

Following Christ Through The Gospels

Part Ten

The Lord Jesus Christ is unique! From many other religions we hear of gods and other ‘superior beings’ who visited humanity either to gratify their own lusts or to instigate an exemplary lifestyle. The Lord Jesus, however, left the splendour of Godhead to enter amongst the vilest of sinners in order to bring a people unto Himself. The final study in our series is a consideration of how much He loved.

Each of the Gospels (Mt. 26:6ff.; Mk. 14:3ff.; Lk. 7:36ff.; Jn. 12:1ff.) record the account when Jesus visited the house of Simon the leper in the town of Bethany. There, unknown to all, He was anointed in preparation for His burial (Jn. 12:7), for shortly afterwards, Judas Iscariot entered into a pact with the enemies of Jesus (Mt. 26:14f.; Mk. 14:10f.; Lk. 22:3-6; see Ps. 41:9).

Meanwhile, the disciples began to make ready the Passover Feast. As they sat down at the table a sadness would have been present. They sensed something was going to happen, but they just weren’t too sure. After Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet He informed them of ‘a traitor in the camp’. Here, He made His final unsuccessful appeal to Iscariot (Mt. 26:24f.) before instituting the ordinance of the Last Supper. He then led them out to the Mount of Olives (note the love which with He speaks, “Little children ...”, Jn. 13:33). He told all the disciples, - Peter, in particular, - they would abandon Him in His neediest hour. They refuted His words. He then gave them His message of hope, incorporating the imminent arrival of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14-16). He withdrew from them and cried out in great anguish of spirit to His Heavenly Father, interceding for His disciples and all those who would be saved (Jn. 17). In Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36ff.; Mk. 14:32ff.; Lk. 22:40ff.; Jn. 18:1ff.) such a cloud of sorrow and distress covered the Saviour, so much, as it were, great drops of blood fell from His face to the ground. He requested for His cup of suffering to be removed, but He knew that only through His death would eternal life be effectuated. As He returned to His disciples He found them asleep, - incapable of staying awake for Him, unaware of the hellishness of the approaching moments. Judas sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver and Jesus was taken into the custody of the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities. Judas then went and duly ended his life, - *how horrific must hell be to all those who had all the opportunities and yet passed them by!*

In the Garden Peter slashed the ear of the High Priest’s servant (Jn. 18:10), but yet he was incapable of staying awake and he was unwilling to stand up for Christ as he sat around the fire in the High Priest’s Garden. Inside, His Master was being questioned and vilified. Jesus was alone, and how the human heart of the Saviour must have been breaking. How He loved these people, ... and how they hated Him. When they pulled His hair it was human pain that He felt. When they spat on His face His hurt was more than any man should bear. The words and prophecies of the Old Testament were not being heeded by these men of the Law. They knew their Scriptures but their eyes were so blinded they could not see the promised Saviour before them. Their minds and hearts were so filthy because of sin. They led Him before Caiaphas and questioned Him as they would a murderer, an adulterer, or the worst and lowest of sinners. They mocked His words (especially note Mk. 14:61,62ff.) and rejected the Man of Sorrows.

They then brought Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. As He walked along the lithostratos of the judgement hall Pilate was uncaring, ... but he had to act, ... he had to do something to appease the great anger of the Jewish leaders. They wanted Him dead, and only Pilate had the authority to execute Him. They trumped up the charge of insurrection (Lk. 23:2) and the Roman governor then had to act. He questioned Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered in the positive, but He would say nothing more (Mt. 27:14). To the disgust of the Jews Pilate judged Jesus faultless (Lk. 23:4). He then passed the responsibility to Herod, but Jesus wouldn’t entertain a conversation with Herod, so He was sent back to Pilate.

Then, Pilate had an idea. Give the people a choice, “Will I release the murdering, rebellious mobster Barabbas, or will I release Jesus in Whom I find no fault?” the response was immediate and unanimous, - release Barabbas, *kill* Jesus!

As Jesus stood on the parapet with the Roman Governor and listened to the roaring voices of the people for whom God had done so much we could *never* reach an understanding of the heartache through which He was passing. Perhaps He recognised some of the faces that had greeted Him on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. ... yet, there was one face in particular who He did not see, and it was Peter's! *Jesus stood alone*. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself such a burden of damnation that none other could have borne.

He left Pilate and judgement hall and He was dragged before the crowds. On His head they placed a crown of the cruellest of thorns. It pierced His brow to the cheers and laughter of the crowd. The blood flowed and trickled His precious face. Upon the Son of God was being heaped all the enmity of the forces of hell. They humiliated Him as they stripped Him and mocked Him with the purple robe. They spat on Him and smote Him with all the energy that the servants of Satan could muster. They took off the purple robe and they put on His clothes again ... and they led Him away to crucify Him.

From out of the crowd they made a man, Simon of Cyrene, to come and bear His cross. And as the Lord Jesus walked through the streets of the Holy City on the way to Calvary the humiliation that He carried was so utterly cruel. When they reached the place, there was a hole in the ground. The two pieces of wood were joined together to make a cross. Jesus was then again stripped of His clothes, made to lie down on top of the cross, to stretch out His arms for the large nails to be banged into His hands. *The pain must have been excruciating!* As the blood oozed out of His hands they then nailed His feet to the wood. They lifted the Cross, - with the Saviour upon it, - and dropped it unceremoniously into the hole in the ground. Such pain would have shot through my Saviour's body. The mocking wasn't over yet. They had nailed a sign mocking His Kingship to the cross; they laughed at Him; they gambled over His garments, it was a hot day and they mocked Him as they offered Him a drink of *vinegar* ... how horrific must hell be to all those who had all the opportunities and passed them by. Even the wickedness of the other two men crucified with Him mocked Him (Mt. 27:38,44). Jesus had nowhere to look for help. Even His Father rejected Him. How beautiful, though, that the grace of God caused one of the malefactors to call to Him for grace (Lk. 23:33-43). There, too, was His mother, the disciple John and a little group of friends, - they were powerless, but they were there!

Then, from noon to three o'clock, darkness such as had never been experienced before filled the land. As Jesus cried out and died the veil of the temple was torn in two and many Old Testament saints entered the Holy City. As dusk began to set in a Roman soldier came and broke the legs of the other two who had been crucified, but because Jesus had already *died* he had no need to break His legs. Joseph of Arimathea then sought permission to take the body down from the tree and he, along with Nicodemus buried the Son of God in a garden tomb (Jn.19:39-42). The next day was the Sabbath.

On the day following the Sabbath the two Mary's visited the tomb to find the huge stone rolled away and no Jesus. As she stood weeping in the garden Jesus came to her and made Himself known (Jn. 20:11ff.). When the disciples were told, Peter and John rushed to the tomb to find it empty. Meanwhile, on the road to Emmaus Jesus met and comforted two disciples (Lk. 24:13ff.; Mk. 16:12). Some of the disciples had returned to their old lifestyles and Jesus met them and brought them back into His work (Mt. 21). Further, when He appeared to His disciples in the enclosed room (Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:36ff.; Jn. 20:19f.). He instructed them to go to all peoples and all nations and tell them of Him. Those were the last words from the Saviour's lips, - "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15); What Gospel? - "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16)

What did they then do? No sooner had Jesus been taken up into Heaven that they "went forth and preached everywhere; the Lord working with them" (Mk. 16:20). Though the doctrine they preached was contrary to the spirit and wisdom of the age, though it met with an abundance of opposition, yet these preachers were neither afraid nor ashamed. The Spirit of God worked in them, with them and through them for they were vessels honed and fit for the Master's use. This *alone* is God's formula for the ingathering of precious souls to the glory of His most Sovereign Name.