

Introduction:

- Jesus is betrayed in Gethsemane.
 - Judas comes to betray Jesus. "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for."
 - The disciples resist, and Jesus rebukes them because it is not necessary. "No one is taking my life. I am freely giving it."
 - The force that Jesus could call on would be far greater. Jesus does not ask for help because He already knows the Father's will. Even though Jesus does not escape it is still clear He is in charge.
- Jesus says that all of this is being done to fulfill the words of the prophets.
- At this the disciples now exit until the resurrection.
- The power of choices continues to be revealed.
 - Peter Buckles under pressure, having not prayed.
 - Judas deliberately changes sides and is stricken with grief to the point of suicide.
 - Jesus humbly and willingly submits to His death.
- Mt 26:57-ff

I. The Climax Begins

- A. It is a battle for supreme authority. But as readers we see it as a tremendous paradox.
 1. Jesus asserts his supreme God given authority.
 2. The religious leaders assert their upper hand in the legal process.
 3. Jesus from the readers perspective has both the authority and the upper hand.
 4. The religious leaders are seen as under handed, conniving, wicked men who abuse authority.
 5. As readers of the book of Matthew, we do not see this as the proper outcome to this struggle or conflict but Jesus clearly points to the final outcome: *"Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.""* (Matthew 26:64, NKJV)
- B. Jesus then remains silent.
 1. He says nothing more until he briefly answers Pilate.
 2. And again nothing until he cries out to Father from the cross.
 3. There really is no more to be said. Jesus silence speaks loudly to the reader because it begins to bring back so much of what has already been said.
- C. We can learn from the disciples:
 1. They are scattered in the midst of the pressure.
 2. Judas chooses to hang himself out of guilt and shame.
 3. Peter simple puts distance between himself and Jesus out of fear for self preservation.

II. The Spotlight of the Night

- A. Jesus gets the high drama place when He declares, based on the Pharisee's questions:
 1. I am Messiah! I am the Christ! I am the anointed One!
 2. I am Son of God! This resonates with RELATIONSHIP! And it resonates with the divinity of His mission.
 3. This declaration is final! The High Priest tears his garment and declares Jesus guilty. This set Jesus up to now be sent to Pilate. The religious leaders are not allowed to kill so they get Pilate to do their dirty work.

- B. Quietly now the spotlight moves to Peter in vs. 58. I have always been moved by these words since first reading them: *"Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and came to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and sat with the guards and waited to see how it would all end."* (Matthew 26:58, NLT)
1. That Peter would follow at a distance 'hammers' him in his own words...I will die for you. I will follow when all others will not.
 2. That Peter would follow at a distance is "All too easy for us to relate to."
 3. Jesus face His trial among the religious leaders. Peter faces his trial among the servants.
 4. It gives the whole scene and new tension to the story line.
 5. *"The reader is invited to choose between two models of how the man of God behaves under pressure, the one who escapes death but with his spiritual reputation in tatters and the one who will be killed only to live again in triumph; so the reader is reminded that "anyone who finds their life will lose it, and anyone who loses their life will find it." (10:39; 16:25) France, R. T. (2007). NICNT (p. 1017). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.*

III. Two Men's Torment

- A. Peter's Trial 26:69-75 After this section Peter's name is not mentioned again in this Gospel.
1. Peter follows at a distance vs 58
 2. Peter was sitting outside. Still maintaining distance from Jesus.
- B. Three challenges...and Peter response escalates with each challenge.
1. A single servant girl. Gr. One little servant girl.
 - a) Peter is outside in the courtyard. vs 69
 - b) The accusation: *"You were..."* Matthew takes a shot at Peter and thereby takes a shot at us.
 - c) evasive denial by Peter
 2. Another single servant girl appealing to the crowd.
 - a) Peter is outside by the gate. He is moving away from Jesus. vs.71
 - b) The accusation: The accusation: *"This man was..."* Matthew takes a shot at Peter and thereby takes a shot at us.
 - c) A direct denial by Peter, with an oath. He denies Jesus with an oath... which Jesus directly stated in sermon on mount was not good to do. Mt 5:33-37. And he leave totally outside weeping bitterly. vs 75.
 3. A group of by standers
 - a) The accusers speak, *"You must be..."*
 - b) Peter curses Jesus, because as is written in Gr. there is no object to verb which leads us to believe it is Jesus. *"Here, where the object is not expressed, it means that Peter is cursing someone other than himself, and the most natural sense in this context would be that he now began to curse Jesus."* France, R. T. (2007). NICNT (p. 1034). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.
 - c) Strongest response by Peter in that he directly denies he knows Jesus.
 - d) Under the pressure of the moment Peter allows his loyalty to be compromised and the rooster crows confirming that Jesus had already seen this! He weeps bitterly under self disgust and true sorrow.

C. Judas 27:1-10

1. Jesus goes to Pilate to be sentenced
2. Judas sentences himself.
 - a) The comparison to Peter allows us as readers to see their faults and fates.
 - b) vs 4 "I have sinned, for I have betrayed and innocent man!"
 - (1) What remorse.
 - (2) What pain.
 - (3) What desire to turn back to what was.
 - c) Judas cant get rid of the responsibility and the Religious leaders refuse to accept it. And Pilate later washes his hands of it thereby transferring the guilt to the Pharisees and the people (who willingly accept it!)