

Bible Study # 38
June 27, 1989
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 25:14—26:75; Mark 13:37—14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1—18:27

We are almost to the end of our survey—at least, the Gospel part of it. We will be getting into the book of Acts as we finish the Gospels. This Bible study and our next Bible study will complete the Gospels portion of it, and then we have three studies in the book of Acts.

We are picking up the story at the time just immediately before Jesus' final Passover. One of the things that I think we have seen is the way things have really begun to come to a climax at the very end of Christ's ministry.

One of the things to note is that Jesus had been in Jerusalem earlier. He had been there at the time of the Hanukkah celebration (25th day of Kislev), which is in the latter part of December. He had been there at that time and a little while afterward, had come back. In John 11, Lazarus had gotten sick and had died by the time Christ got there. Jesus had intentionally waited until He knew Lazarus was dead. Mary and Martha had sent word asking Him if He would please come. He came there, perhaps in January, maybe February, but probably right around the latter part of January. Lazarus had been dead and buried for several days. When Jesus came, He resurrected Lazarus. Needless to say, that created no small uproar.

Think of the timing. He waited. He didn't just show up when Lazarus was sick. Then people, who want to discount God's hand, could always say he just had the flu and would have gotten better anyway. He waited until Lazarus had been dead and buried in the grave for days. Then there wasn't any question.

Lazarus was a prominent member of the community. He lived in Bethany, which is right on the outskirts of Jerusalem within less than a mile of the city gates. We would think of it, really, as a part of town, but Jerusalem had definite walls—and Bethany was outside the walls. Lazarus was a prominent individual. He owned a home where he and his sisters lived. There had been a lot of people at the funeral. They knew he was dead. They had seen him buried. Jesus came and resurrected him. There were a lot of people there when Jesus came and Lazarus was resurrected. There were multiple

witnesses to that, and it created no small stir. You can imagine that word spread like wildfire. Remember, Jesus came to the tomb and told them to roll the stone back. Martha said, 'Don't do that; don't go in there. You don't want to open up the tomb because he's been dead for days—the place stinks.'

Well, He had them open it up. And I'm sure at that point there wasn't any question that Lazarus was dead. Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came forth. Well, you can imagine that it created a tremendous furor in the area and word spread.

Jesus left immediately afterwards and went out to the Judean Desert where He was difficult to find. He went there for a period of time, out around the Jordan River, and out into the Judean Desert. He stayed out of the mainstream.

In the meantime over a period of weeks, word travels, news spreads, the story grows and people are stirred up. This is the talk of Jerusalem because Jesus had been known. He had been there and miracles had been performed. He was an authoritative teacher. He was someone who had built a certain reputation. But when He did this, this was really the "final straw"—this was monumental. It created such a furor, at that point, many of the religious leaders began to plot how they could murder Jesus and get rid of Him.

John 12:10, they also wanted to get rid of Lazarus. They were not comfortable with having him walking around because that just kind of called attention to the fact that Jesus had raised him from the dead.

It was in this context that Jesus showed up six days before the Passover. In other words, if the Passover came on Wednesday, then He showed up on the Thursday six days before. He showed up sometimes during the day on Thursday, and by Thursday evening when the evening meal was fixed, you could imagine there was quite a crowd that had gathered around. Word began to spread, and it says people came to see not only Jesus, but to see Lazarus also (John 12:9). This was quite a thing. It had gotten a lot of peoples' interest. They had the meal that Thursday evening.

The next day, on Friday, Jesus sent the disciples for a donkey. They got the donkey, and He started riding into Jerusalem—the place went wild. They began putting palm branches down and throwing their coats down so that the donkey's feet wouldn't even touch the dust of the ground. This was the idea. This huge crowd was shouting, "Hosanna to the King." They were acknowledging Him as the Messiah.

But you also have to understand what their concept was of what the Messiah was going to do. What it talks about in Isaiah, Micah and all the other places is very plain. The Messiah is going to set up a Kingdom. He is going to set up a government. They had read those scriptures. They were chafing under Roman rule. So, in their mind, this had to be the Messiah. No one could teach and preach and do the miracles that He did and not be the Messiah. He did miracles, right to the point of having raised the dead. What more could the Messiah do? The Messiah was going to throw the Romans out and establish the Kingdom. They were lining the streets, yelling and cheering and shouting. They were all excited. It is in this context that He came into Jerusalem.

Friday evening He came to the temple and saw the mess things were in. He left, went back to Bethany and spent the night. Sabbath morning He came back, and when He did, it was in that context that He walked into the temple.

Mark 11:17, He said, "...Hasn't it been written, 'My [Father's] house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers and thieves!" "Get this junk out of here!" He started heaving tables here and there, cutting loose oxen, sheep and goats and flipping open dove cages. All of a sudden, there was quite a scurry of activity.

Again, you can imagine how resentful people had been about the "rip-off" that was going on there in the temple with these priests running nothing more than just a "racket" with the sacrifices. You can imagine how people resented that. People always take note when those in authority are doing things like that. They resent it now and they resented it then. That was a very popular move. Everybody knew they shouldn't have been doing it, but nobody had done anything about it. Nobody challenged the priests and the Pharisees on it.

The whole city had just gone wild acknowledging Him as the Messiah the previous day. Nobody was prepared to come up and arrest Him. No way! He was being acknowledged, at the very least, as a prophet and many were acknowledging Him as the Messiah. They had expectations. They had decided how God was going to act.

It is interesting, as we will note, how on the one hand, they believed Him and on the other hand, they really didn't. There really wasn't faith because when He didn't conform to their expectations when He didn't do things exactly

the way they thought that He would do it, the mob very quickly turned against Him. It was only a matter of days that some of that same group were standing in a mob outside Pilate's palace yelling, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Why the variation? He didn't fit their image. He didn't do things the way they anticipated it being done. They had it all figured out in their minds as to how He had to do it. And when He didn't do it that way, they took great exception. Oh, they didn't like that at all, but this hadn't come up yet.

Of course, the Pharisees and the religious leaders all had a vested interest. Jesus came in and they were in a panic at the reception He was getting. They very quickly got together as politicians do. You hear the saying, "politics makes strange bed fellows." Well, it did back then the same as it does now. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians who normally can't stand one another, got together. It was worse than the "left wing," the "right wing" and the other "wings" in between. These were the various political factions, but they quickly got together. They had things divided up; each one had their sphere of influence. 'But if this guy keeps "muscling in," we are all going to be in trouble.'

Matthew 22:15-22, the Pharisees put the Herodians up to coming in and asking Him the questions. They came up there to confront Him on this issue of taxes. You remember He addressed that and very quickly put them in their place. They didn't have any more questions to ask.

Verses 23-33, the Sadducees came and they had their trick question on the resurrection, which they thought was the real clincher. He very quickly put them in their place and they began to slink away.

Verses 34-46, then the Pharisees showed up. They heard that the Sadducees and the Herodians had been put to shame, so they decided that they would try to "show Him up". After a couple of statements from them, His response "took the wind out of their sails". They didn't have a whole lot of other comments to make.

Matthew 21:23-27, they asked Him, 'Where do You get Your authority?' And He said, 'Let Me ask you one question—where did John get his?' This really put them at a quandary because they didn't know how to respond to that without antagonizing the crowd.

Then in Matthew 22:36-40, there was a question that came up—what's the most important part of the law? He very quickly addressed that subject.

He summed it up and explained the principles upon which the whole law hung: love God and love your neighbor. That summarized everything there was to say on the subject. None of them had any response to that.

Now He begins to set the stage.

Matthew 23:2-3, “Saying, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses. Therefore whatever they may tell you to keep, keep and do. But do not according to their works: because they command, but do not practice it themselves.’”

Verse 33, He proceeded to go through and tell them, “‘You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how are you going to escape the judgment of Gehenna?’” “‘You sons of snakes, you sons of the devil, you hypocrites—you are going to burn in hell fire.’” Boy, He began to really read them the “riot act.” There were no more questions. Needless to say, by the time He finished with that, a crowd had gathered around because He just really “laid it out” to them.

Matthew 21:43, He told them, “‘...the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and it shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of the kingdom of God.’” They were in authority, but He was in ultimate authority as God in the flesh. Here they were purporting to represent Him as the God of the Old Testament. They had so distorted and abused the responsibility they had, that they really deserved to be corrected sternly and strongly. He told the people, ‘As long as they occupy this office, respect them in it. Listen to what they say, but don’t follow their example.’

As I have mentioned before, that is advice that goes so totally “against the grain” when it comes to human nature. When people find out that someone is not practicing what he preaches, they immediately say, ‘That hypocrite!’ Well, yes, he is! He’s not practicing what he preaches. But then the response of human nature is, ‘Why should I do that? He doesn’t even do it himself. He’s been telling me to do that and he’s been doing the opposite. Why, I am not going to pay any more attention to what he says.’

Isn’t that the response that people so often have? Christ said that even if he’s a hypocrite, if he tells you the truth, do the truth; just don’t follow his hypocrisy. His problem is not that he’s preaching the wrong thing and doing the right thing. His problem is he is preaching the right and doing the wrong. What people want to do is ignore the message and follow the example. Then they get mad because they think somebody’s gotten by with something they’ve wanted to get by with

and didn’t dare try it. Then they get resentful about it. Christ made it plain as to the perspective.

This was on a Sunday. This was the day of confrontation and when all these events had occurred.

Matthew 24:1-3, He left and went back out to the Mount of Olives. As they were leaving Jerusalem going back to Bethany, He went through the Olivet prophecy with the disciples.

Matthew 25, we pick it up that Sunday evening, or late Sunday afternoon, as He is speaking to the disciples. We see here the parable of the ten virgins that Christ gave in the first 13 verses of Matthew 25. It’s apparent that the ten virgins symbolize the entire Church.

Verse 5 describes them all “going to sleep at the switch.” The bridegroom delayed His coming, and they all slumbered and slept.

Matthew 25:6, “‘Then at midnight there was a shout, “Look! The bridegroom is coming! Get ready to meet him!”’” What do we have? Christ is giving a parable. It applies and is descriptive of what happened to the Church. The Church is described here and pictured as ten virgins. It became apparent that Christ did not come immediately as they expected that He would, and by the time the destruction of Jerusalem had come, it was apparent that the Messiah was not coming back in that generation. Effectively, the Church “went to sleep at the switch.” They all slumbered and slept. The Church continued, it existed, but they went to sleep—that sense of zeal and urgency was lost.

Then when God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong in the 1920s and 1930s, the midnight cry began to go out, “Behold the bridegroom is coming!” Mr. Armstrong was raised up to cry out that, ‘Behold the bridegroom is coming! Get ready to go meet Him. Be prepared.’ That, of course, was part of the commission of John the Baptist—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Then we come forward in our time now and the earlier part of this century. We find the story is that the virgins got up and began to trim their lamps. Then we find a distinction here—five were wise and five were foolish. There has been some speculation in terms of perhaps symbolizing the Laodicean and Philadelphia eras. There are various points, but certainly the point of it is that we had better be adequately prepared with God’s Spirit because that’s what is needed to be ready.

Verses 14-30, then Christ gave the parable of the talents. The man called his servants and left property entrusted to them. He gave to them on the basis of what they were able to handle. Then after a while he came back and evaluated what they had done. Two of the servants had been diligent. They had been faithful. One had been unfaithful, unprofitable. It's made apparent here that the difference between the profitable and the unprofitable servant was that the unprofitable servant was one that was incapable of carrying out the master's expectation. He needed total, constant supervision. He didn't think like the master thought. The two who took the five talents and the two talents went out and doubled it.

The term "talent" is an old English word. It is a translation of a word that has reference to "a unit of money." The "talent" was a unit of money in the Middle East at that time. It is simply an analogy of money having been entrusted to individuals who took and used what they had been given. They did things as the master would have done had he been there and he was very well pleased. He was pleased at the way they had the big picture. They sought to be responsive to his way of doing things.

We have the contrast that is given of how we take and use what God gives us now and the growth that we bring forth. This determines our reward.

Verse 21, look at the statement, "...Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things, I will appoint you over many things: enter into the joy of your lord."

Right now, whatever our area of responsibility, it's over a few things. We have to learn to use them properly. Use the small opportunities we have right now, and God will ultimately give us great things in the Kingdom. It's a principle: if we're faithful with a little, we'll be faithful with much; if we're unfaithful on a small scale, we'll be unfaithful on a grand scale. I saw a sign the other day that I thought had an interesting point. It said, "If you can't do great things, then do small things in a great way." That's part of what it's saying right here.

Most of the things we are involved in right now are not great earth-shattering, world-moving events. The world news does not particularly take note of what you and I are doing in our daily lives. We are not making decisions that are impacting thousands and millions of people. Maybe we are only making decisions that impact us and our immediate family or a few people that work with us. What we do is on a small scale, but

if we learn to do it right on a small scale, then we have the promise of greater things.

Christ says, 'I want to see that you are learning to be a faithful servant and that I can count on you to handle things the way I would handle it. I want to see if you're developing My mind. I want to see if you are learning to think like Me. You don't need somebody to just stand there and point out every single rule, and all you do is conform to the rules.' We must be transformed to think like God.

Now if the master had been over there and said, 'Take this dollar, go over here and do this with it; take that one, go over there and do this,' then I'm sure he would have carried it out. 'You take this one, go to the bank with it and deposit my dollar.' He would have probably done that. It didn't say he was a thief. He gave the man back what he had. He had buried it. It was just that he was incapable of exercising any independent thought or action unless somebody was standing there giving him a long list of rules, spelling out every detail. He simply couldn't take and apply the principles he had learned and do it the way the master would. He didn't do that.

As we come through, Matthew 25:31-32, Christ makes plain that when the Son of Man comes in all of His glory and all the holy angels are with Him, that's when He is going to sit on the throne of His glory. That's when He is going to separate the sheep from the goats. That is a judging process. Again, an agricultural analogy is used.

If you have ever been around sheep and goats, you understand there is a distinct difference. They are not animals of the same temperament at all. It was a figure of speech that would have been easily understood to people at that time and to some of us who've had occasion to be around sheep and goats. Sheep are known for their willingness to follow the leader. Goats don't follow anyone. They tend to have a very definite mind of their own. We even use the expression of somebody being "stubborn as a Billy goat." All you have to do is have a Billy goat, and you realize how stubborn that is.

The distinction that Christ describes in Matthew 25 are those who willingly follow Him and those who are stubborn, self-willed and go their own way. What it ultimately comes down to is converted and unconverted. Are we willingly yielding ourselves and trying to follow Christ? The sheep follow the shepherd. Christ is the Good Shepherd. The sheep are the ones that try to follow Him. The goats are the ones that go charging off in their own direction. If they are

dragged back, they may come, but every time you look around, they go wandering off somewhere else. They don't want to follow.

Christ went on to make it plain that He has not been ruling and judging during the last 1900 years. He has been in heaven.

Verse 31, He says, "But when Son of man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit upon the throne of His glory." That's when He's going to sit on the throne.

Verse 32, that's when He is going to judge the nations. The judgment process is going to begin at the second coming.

Verses 35-40, "Because I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to see Me.' Then the righteous shall answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You something? Or thirsty, and gave You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and took You in? Or naked, and clothed You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You, and visited You?' And answering, the King will say to them, 'Truly I tell you, as long as you have done it to one of these, the very least of My brethren, you have done it to Me.'"

We demonstrate our real attitude toward Christ by the way we treat one another. You know, Christ takes it personally the way we treat one another. Look around. Anyone that we would consider the least of Christ's brethren, maybe they're someone who is elderly, maybe they're "this or that," maybe they're having a problem. Whatever the circumstance, do you realize that the way we treat them, Christ says, "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you've done it to Me."

He goes through and talks about this distinction of those that are going to say, 'I was hungry' or 'I needed help' or whatever it is. 'I needed a ride to Church'; 'I needed somebody to come and encourage me'; 'I needed somebody to help me' or do whatever—'And you wouldn't come.'

They will say, 'Lord, we never saw You. Boy, if I had ever seen You needing help, why surely I would have come and done it!' He says, 'No, you have not done it to one of these the least of My brethren. You wouldn't go across the street to help him; you wouldn't do it to help him. If you didn't do it to him, you didn't do it to Me.'

When we serve one another, it is the same as if we have done it to Christ personally. Maybe you

don't think of it that way. Jesus takes it personally the way we treat His brothers and sisters. That's what He calls us—His brothers and sisters. He takes it personally. It is important that we have that concept in mind. The way we treat one another, Christ is taking it personally. It's as though He were there. The next time you do something for someone realize that as God looks at it, it is the same as if you had done it personally for Jesus Christ.

We read in the New Testament about different ones that did different things for Him. Sometimes we think, 'I wish I could have been there and could have done some of those things, had that contact, had the honor of serving Him a meal, giving Him a place to sleep, doing certain of these things'—whatever it may be. Realize that if you have done it to His brethren, you have done it to Him. He takes it personally.

Then on the other hand, if we have opportunities to do something for someone and we don't, then it's just like we didn't do it for Christ. We have to look at it that way. If that were Jesus Christ there, would I go do it? Would I help Him out? Would I be willing to serve? Would it be too inconvenient? That's the point that He goes through here, "as long as you have not done it to one of these, the very least of My brethren, you have not done it to Me." He takes it personally, and I think that is an important concept.

If you really grasp that, how would there be problems and friction? How would there be gossip? Would you say that about Christ Himself? Do you realize that if we go around and say bad things about people, we are doing it to Christ? We do things and we might as well be doing it to Him. It's an important concept. If we really grasp the extent to which Jesus Christ takes it personally, then we'd have that concept in the way we treat one another. Treat one another exactly as you would treat Jesus Christ. That is a very important principle.

Two days before Passover: Matthew 26:1-5, Mark 14:1-2 and Luke 22:1-2.

Matthew 26:2, "You know that after two days the Passover takes place, and the Son of man is to be betrayed and to be crucified." This would have been Sunday evening; one day later would have been Monday evening; two days later would have been Tuesday evening—and that's when Christ and the disciples kept the Passover. This is Sunday evening.

Verses 3-5, "Then the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people were assembled together in the court of the high priest,

who was called Caiaphas. And they consulted together, in order that they might find a way to seize and arrest Jesus by deceit, and kill Him. But they said, 'Not during the Feast [of Unleavened Bread], lest there be a riot among the people.'" They were afraid of a riot. They wanted to do it quietly. They wanted to betray Him, to get rid of Him "on the quiet." They did not want a public outcry. They were afraid of trouble.

Jesus is anointed in Bethany: Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9.

Matthew 26:6, "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon..." That Sunday evening there was a dinner there at the home of Simon.

Verse 7, "A woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of ointment which was extremely expensive, and poured it on His head, as He was sitting at the table." You remember a few days earlier when He had gotten there, Martha had anointed His feet with oil and Judas had gotten very upset. Judas said, 'That's just wasteful and extravagant. Why this stuff could have been sold and the money given to the poor. It could have helped people. Look at that!' He began to talk around among some of the others and stir things up.

Verse 8, well, this time, this other woman came in and poured this ointment on His head; some of the disciples began to be indignant. You can imagine Judas is the instigator of it. He had evidently stirred up a few others, and they began to think that it was awfully wasteful and extravagant. 'Why does He encourage extravagance like that?' You know what Judas' motive had been; John made it plain.

John 12:6, "But he said this, not because he actually had concern for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money bag; and carried what was put into it." He was keeper of the bag; he was the treasurer. He wanted it sold and the money put in the "pot" because he planned on "skimming" some off the top. That was the real motive. He wasn't interested in the poor, one way or the other. He had stirred things up and it got some others stirred up.

People have done that. I remember years ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong was getting ready to build the auditorium. There were people that were all upset. 'That's extravagant! Why does he have to go out and have that carpet specially made; I know some he can get on special down there at Wal-Mart. Why doesn't he put some of that in?' Well, he didn't do it that way. And I think anyone who has ever had opportunity to be

out there and has seen it realizes that he did it just the way God inspired him to do it. In fact, if you really get back to it, the ones that were stirring it up were at the top, and they were stirring because they had the same motives as Judas. They stirred up things down through the ranks and eventually some got bitter and accusative. It's unfortunate. When people start being accusative of things, you better kind of wonder what their motives are. Judas managed to get some upset.

Matthew 26:11, Christ said, 'If you're so interested in the poor, you have plenty of opportunity to help them because they will always be here,' "...but you will not always have Me.'" 'I am not going to be here much longer.'

Verses 12-13, "'For this woman, in pouring this ointment on My body, did it toward My burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel shall be preached in all the world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of, for a memorial of her.'"

He said, 'Leave this woman alone; she's doing a good thing. This is going to be remembered. This is an act of faith on her part, and you will have plenty of opportunity to do other things.' Christ undoubtedly made it very plain. I suspect He looked Judas squarely in the eye when He said some of this and made it very plain what He was talking about because of the next thing we read.

Judas betrays Jesus: Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11 and Luke 22:3-6.

Matthew 26:14-15, "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest, and said, 'What are you willing to give me, and I will betray Him to you?' And they agreed to give him thirty pieces of silver." Judas was a traitor. Christ didn't do things Judas' way. In fact, Christ saw through Judas, and instead of Judas repenting, he became resentful to the point that he thought, 'I'll fix You; I'll get even with You.' So, he went.

Now why were the leaders willing to pay Judas this large sum of money? Thirty pieces of silver was a significant sum of money. They wanted to get Him, to arrest Him, but they did not want to try and seize Him at a public occasion because of fear that there might be a riot on their hands. As a result, they had been trying to lay wait for Him, but they never could catch Him. They wanted to seize Him privately, and Judas came and said, 'I will give you an opportunity. I will point Him out to you. I'll help you find Him privately, off away from the crowd.' That was what they wanted.

They wanted to do what they did quietly. They were not prepared to try it in the temple or some place like that.

The disciples prepare for Passover: Matthew 26:17-19, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-13 and John 13:1.

Matthew 26:17, “Now on the first of unleavened [the first day of unleavening] the disciples came to Jesus, asking Him, ‘Where do You desire that we should prepare for You to eat the Passover.’” I commented on this prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread. The reference here, in what is called “the first of the unleavened” or “the first of the unleavened bread,” is not a reference to the first holy day of Unleavened Bread (the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread) because the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread is a holy day. It comes after the Passover.

It is very plain in Leviticus 23. Passover is on the 14th, the days of Unleavened Bread begin on the 15th—and the first day is a holy day. The expression “the first of the unleavened bread” or “the first of unleavened” was a term that referred to “the 13th day of the first month.” In this year, it would have been Tuesday.

The Jews’ custom was that after 12 o’clock noon on the 13th, no more leavened bread was to be made. No more dough was to be put out to rise. They began to clean and gather up things, to gather the leavening. Now, they continued to eat the leavened bread that they had, but there had to come a point you stopped baking it. You know, you don’t bake right up to sunset on the 15th. There is a cutoff point. Their cutoff point was at noon on the 13th. After that they didn’t bake more leavened bread. They would continue to eat what they had from noon on the 13th to noon on the 14th. After noon on the 14th they burned the leavening or it was consumed that afternoon, prior to sunset that evening.

Most of us do that. We dispose of our leavening at least a few hours before or sometimes the day before. Maybe you have a little bit you have saved back, and you finish it off that morning. Well, they did something similar. The 13th was known as “the first day of the unleavened” because it was the beginning of the time, from noon, that they could only bake unleavened bread. It can be confusing as you read through it without knowing that phrase. It’s just a little awkward.

They asked, ‘Where do You want us to prepare the Passover?’ He told them and they did. I know that there are some who say that Christ changed

the time of Passover or some have said it in the past. I don’t know about saying it now, but some in the past have said that Christ changed the time of the Passover. I find it hard to reconcile that with the account that’s given right here.

The disciples brought it up. The clear implication from Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22 is they ate the Passover when they expected to eat the Passover. Can you imagine Jesus saying, ‘Go prepare the Passover’ the day before they had ever been doing it? ‘You know, we are going to eat Passover tonight.’ If they had always done it a night later, can you imagine Peter not saying, ‘Wait a minute, Lord, You are a day early, aren’t You? Why are we doing it tonight? That’s not till tomorrow night.’ Can you imagine Peter just letting it pass and not asking why? He asked for a whole lot less than that. That would have been pretty major.

There was never a “ripple,” never a question. It was never an issue. It never seemed to have come up. In fact, the disciples came to Him and said, ‘Where do You want us to prepare it?’ In fact, Peter and John were the ones that Christ sent. They didn’t have any questions. They weren’t surprised. They weren’t taken aback. It was just the normal course of things. They ate the Passover every year, and there is no indication here that they ate it any other time than when they expected to eat it.

It’s plain when you go through John’s account (John 19:14) that the Pharisees were observing it a day later than Christ did. I have no questions as to who knew the right time. Christ told Peter and John where to go and they did. Things were prepared; they went in to eat the Passover.

We will continue the account.

Matthew 26:20, “And evening came and He sat down with the twelve.”

John 13:2-5, we will pick up the account, “And during supper (the devil having already put into the mind of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Him), Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was returning to God; He rose from the supper, and put aside His garments; and took a towel, and secured it around His waist. Afterwards He poured water into a washing basin, and began washing the disciples’ feet, and wiping them with the towel which He had at His waist.” The clear implication from John 13 is that Jesus washed Judas’ feet.

I wonder if you have thought about that. Suppose you knew that somebody was a traitor, someone

who purported to be your friend, had sold you out and was collaborating with people who were going to murder you. How kindly disposed do you think you'd be toward that person? To really grasp the compassion, the mercy, the attitude, and the willingness to serve, what about serving a "Judas"? It's no big deal to serve somebody who is nice to you, somebody who is your best friend and always does good things for you. It's easy to serve that person because you want to. You serve them; they serve you. What about serving a "Judas"? Do you feel much incentive to go out and serve a "Judas"? I don't think any of us do. Christ got down and washed his feet. He had that attitude, that willingness to serve, that attitude of humbling Himself; He began washing the disciples' feet. We went through the account at Passover. I won't go into the details.

Judas dips the sop and then leaves: Matthew 26:21-25, Mark 14:18-21, Luke 22:21-23 and John 13:18-32.

Matthew 26:21, "And while they were eating, He said, 'Truly I am telling you, that one of you shall betray Me!'" It is plain that they were still eating the meal because different ones began to ask about it. This was upsetting.

John 13:24, "Then Simon Peter motioned to him [John] to ask who it might be that He was speaking about." This was a Middle Eastern style banquet. The table was fairly low to the floor, and they were reclining on cushions. The meal was on the table. John was over there right up next to Jesus, and Peter was always curious. That's why I find it hard to believe he wouldn't have asked something about Passover. He immediately kind of motioned to John and said, 'Ask Him who it is. Ask Him.'

Verse 25, "Leaning over on Jesus' chest, he asked Him, 'Lord, who is it?'"

Verse 26, "Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give this sop, after dipping it.' Then, after dipping the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, Simon's son." Now it was customary that there were not a lot of utensils that were used. Bread, even unleavened bread, would have been broken off and dipped. Often some of the food was wrapped in it and dipped in the gravy. You might compare it to a tortilla. If you have gone to a Mexican restaurant, they bring out these tortillas, and you wrap some of the food in it, using it to hold the food. Well, that's similar to what He did. He tore off a piece and wrapped a morsel of meat in it, dipped it in the gravy and handed it to someone. The dish was evidently there near Him.

He just quietly said to John, 'It will be the one that I hand this to.' And He handed it to Judas.

Verse 27, "...Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly!'"

Verse 30, "After receiving the sop, he immediately went out:" Judas got up and left.

Verses 28-29, the others really didn't grasp it; they thought that maybe Judas was being sent out to buy something for that evening or to give something to the poor—since he claimed to be so interested in them. They didn't really grasp what had happened, but in reality, Judas had gone out to betray Him. This was during the meal portion.

Eating the unleavened bread: Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

Matthew 26:26, "And while they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'" This makes it plain that it was at the conclusion of the meal, as the meal was drawing to a close, that Jesus then took the bread and the wine and gave a special significance. He took the bread, broke it and gave it to them; He said, 'This is My body, broken for you.'

Verses 27-28, "And after taking the cup, and giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it. Because this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" He took the cup and said, 'This is My blood shed for you.' This was obviously something that was done in a special way at the end of the meal to give significance to it. Judas had gone by then. It was certainly appropriate that Judas was not there to partake of the symbols of Christ's sacrifice because he didn't really accept those symbols. He did not partake of that although he was present at the foot washing. Jesus was willing to wash his feet, but Judas did not partake of the symbols of the New Covenant.

In this context, there was a contention.

Luke 22:24, "And there was also an argument among them about this: which of them should be thought to be the greatest." They got to arguing about who was the most important. Who's going to have the greatest job in the Kingdom?

Verses 25-27, "And He told them, 'The kings of the nations lord it over them; and those exercising religious authority over them are called benefactors. But with you it shall not be this way: but he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he who leads, let him be as he who serves.'" Christ made it plain that the real key to greatness is service and

humility—willing to serve and not to exalt the self.

John 13:34, “A new commandment I am giving to you, for this purpose, that you should love one another; in the same way as I have loved you, this is the way you also should love one another.” That’s the way. Not simply love. Our relationship with one another is not simply as neighbors. You are to love your neighbor as yourself. You are to deal fairly and equitably with him. Your neighbor is anybody you may come into contact with. Deal fairly and above board with all people.

But with the brethren, we are told that we’re more than neighbors—we’re brothers. We are not simply neighbors—we are family. Christ said, ‘This is the commandment that I am giving you. Don’t simply love your brother as yourself, love him the way I have loved you—with a sacrificing kind of love. We’re not commanded to love our neighbor that way. We’re commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We deal with him the way we want to be dealt with. Treat him fairly. Treat him the same way we wish to be treated. That’s certainly expected. But we’re told with the brethren we are to even go beyond that. We need to have the kind of attitude that Christ Himself had.

Peter denies Christ three times: Matthew 26:31-35, Mark 14:27-31, Luke 22:31-34 and John 13:36-38.

Matthew 26:31, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be offended because of Me during this night: because it has been written, “I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad.”’”

Verse 33, “And answering, Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all should be offended in You, I will never be offended!’” Peter was quick to tell Him, ‘I don’t care who forsakes You; I don’t care who leaves or who does what. I will never back down. I will never turn away from You. I am prepared to go to the bitter end.’

Verse 34, “Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, that during this night, before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times.’” Christ said, ‘You don’t really know what you’re saying. Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’

Verse 35, “Peter said to Him, ‘Even if it were needful for me to die with You, in no way will I deny You!’ And all the disciples answered in the same way.” Peter was just adamant; he knew he wouldn’t do that. Well, Christ knew he would because as I’ve mentioned before, there was a lesson Peter had to learn.

Peter had not come to realize that his strength was inadequate. We need more than what we can supply. We need God’s strength. Our strength is inadequate. Our strength can fail us. Peter learned that in a very humiliating experience. He learned that and he simply didn’t make the mistake of relying on his own strength anymore. He was clearly not converted at this time.

Luke 22:32, “But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail: and when you are converted, establish and strengthen your brethren.” When you are converted! That would, of course, be at the Day of Pentecost.

Next, we find Christ’s message to the disciples on that final evening of the Passover.

John 14:2, “In My Father’s house and family there are many positions and offices.” There are many responsibilities and offices.

Verses 2-3 (NKJV), “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Christ makes it plain. He didn’t tell the disciples that they would go to heaven.

Some want to quote, “In My Father’s house there are many mansions.” I can remember as a child growing up in the Baptist Church, the preacher would read, “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” Many times they do that at funerals. At that point they would close the Book and begin to talk about how the dear departed were in heaven.

As a child I remember my concept when somebody said “mansion,” the only thing I could think of was some of these antebellum-style homes. My concept, as a child, was that the streets of heaven must be lined with great big white houses with great big white columns. Many mansions—just filled with mansions.

The preachers want to stop there and give you the impression that you are going to go floating off up there; you check into that great hotel in the sky. You get your room, and you don’t check out. That is not what Christ said.

Verse 3, He said, “And if I go and prepare a position and place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you into a close personal and intimate relationship with Myself; so that where I am, you may be also.” Christ made it plain that we are not going up there and meeting Him. He is coming here to us. He didn’t say, ‘I am going away, and I will leave you a road map as to how to get there.’ He said, ‘I am going to come back.’ The term “My Father’s house” was a reference to “the temple,” which the Jews understood.

Matthew 21:13, Christ had said just a few days earlier, "...It has been written, 'My [Father's] house shall be called a house of prayer.' But you have made it a den of robbers and thieves!" The temple was symbolic of the Father's house. The temple did not symbolize heaven. The Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant symbolized the throne of God. There were many compartments and apartments. There were many places in the temple that were assigned to various offices and functions of the priesthood. The particular office or dwelling that particular ones held was in accordance with the position that they held there in the government. These apartments or places were around on three sides of the temple. They were part of the temple.

The concept given is that the New Jerusalem is going to come down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2). Christ is going to prepare a place and He's going to bring it with Him. It's ultimately going to come down. He's going to come down and assign offices and responsibilities. There's an analogy here, and it's plain that He's going to come back to bring the reward.

John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that It may remain with you forever, even into the ages of eternity."

Verse 26, "The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, It will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things, whatever I have said to you."

One of the things the Holy Spirit does is open our mind to understand spiritual things. One of the reasons we need God's Spirit is that it helps us to learn to grasp spiritual things. On our own and with God's Spirit working *with us*, we can make changes (certainly God's Spirit is with all of us here), but until you come to a point of conversion, until you come to really truly repent and be baptized, there is a difference. The difference is that with God's Spirit *with you*, you can make progress, grow, make a certain level of progress or go to a certain point on your own. You can go to a certain point, but then it's like you come up against a brick wall. You've made progress, changed, done certain things and gone as far as you can go, but you can't seem to get beyond that point. That's the point beyond which you can't go without God's Spirit *in you*! The Spirit had been *with* the disciples, but it hadn't yet come *into them*, which it would on the Day of Pentecost.

With young people growing up in the Church or new people coming in—perspective members—the Spirit is working with them, but they'll only make progress to a certain point. Beyond that point they cannot go until they surrender, make that commitment and the Spirit comes into them. Then it is like somebody tore down the wall. Progress is still a step at a time and a day at a time, but there's no longer a limitation beyond which you can't go. At that point, God's Spirit is the unlimiting factor.

Christ makes it plain there is no so-called "independent" Christian.

John 15:1-4, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that is not producing fruit, He takes it away: and every one that is producing fruit, He cleanses and purges it, so that it may produce more fruit. You are already clean through the word which I have spoken to you. Remain and live in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch is not able to produce fruit by itself, all alone, except it remain and live in the vine; in exactly the same way, neither can you produce fruit, except you remain and live in Me."

Imagine cutting off a branch, tying it to a fence post or a telephone pole and expecting it to bear fruit. Of course not! You cut off the branch, and it is not receiving nourishment anymore from the trunk—it dries up and withers.

Verse 6, the only thing you can use it for is firewood. Christ made that plain. All the branches have to stay attached to the main trunk. We have to be unified. The source of our ability comes through Christ. It comes through being attached to the body. Christ also made it plain to the disciples.

Verse 16, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you. Also, I have ordained and appointed you, that you should go out and produce fruit, and that your fruit should remain: so that whatever you may ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you."

Why are you here? Why am I here? Well, God called us; God chose us. I am not here because I figured it out for myself, and you're not here because you did it yourself. God sought us; God called us. Christ said, 'You haven't chosen Me; I have chosen you.' We didn't take the initiative, God did. He took the initiative in our lives. If God had not taken the first step, we would still be in our sins.

Christ then went on talking about how we would have trials and tribulation. Why did He tell us we should take courage?

John 16:33, “I have spoken these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good courage; I have overcome and conquered the world!” ‘I have overcome! I have conquered!’ We can have courage in facing whatever problems, whatever trial, whatever difficulties in this world, realizing that Christ has already won. The battle is won. The war is won, and all we have to do is hang on to the winning side. It’s already determined.

I am not going through every detail here in John 14, 15 and 16. We went through that on Passover. I’ll hit some of the high points. We note here they had been there in the upper room where they had the Passover service.

Jesus comes to Gethsemane to pray: Matthew 26:36, Mark 14:32 and Luke 22:39.

Then Christ and the disciples left and on the way out to the Garden of Gethsemane, they were discussing some of the things that are here in John 15 and 16. We have the account of what Jesus was telling them as they were walking along. By this time they came to Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:36, “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane: and He said to the disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go and pray nearby.’”

Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him: Matthew 26:37-38, Mark 14:33-34 and Luke 22:40

Matthew 26:37, “Then He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee: and He began to be extremely sad and deeply depressed.” The whole reality of what was happening began to converge on Him, and it just overwhelmed Him. He felt just absolutely overwhelmed at the thought.

Verse 38, “Then He said to them, ‘My soul is extremely sad, even to death: wait here, and watch with Me.’” ‘I just feel so depressed that life is a burden. I am just extremely overwhelmed with this sense of what is happening.’ He said, “Wait here and watch with Me.”

Jesus prays for three hours: Matthew 26:39-44, Mark 14:35-40 and Luke 22:41-46.

Matthew 26:39, “And after He had gone forward a little way, He prostrated Himself, face down, and prayed, ...” What did Jesus do when He reached that point when He began to be overwhelmed with this discouragement and this depression? He went to God with it! He went to God and made His request known.

Verse 39, continuing, “...saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.’” He came and had this request. He said, ‘I don’t want

to go through with this, but help Me—not My will but Your will.’ Jesus prayed to come to that point of absolute total surrender. There is a serenity that comes from surrender. When you really put it in God’s hands, there is a peace of mind that you have. There is peace and Christ had that. He wrestled through it in prayer. He had total surrender. He was asking God to help Him get rid of any vestige of holding on to His way. ‘Let it be Your will.’ And when you really turn loose and you know it is in God’s hands, you can relax and have peace. We have the account in John 17, some of the prayer that He prayed. Then He began to get His mind more and more on others because He had peace in Himself.

The time of betrayal: Matthew 26:45-46 and Mark 14:41-42.

Matthew 26:46, “‘Get up, let us go. Look! He who is betraying Me is approaching.’” Finally, He told His disciples, ‘Come on, let’s go.’ He was ready.

That’s the key. He understands what it’s like to be depressed, to be discouraged and to be absolutely overwhelmed. As the reality of what He was facing, what He was going to have to go through and what it was going to be like started to come to mind, it was just overwhelming. But He turned loose. He knew that God knew what He was doing and He prayed it through. We have to come to that point of surrender. Once you really turn loose, then you can have peace because you know that God is going to work it out.

Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss: Matthew 26:47-49, Mark 14:43-45, Luke 22:47-48 and John 18:1-9.

Matthew 26:47-49, “And while He was still speaking, suddenly Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people. And he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, ‘Whomever I kiss, He is the One: seize Him.’ And immediately he came up to Jesus, and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ And with an outward show of love, he kissed Him.”

Now, they had paid this sum of money. Judas would lead them to where He was privately. They were just a small group, away from the crowds. The other thing was that as they came in with a group like this, it was dark and they had these torches. These were men all about the same age and would have been similar in appearance. They weren’t sure of being able to pick out Christ in a group of other young men about His age. These were men around age 30. Jesus was

age 33, so I think it is safe to say the disciples were pretty much in the 25-35-age bracket. They would have been men right around that age. Christ was standing there, and they weren't sure they would pick Him out in a crowd like that where it was dark and torches and everything. But Judas would have known Him well; he went up and kissed Him. It's apparent that Jesus didn't have a halo over His head to where you could see Him because He glowed in the dark. No, He looked just like an ordinary Jew of His day. And they paid Judas a considerable sum of money to "tip them off" as to where He was and then to go and point Him out.

Peter cuts off ear of high priest's servant: Matthew 26:50-55, Mark 14:46-49, Luke 22:49-53 and John 18:10-12.

Matthew 26:50, "But Jesus asked him, 'Friend, for what purpose have you come?' Then they came to Jesus, and grabbed Him with their hands, and arrested Him."

All was done to fulfill prophecy: Matthew 26:56 and Mark 14:50-52.

Matthew 26:56, "...Then all the disciples, deserting Him, ran away." The disciples left. Everybody split.

Jesus led to high priest's house: Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:54 and John 18:13-14.

Matthew 26:57, "But those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

John 18:13, "And they led him away to Annas first; because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year."

Peter follows into the courtyard: Matthew 26:58, Mark 14:54, Luke 22:54-55 and John 18:15-18.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all make plain that a couple of disciples followed Him. Peter followed Him. Peter is mentioned in all of the accounts. John makes it plain that he was with Peter. The two of them followed Him.

John 18:15-16, "Now following Jesus were Simon Peter and the other disciple [John]: but that disciple was known to the high priest, and he [John] entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter stood outside the door. Then the other disciple [John] who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in."

John was actually a witness to the trial because he entered into the room and stood there and watched. He was evidently known and had some

connections. He showed up there, and whoever was at the door let him come in. He stood there and watched. Peter was outside waiting.

Verse 24, "Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest." All of this commotion was going on, and then they brought Him in.

Chief priests illegally condemn Jesus: Matthew 26:59-65, Mark 14:55-63 and Luke 22:63-65.

All the accounts bring this in.

Matthew 26:59-60, "And the chief priests, and the elders, and the entire Sanhedrin, tried to find spurious evidence against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death. But they did not find any: yes, even though many false witness had come forward, they did not find any." Now here we are in the wee hours of the morning. What kind of people do you find on the streets in the wee hours of the morning? They had false witnesses in there. If you notice the story, the false witnesses couldn't get their stories together.

Mark 14:56, "For many gave false testimony against Him, but their testimonies were not in agreement."

What had they done? They had gone out, dragged the streets and grabbed a few drunks in off the streets. They had gone out, grabbed some of these drunks that left the bar about one o'clock in the morning. Who else are you going to find on the streets in the wee hours? They got this crowd in there, and these guys couldn't even get their stories straight. They were all willing to go in there and give false testimony. They were trying to maintain the outward appearance of legality, so they needed two witnesses. They got this bunch of drunks, and they couldn't even find two of them who could remember the same story. So they had confusion there for a while until finally two of them managed to land on the same story. They said, 'Okay, that's it!'

Matthew 26:61, "But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, 'This Man said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it again in three days."'" You talk about a "stacked deck" in a courtroom. The judge starts parading witnesses through and finds two that agree. 'Those are the right ones. I know because they agree. It's clear.' All you have to do is go through the account and you can see what a trumped up false thing this was. It was an outward sham. They were ready to crucify Him, to take Him to Pilate.

Sanhedrin condemns Jesus and sends Him to Pilate: Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-73:1 and John 18:28.

Matthew 27:2, “And after binding Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him over to Pontius Pilate, the governor.”

At this point, we will stop here this evening. The next Bible study we will conclude with Jesus before Pilate, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension into heaven. The final events will be covered in the next Bible study.

Hopefully, as we have been going through this series on the harmony of the Gospels, we can gain a little more insight into what Jesus did, what He said and taught, and gain a deeper insight into the day-by-day things that transpired. We see the development through His ministry, as it was finally time for things to culminate. He came in full force there to Jerusalem realizing that things had built up and the foundation was laid. When the foundation is laid, the full force doesn't take long.

I think from our standpoint, we need to realize that we are right now in the position of finishing the foundational structure in terms of the work. When the time comes that we “hit it” with full force, it won't take long. But we are in that position right now of completing the foundation. With that we will be concluded this evening.