

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 91, Chapter 26 Continued 3

In our previous study of Matthew chapter 26 we took a careful look at a rather peculiar ceremony that took place at an unknown location within the city walls of Jerusalem, with Jesus and His 12 disciples in attendance. It occurred in the first hour or so of Passover and therefore happened soon after dark on Nisan 14th, just after Nisan 13th ended (as the Hebrew reckoning of days is sunset to sunset). It has in Christianity taken on the name of Last Supper or the Lord's Supper, and as we discovered this could not have been the traditional Passover seder because that occurs by biblical command 24 hours later, in the first moments that the calendar turns to Nisan 15th, when the Feast of Passover ends and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins.

The Apostle John (in John chapter 19) makes careful note that the Judeans... meaning residents of the Roman province of Judea... nicknamed the entire day (the entire 24-hour period) of the 1-day Feast of Passover, Preparation Day. That is, Passover day was used by the local residents of Judea as the time to prepare the commemorative seder meal (but not eat it, yet), during which time their Passover lambs would be slaughtered at the Temple and then each family would prepare and cook their slaughtered lamb in one of the many public ovens set up around Jerusalem. Upon sunset of Passover day, when it becomes the first day of the Feast of Matzah, then the prepared meal was eaten. The reason that meal preparation could not continue into the first day of the Feast of Matzah is because both the first and seventh days of that feast are God-ordained special Sabbath days, so no work can be done.

^{CJB} **Leviticus 23:4-8** ⁴ *"These are the designated times of ADONAI, the holy convocations you are to proclaim at their designated times.* ⁵ *"In the first*

month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between sundown and complete darkness, comes Pesach for ADONAI. ⁶ On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of matzah; for seven days you are to eat matzah. ⁷ On the first day you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. ⁸ Bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work."

Biblically, the Law of Moses does not call for this ceremony that Jesus officiated on the opening hours of Passover. So, what was it? By all accounts and educated guesses it seems that this special meal that Christ and His 12 celebrated was a strictly manmade tradition that the Galileans created and observed, but Judeans and other Jews did not seem to share in it. I think we've explored in this and the previous lesson about as far as recorded information, biblical or otherwise, gives us about this ceremony. The important part of this special meal ceremony is this: the eating of the bread as representative of Yeshua's body, and the drinking of the wine as representative of His blood, were meant symbolically as His disciples identifying with Christ's death. Flesh and blood are human, not divine, characteristics. Thus, Yeshua's humanity is the focus. Frankly, from what we have thus far learned, I can't imagine the disciples understanding the point of it at all; in fact, I suspect that they had to be not only perplexed but disturbed about it since the drinking of blood was forbidden by the Torah. And the eating of human flesh could not have evoked anything less than the idea of cannibalism. Without doubt exactly what this peculiar observance meant, which centuries later was formulated into the Catholic Church sacrament called Communion, puzzled Yeshua's Jewish Believers for years to come after His death and resurrection. This is why it fell to Paul 3 decades later to better explain it in a letter to the Corinthian congregation (1Corinthians 11).

I want to also remind you of something that is uncomfortable for us because of what has been said and taught in the Church for centuries, and thus we take for granted. Christian academics have for some time acknowledged (usually in an obscure footnote) that in reality when we read in Matthew's Gospel of Christ saying "for this is My blood, which ratifies the New Covenant", many (and the most ancient) of the Greek New Testament manuscripts do not have the word "new". Instead that same passage reads: "for this is my blood, which ratifies the Covenant". Even the centrist modern traditional scholar Ben Witherington III in his commentary on the subject says this:

... the word “new” in verse 28 seems not to be an original part of our text but is rather a scribal attempt to conform our text to Luke 22:20 or to 1Corinthians 11:25.

In other words, it seems that a later Christian editor added the word “new” to the verse. I have taken the position that mostly likely even if Matthew did not include the word “new” in his Gospel account, nonetheless Jesus was probably making reference to the fulfillment of the “new covenant” prophesied by Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 31. Therefore, we must be careful to not take the meaning of the term “new covenant” too far. When Jeremiah said it, it was not meant as the **formal name** of a new covenantal agreement between God and Israel. That is, we need to understand the term as meaning a covenant that is new-er or maybe even re-newed. For instance; if we go out and purchase a new car, that car doesn’t acquire a formal name of New Car. New is just a description of the car, not a formal name for it. New is an adjective, not a noun. As I have previously explained, this new-er covenant was not new in the sense of its substance and its ordinances, but rather it was “new” in the sense of how and **where** it existed and resided...and Jeremiah makes that quite clear (if one reads the next couple of verses in that passage). That is, the newer covenant is not the abolition of the older rules and currently existing covenants that are replaced by new rules (a newer car doesn’t abolish the older car). All of the covenants God made are still intact as a series of covenants, not each newer one replacing the previous ones. So, what does the new or newer covenant actually do? According to Jeremiah it is that the Law (the Covenant of Moses) was now mysteriously placed into our inward parts (our hearts, in Jewish thought) as an act of God, with the devotion to it and understanding of it becoming part of our nature, as opposed to it having existed externally only on stone tablets and sheep skin scrolls as a kind of physical rule book that was held primarily in the possession of the religious leadership. This thought should not at all alarm a Christian. After all, central to Christian belief is that the event of Pentecost moved the Holy Spirit from existing as external and apart from us to becoming internal within us, with the effect that our inward natures were modified to become more receptive to God and His commands. It is my opinion that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the means and the vehicle within which the spirit and intent of the Law of Moses became transferred from outside of us to inside of us.

Even though that subject is fascinating and inspiring, and we could discuss it for hours, let’s move on to Jesus returning to the Mount of Olives and the series of prayers He made to His Father in Heaven as the terrible reality of the ordeal He

was about to suffer in a few hours, began to set in. Open your Bibles to Matthew 26; we'll start reading at verse 30.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 26:30 – 45

The CJB says that after Yeshua and the 12 finished this special Galilean celebratory meal, they sang the Hallel. The word "Hallel" does not appear in the Greek manuscripts. Rather the more literal translation of the Greek word used (*humneo*) is to sing a song or a hymn. Translating this to "Hallel" assumes that the group would have sung a traditional Jewish praise or blessing normally used in this Spring holiday season, and that seems most likely. The Hallel consists of passages taken from Psalms 113 – 118 and then set to music. This praise-song seems to have been the traditional closing to this special Galilean observance we call the Lord's Supper. Next Yeshua moved Himself and His entourage back to the Mount of Olives.

In verse 31 Jesus makes a startling prediction: **all** of His 12 disciples will lose faith in Him. He sets this distasteful statement in the context of the fulfillment of a prophecy found in Zechariah 13.

^{CJB} **Zechariah 13:7** ⁷ *"Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the young ones.*

Let's begin by noticing that Yeshua says "tonight" you'll lose faith in Me. This loss of faith is going to happen in only a matter of a few hours. It won't be a slow fading away; the loss of faith will happen suddenly. Yet Messiah tempers this bad news with some good: after He rises from the grave He will meet them in the Galilee. In other words, all... not some... of the disciples will fall away from the faith and trust they had in Him. However later they will regain that faith and then rejoin Him back in their home province of Galilee. The implications of what this is saying are enormous not the least being that it makes quick work of the erroneous Christian doctrine among some denominations known as "once saved always saved".

One of the major tenants of that doctrine that tries to explain-away the many warnings in the New Testament about the eternal consequences of a Believer disavowing their faith in Christ is to say that those who do so were never Believers in the first place... they were merely pretenders. If that is the case, then

so were Christ's venerated 12 Disciples pretenders... and I don't think any of us of any denomination would make such a drastic claim. While we'll revisit this as we get a little further into Matthew 26, I ask you to go forward understanding that no amount of clever spin can take away from the plain reading and understanding of the Greek words that the 12 disciples **will** renounce their trust in Yeshua. They **will** cease being Believers for a time. Although I don't want to get into semantics, they **will** lose (or better, disavow) their salvation. However, this principle is immediately expanded upon when we read that despite this nearly unfathomable desertion of their Master by the 12, Jesus will meet up with them again in the Galilee. In other words, this is a story of faith lost and then restored. What a hope that is for us and for our family members and others who at some point have abandoned their faith in Christ. The door to eternal security if not yet fully closed for them as long as they have breath in their bodies to consciously regain that faith, if they so choose.

Clearly the "after I have been raised" comment went in one ear and out the other for all the disciples. I'm not sure what else they could have been thinking that meant other than resurrection from the dead. That said, it was either that they were so stunned by being told they are about to renounce their faith in Him that what He said next simply didn't register, or they didn't believe Him that He would be resurrected. And folks, not believing in the resurrection of Yeshua is the wide-open gate into disbelief in Him as our Savior. Sadly, a watering-down of His resurrection into Him not actually having been dead but only "swooning" or not having a detectable heart-beat but still being alive, or some other such thing, is a growing and spreading tenet that Bible scholars are pressing since miracles are not something many of them believe in any longer. Without Christ's death and resurrection, then our faith that He has atoned for our sins, is in vain. In fact, to not believe in His death and miraculous resurrection is to have no belief in what He accomplished on our behalf.

Naturally the always exuberant Peter is the first to immediately speak up: "I'll never lose faith in You" even if all the other disciples do. Peter's bravado will soon be exposed as false. I love Calvin's characterization of it as "the intoxication of human self-confidence". A book could be written around this subject. When we back away and think about it in a larger sense, we must first recognize that Peter is telling Jesus that He is wrong. Jesus doesn't know what He's talking about. This warning might apply to everyone else, says Peter, but never to me. Others might be tempted into falling away, but never me. My faith in Messiah is so deep and enduring that I have finally passed that point of even

being capable of renouncing Him, thinks Peter. I'm different than all the other Believers. Christian and Messianic leaders (I'm speaking to you, now), it is no small thing that it is Peter expressing this sentiment. Peter is the leader of the disciples. He is second in command only with Christ above him. I have personally met too many leaders of our faith who believe that the temptation to fall has more-or-less passed them by; that they have gained a kind of immunity. This false bravado actually makes them the most vulnerable to it. Statistics show that among Believers, it is leadership that is the more likely to fall to temptation. In fact, most studies done on the subject say that around 3 in 10 Christian leaders will commit some type of serious moral failure, nearly always involving improper sexual conduct.

Yeshua immediately pushes back against Peter and tells him that before the cock crows he will disavow Jesus not once, but 3 times. The cock crowing simply means daybreak. The reality is that roosters will crow at almost any time. But it is also observed that just as daylight is about to erupt, their internal clocks will indeed cause them to crow. Thus, it is an ancient expression of saying "when the cock crows" as meaning the time when the sun is about to light the horizon.

Peter, himself sort of crowing like proud rooster, responds **again** that Jesus is wrong. In verse 35, Peter ups the ante. He says that even if he has to die along with His Master he'll never disavow Yeshua. The Greek word used changes to the much stronger term **aparneomai**. That is, there is no question that the sense of the word in modern English is to disown. It means to fully dissolve whatever relationship had previously existed. Matthew tells us that the other disciples also chimed in at this point and agreed with Peter. So now all of them are rebutting Jesus and telling Him that He is mistaken. As we'll soon see, they will all... to a man... do the opposite of what they claimed. At least, finally, Peter and probably all 12 of the disciples, have accepted that Jesus is about to die. Resurrection? Apparently not. They still remain blind if not delusional about what lays ahead.

What comes next is a power struggle within Yeshua that disquiets many Believers; so much so that all manner of explanations by various Church authorities to try to dismiss the obvious have been contrived in hope of gaining some peace about it. However, we're going to face it just as it is written and therefore as it happened.

Verse 36 has Yeshua and the 12 on the move yet again, but this time not very far. They remained on the Mount of Olives, only relocating to a place called

Gethsemane. However, that's not what they would have called it. In their Hebrew language it was **Gat-Sh'manim**, meaning "olive oil press". So, wherever they were, it was where a well-known olive press was present. John in John chapter 18 calls this place a garden. In the other Gospel accounts only Mark along with Matthew gives that formal name to the place. Christ tells His disciples that while He goes, alone, to a quiet nook to pray they are to stay where they are. Let's pause. Let that sink in for a moment. Yeshua, whom the Church rightly confesses is divine, goes to pray. Praying inherently involves addressing someone greater than oneself. He prays to whom? In verse 39 this person is identified as My Father. This means that Yeshua as God's Son, and Himself divine, is not on an equal status footing as the Father. There is, of course, a divine hierarchy of authority. There is no co-equality of the God-head. We certainly never hear of the Father (or the Holy Spirit) praying to Jesus, nor does Jesus ever tell us to pray to anyone except The Father. So, He follows His own instructions.

That said, verse 36 explains that Yeshua took with Him Peter, James and John. We see that as time has rolled along, those 3 have become the innermost of Yeshua's inner circle of friends and followers. These are the same 3 who were there at the Transfiguration of chapter 17. Apparently as His most trusted confidants, Yeshua descends into a sorrowful and painful confession. He says that He is so distressed and anxious that He wishes He could die. No doubt "I wish I could die" is meant in the same way we use it today. It is not meant literally; it simply means that the person has reached the end of their ability to deal with or process something that is grievously dreadful for them. There is no getting around it; Christ is very worried about what is about to happen to Him. So, while He doesn't want to include the 3 disciples as part of a prayer ring, He does want them near to Him for comfort as He prays to His Father.

As I thought about what was happening here, I was flailing around about how to describe what Jesus was going through. I couldn't find the right words for it. However, Psalm 55 solved it for me. I will read to you the opening verses of Psalm 55, a Psalm written by Yeshua's ancestor, David.

CJB Psalm 55:1 For the leader. With stringed instruments. A maskil of David: ² Listen, God, to my prayer! Don't hide yourself from my plea! ³ Pay attention to me, and answer me! I am panic-stricken as I make my complaint, I shudder ⁴ at how the enemy shouts, at how the wicked oppress; for they keep heaping trouble on me and angrily tormenting me. ⁵ My heart within me is pounding in anguish, the terrors of death press

down on me, ⁶ fear and trembling overwhelm me, horror covers me. ⁷ I said, "I wish I had wings like a dove! Then I could fly away and be at rest.

As we think about Christ praying, this Psalm is a good characterization of how He felt and what was going through His mind. This is borne out by the prayer He raises up to His Father.

^{CJB} ***Matthew 26:39 Going on a little farther, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet- not what I want, but what you want!"***

I think we can take "he fell on his face" pretty literally. Even the worst sinners, and sometimes those who have resisted God all their lives and suddenly realize their end may be at hand, nearly instinctively fall face down on the ground as they plead with God to help them. It's almost like assuming such a lowly position while sending up an urgent plea to the Creator, is built-in to us as humans. Once again it is Jesus's humanity that is on full display here. In the position of submission, He begins with "My Father", which essentially conforms with the important opening element of the Lord's Prayer of Matthew chapter 6. And then Jesus continues with "take this cup from Me". What "cup" is He talking about? The usual take is that He is asking for the terrible beating and then painful beyond imagination experience of crucifixion to be taken away. However, in the ***Tanakh*** (the Old Testament), in Revelation, and even in the Apocrypha (those books written during the 400-year period between the Old and New Testaments), the term "cup" is always associated with suffering God's wrath. It cannot mean any other than that here. We know that in His final moments of life, agonizing on the cross, hardly able to breathe, He cries out and wants to know why the Father has abandoned Him. There is no better definition of God's wrath than to be abandoned by God and to suffer what inherently comes with that.

So, while no doubt Jesus is stressed out about the agony He is about to experience, the bigger issue is that He knows that part of that experience is going to be to suffer from His Father's wrath. When we get to that part of the Passion Narrative, we'll discuss just why that had to be. Don't let it fly by... nor sugar coat it... that Yeshua asks The Father to NOT pour out His wrath upon Him and for Him to NOT have to suffer the humiliations He is about to. Yeshua asks God if He really has to go through this and of course the meaning must include that He'd rather **not** go through it. And yet, somehow in the midst of this emotional agony, Yeshua remains resolved to go through whatever He must in order to

fulfill the Father's will. It must be noted that in the Jewish mind of that day and even until the present that in response to sincere prayer God can change His mind. We see a prime example of that in Abraham's pleadings to God about the residents of Sodom.

How as mere humans, do we rationalize what Yeshua is asking His Father for? How do we deal with Him seemingly inquiring if perhaps there isn't another way... maybe even another person... that can bear this horror that He is being asked to do? John of Damascus makes this observation: ***Jesus's words show that He did, in truth, possess two wills... corresponding to His two natures.***

It is interesting that the most orthodox of Christian faith has been quite reluctant to accept that Jesus had two natures and thus two wills, because it would shine too much of a light on His humanity, when what we most want from Him is His indomitable divinity. We prefer a strong, courageous, can't be deterred Yeshua of Nazareth, as opposed to one that seems to be on the verge of wilting. The problem is that this is the classic case of re-imagining Jesus into the Jesus we want instead of the Jesus that was and is. We have here (and in all the Gospel accounts) a record of Yeshua in a mammoth struggle between His human will and the will of God. It is not an issue of Yeshua trying to deny or defy His Heavenly Father; but rather it is an issue of Him coming to a place in His mind that finally accepts that there is no plan B, there is no other option, and that because the human will is simply not in tune with God's, therefore the struggle within will continue. It's an issue of full submission, as opposed to trying to find a happier medium.

Paul understood this dilemma well and in a passage that I dearly love to remember and to quote, I suppose because I see myself in it, he said:

CJB Romans 7:14-25 ¹⁴ For we know that the Torah is of the Spirit; but as for me, I am bound to the old nature, sold to sin as a slave. ¹⁵ I don't understand my own behavior- I don't do what I want to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate! ¹⁶ Now if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am agreeing that the Torah is good. ¹⁷ But now it is no longer "the real me" doing it, but the sin housed inside me. ¹⁸ For I know that there is nothing good housed inside me- that is, inside my old nature. I can want what is good, but I can't do it! ¹⁹ For I don't do the good I want; instead, the evil that I don't want is what I do! ²⁰ But if I am doing what "the real me" doesn't want, it is no longer "the real me" doing it but the sin housed inside me. ²¹ So I find it to

be the rule, a kind of perverse "torah," that although I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me!²² For in my inner self I completely agree with God's Torah;²³ but in my various parts, I see a different "torah," one that battles with the Torah in my mind and makes me a prisoner of sin's "torah," which is operating in my various parts.²⁴ What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death?²⁵ Thanks be to God [, he will!]- through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord! To sum up: with my mind, I am a slave of God's Torah; but with my old nature, I am a slave of sin's "Torah."

Paul wasn't Yeshua, and neither are we. Yet we share some similar attributes. Our human nature, as given to us from Adam, is an unfixable corrupt nature. We will not be fully cured from it until after our death. With faith in Yeshua as our Lord and Savior, with trust and obedience in His Father that His Word to us is true and is our guidebook that reveals His expectations of us in this life, many of the **symptoms** of our corrupt humanity can be relieved. Nevertheless, that corrupt nature will remain alive and well alongside our new God-given redeemed nature, and the war between them will never abate in this life, nor should we expect it to. It will be a frustrating string of battles; we'll win some and lose some. Even Yeshua, perfectly lacking in sin, was in His prayer to His Father at Gethsemane struggling between the two natures because He was somehow as human as He was divine.

Although we're not directly told what the answer was from His Father, clearly what proceeds says the path was not re-routed. Yeshua returns from private prayer to find the disciples asleep. He chastises them for not being able to even stand vigil with Him for a relatively short time (about an hour). He accuses them of being weak (that is, weak of will). Jesus goes on to say that they need to stay awake and pray for themselves that they will not succumb to the test that looms. And this because while they have a spirit in them that is eager to do what God wants, their flesh (their human nature) is weak. And thus, here we get this famous proverb of Jesus that has been in use for many centuries: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. This speaks of our 2 natures.

What "test" is Yeshua talking about? No doubt it is the test of them watching their master get arrested, knowing what the Romans do to such a person and often to His associates, and them being able to keep their faith in Him at the risk of losing their own lives. They have just stated that they are all willing to go to their deaths if necessary for Yeshua, and to this claim Yeshua says that they

better get to praying and keeping praying if they have any hope of following through with their bold promise to Him. We can take Yeshua's instruction to stay awake as a rather general one that we have encountered throughout His many teaching discourses, and most recently in the illustration of the 10 virgins with the oil lamps that go out to meet the bridegroom. Being alert and prepared heavily involves prayer and leaning on God's Word; as the betrayer is about to strike, sleep is out of the question. So, while this directive applies to the sleeping disciples on the **P'shat** level, on the **Remez** level it applies to all of Christ's future followers right up through today as we await His return. We are going to have our faith and trust regularly tested. I cannot let this pass without making a social comment concerning the world as it stands today, in the year 2021. Our faith is under attack. Some Christians might not think so, because they see no danger to either attending their Church or to their tax exemption for giving being taken away. What they must not be seeing is that Western society and Western governments especially have openly announced that they see the Christian and Jewish faiths as a threat to their vision of the future. They are demanding through the media and by law that for the social good we must give-in to the trajectory of secularism, and that begins by calling what is evil good, and what is good evil. We must see the Bible and its moral principles as a relic, science as our new god, and that we can make different decisions in our time than what the ancient Jews made or were obligated by God to make. As long as we agree to that, then we will be allowed to function. But function as what? It will certainly no longer be as a Church devoted to God and to Christ, but rather as a Church devoted to existing in whatever form necessary to continue to exist.

How will we know right from wrong if the new Christian mantra is that everyone has their own personal truth, because we each have our own personal Holy Spirit, that designs a customized set of commands and morals just for us? And, of course, these commands and morals will agree with whatever State and society says they should be. Every new dictatorial regime that has come into existence from ages past knew and knows one thing for certain: to establish their new order, all remnants of the previous order must be erased. History, traditions, morals and ethics of the past must be replaced by a new set, and that necessarily begins with the elimination of the old and distancing us from any memory of it. When our faith institutions either discourage its members from knowing and following the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and seek to replace such knowledge with manmade doctrines that essentially turn God's Word on its head, we must soundly reject it.

Do not be deceived; we are being tested right now. If you didn't know it, wake up! If you don't recognize that reality it can only be because you don't know God's Word or you don't trust it, and so you don't know what to look for or how to judge what it is that you see. Jesus chastised the original 12 disciples for their obliviousness to the imminent threat they faced, telling them they would fail the test if they didn't wake up to the reality that they indeed were being tested... and to do something... pray!

But, to no avail. Yeshua again goes to pray (and prays the same thing), only to come back and find the disciples again deep in slumber. He goes yet a third time... same prayer... and finds the disciples asleep when He returns. Why did He go to pray the same thing 3 times? It was Jewish tradition that to ask for something 3 times indicated sincerity and earnestness. We find this sort of pattern in the Book of Kings, and in the Psalms. We find it in Daniel as he prayed 3 times per day towards Jerusalem, and thus 3 times per day prayer has become Jewish tradition. Soon when we find Peter disavowing Jesus 3 times, then any Jew reading Matthew's Gospel would understand that this means that Peter is very sincere and earnest in his renouncement of Christ; that is exactly how we are to understand it. Peter had multiple opportunities to rethink it, but instead doubled-down on His renunciation of Jesus.

After this 3rd prayer, we hear Jesus say:

CJB Matthew 26:45 *Then he came to the talmidim and said, "For now, go on sleeping, take your rest.... Look! The time has come for the Son of Man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

This is a sarcastic remark from a disappointed and disgusted Yeshua. It is saying something like: well, I warned you, but here you are sleeping again. I sure hope you enjoyed your sleep because now the time is over to prepare yourself for the test that is but moments away. I've told you what will happen, I've warned you of the consequences, but you've ignored it and now it's too late because the betrayer has arrived and the events underway will have an inevitable ending. You will fail. Can you hear the Lord saying that to us... the 21st century generation? I sure hope you're enjoying your sleep because events are now underway thanks to your laxity and disinterest and general faithlessness. The betrayer, the Devil, is here and (for now) he's winning. He has corrupted even the institutions that were supposed to represent God on earth. The gate is now flung wide-open for the Anti-Christ to work his evil likely with worldwide co-operation including that of

influential portions of Church and Synagogue.

Yeshua again calls Himself the Son of Man; a title not of His humanity but of His divinity. He is saying that He, as God's offspring and agent, is about to be horribly despised, mistreated, and ultimately killed not because the Romans are angling for it, but because the Jewish religious leadership desperately wants it. Let's read a little more.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 26:46 – 50

After rousing His sleepy-eyed disciples Jesus says that the betrayer (Judas) has arrived. Judas walks up to Jesus and kisses Him, which was the designated signal to the cohort of soldiers that this was the man they had been seeking. Apparently the troops and maybe not even the High Priest knew what Yeshua looked like, and certainly didn't know where He was camping out. There was no outstanding feature about Yeshua that made Him easy to identify; not even the presence of His 12 disciples gave Him away. No doubt there were scores if not hundreds of Rabbis and Teachers and their flocks waltzing around Jerusalem for these holy days, and the dress of the peasant Jews was very similar. Trying to find Yeshua was something like the needle in a haystack metaphor; Judas provided the solution for the Temple and Synagogue leaders.

It is hard to overlook that Judas was hand-selected by Christ as one of the original 12; never until they all reached Jerusalem do we hear of anything against him or of any shenanigans by him. Here again orthodox Christianity often tends to play this down by saying that Judas was never sincerely part of the group; he was only a pretender. Or that Judas was a spy from the beginning. The idea being that there is no way that Christ could have been fooled by Judas. We have no indication that Yeshua had pre-knowledge that Judas would turn against Him. I think Judas is simply an example of the seed that falls among the rocky soil such that it starts to grow but then eventually withers and dies. In Judas's case, the dead seedling turned toxic. Judas's actions indicate a rather extreme and rash person who nearly certainly was a member of the Zealot party and truly thought (for a while) that this man from Nazareth was the longed-for Messiah that would form an army and chase Rome from the Holy Land. That is, Judas saw Christ in the wrong light, expecting the wrong things, and when his expectations weren't met he not only walked away from his faith, he essentially became an adversary. How many people we've all heard of (if not known personally) that excitedly accepted Christ, and for a time came to a Church meeting every time

the doors opened, volunteered for everything, and when they ran into a personal challenge that wasn't immediately fixed, they lost faith and then became a loud and public advocate against Jesus and His followers. I think this is at least somewhat what happened with Judas.

We'll continue with Yeshua's arrest and mock trial, next time.