jesus' name
3. And a surprising amount of the New Testament is calling us to this attitude, and attitude that, unfortunately, is often missing in the church throughout the ages and an attitude that I think many American Christian's would find anathema
  - 1 a. But embracing Jesus' suffering was Paul's goal, Philippians 3:10-11 - *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*
  - 1 b. And Paul calls Timothy to the same attitude, 2 Timothy 1:8 - *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,*
  - 1 c. Or again in 2 Timothy 2:3 - *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*
  - 1 d. In fact, Peter tells us to rejoice in suffering, 1 Peter 4:13 - *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*
4. We are called to confess Jesus and then let what happens happen - we are called neither a spirit of militancy nor of deceit but a spirit that reflects Jesus in truth and meekness - that's what it means to embrace Jesus, that's what it means to embrace the cross - when we embrace Jesus we lay our lives down and embrace Jesus' suffering
  - a. But we don't do this without reason - we do this because the joys, the treasures that Jesus offers to us that suffering for His name, even losing our lives is of no consequence in comparison
  - b. Jesus has offered us Himself - He will take judgment in our place, He has offered us His body as our sustenance and His blood as our seal - compared to that, our lives are worth nothing