

Is He the One?

Thomas Robinson, *God's Kingdom Breaks In!* 4, February 12, 2017

Matthew 26:45-66 (Cf. Mk 14:41-64; Lk 22:47-61; Jn 18:2-23)

The Kiss of Judas

⁴⁵ Then he comes to the disciples and says to them, "Sleep and rest for the time you've got. Look, **the hour has arrived**, and **the Son of Man is being handed over into sinners' hands**. ⁴⁶ Get up, let's go. Look, the one who's handing me over is right here."

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, **Judas**, one of the twelve, came with a great **crowd** with **swords** and **clubs**, from the **chief priests** and the **elders** of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the one handing him over gave them a sign, saying, "**Whoever I kiss; he's the one. Seize him.**"

⁴⁹ And at once he came to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and heartily kissed him.

⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, that's what you're here for."

Arrest and Resistance

Then they came up and **laid hands on Jesus and seized him**. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those with Jesus stretched out his hand, **drew his sword**, **struck** the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

⁵² Then Jesus says to him, "**Put your sword back** into its place. For all who take a sword by sword will perish. ⁵³ Or do you think that I can't appeal to my Father, and he will send me right now more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ How then should the **Scriptures** be fulfilled, that it **must happen in this way?**"

⁵⁵ At that **hour** Jesus said to the **crowds**, "As against an insurrectionist, you came out with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day **I used to sit in the temple teaching**, and you didn't seize me. ⁵⁶ But all this has happened that the prophets' **Scriptures** might be filled up."

Then **all the disciples left him and fled**.

⁵⁷ Then those who had seized Jesus led him to **Caiaphas** the **high priest**, where the **scribes** and the **elders** had gathered. ⁵⁸ And **Peter** was **following him from afar**, up to the courtyard of the high priest, and when he had gone inside, he **sat with the officers** to see how things would turn out.

Examination at the High Priest's House

⁵⁹ Now the **chief priests** and the **whole Sanhedrin** were seeking false testimony against **Jesus** that they might **put him to death**, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This man said, '**I'm able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.**'"

⁶² And the **high priest** stood up and said to him, "Are you giving no answer? What are these men testifying against you?"

⁶³ But **Jesus remained silent**.

And the high priest said to him, "I command you under oath before the living God, that you **tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.**"

⁶⁴ Jesus says to him, "You spoke those words. Still I tell you, after this you will see **the Son of Man** seated at the **right hand of the Power** and coming on the **clouds of heaven.**"

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered **blasphemy**. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?"

They answered, "**He deserves death!**"

Daniel 7:13-14 Cf. Mt 24:27-30

¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him....

Psalms 110:1 Cf. Mt 22:41-46

¹ The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

He's the One. Seize Him!

In this time of Passover, Jesus has been with his disciples and with God. Things are coming that the disciples can't yet conceive. Mt wants to help us see reality through the fog of false understanding. Jesus gave his disciples a meal to help them look back on the astonishing events. Among the olive trees he grieved and prayed before the need to drink "the cup"—God's wrath at sin's enslavement when humans push God out and live in God's absence.

Now there is misunderstanding and irony at every turn. Who is Jesus? What is happening? On one level it's just an arrest leading to a Roman cross. We know there's more. But what?

We see raw power: the big crowd, swords, clubs. The sign: the irony that Judas' kiss is needed. The officers don't know him. Intimacy becomes betrayal. Judas knows least who Jesus is.

How Should the Scriptures be Fulfilled?

The disciples are ready. If there's hope for Jesus' kingdom, this is the time to defend him. One strikes with a sword. It's hopeless, but they're not cowards. Jesus might escape. Kingdom! This is what we'd do. Fight for what's right! A revolution means you have to break eggs.

But what kind of revolution is this? Jesus says, the swords are the least of it. Put it away. If you fight violence with violence, violence wins. You think you win, but you perish. How does scripture's story come to its full? The promise of God. Deliverance from sin's enslaving power. True Passover Exodus. Jesus challenges the crowd. They want to stop insurrection with clubs. But Jesus teaching people, enacting a new vision of God's love for us, that was real insurrection. The disciples know only "fight or flight." Jesus won't fight. They flee.

All but one. Peter's no coward. He's cautious, but Jesus is in danger. He follows him right into the high priest's dangerous courtyard. He wants to see events. He might get a chance to get Jesus out of this so that his kingdom can be saved. He's ready to fight and die for him.

Destroying and Building the Temple

The chief priests gather looking for a case to satisfy the Passover crowds and the Romans. They need two witnesses with alternative facts that can be presented as facts. Jesus had warned of the Temple's destruction, but the "witnesses" change it to a threat. Jesus won't respond. The high priest is frustrated. Jesus should feel panic, trapped, threatened, make mistakes.

But the temple was at the heart of this. Where and how does God meet humans? The Exodus had produced a movable tent not a fixed weathy temple. A new Passover and Exodus leads to a new "tent of meeting." That was Gethsemane. God descending into human slavery.

The True Human before God, with God

The high priest asks the key question. We know the answer. But the high priest's meaning for the words was no closer than Peter's had been (Mt 16:16). Loaded words, deep meanings.

Jesus responds with Daniel's picture of the son of the Human, representing God's people, ascending on the clouds to God's throne, receiving a new, everlasting kingdom. The high priest knows it's intolerable. It's an affirmation of life and hope. "He deserves death."