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Steadfast Love

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

bimonthly (interim) schedule

1st Wednesday of the month

3rd Monday of the month

MONDAY, 17 JULY 2023

12 NOON IN 318 CLOB (& ZOOM)

The Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study for this month is Monday, the 17th of July (and the 2nd of August thereafter). The *bimonthly Bible studies* are *nonpartisan* and *non-denominational*, in addition to being *open-to-all*. The current study is continuation of a chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse exposition in the Gospel of Matthew.

We have an in-person Bible study in 318 CLOB (Senate Committee Room) *and* also use Zoom. Scripture is taught so that everyone has the opportunity to comment or ask a question.

For archives of past Bible studies (dating from 2010), please visit <http://www.capitolcom.org/georgia/studies>. *Capitol Commission's prayer is that this study will be edifying to you.* The sole intent of this ministry is to serve you, as a resource for pastoral attention, counsel, and prayer. *The present Bible study is just one aspect of that desire.*

— Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Study

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Monday, 17 July 2023

Matthew 26 — “Steadfast Love”

The Greek word *agape* (“love”) is almost a New Testament occurrence for an original concept. *Agape* was used twenty times in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, yet it is almost non-existent prior to the New Testament. Love is the preeminent virtue inculcated and produced by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The entire law is summarized in love (not in the sense of regarding all other commands as insignificant but in the notion that love is fundamental). Love is the primary indication of biblical

maturity (Matt 5:44-48; John 13:35; 1 John 3:14). Love is the highest motivation for all moral actions.

Agape develops its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. True love is not a virtue of natural affection; rather, it is made possible only by divine grace. *Agape* is one of the supernatural fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; cf. 1 John 3:14). Love is a matter of will as opposed to feeling (cf. Matt 5:44-48). All human duty may be summarized in love (Matt 22:37-40; Rom 13:8; 1 Cor 13:13).

Matthew 26 reveals that the most complete expression and superlative disclosure of love was in God sending his Son, Jesus, into the world to die for sinners. The selfless love of God is precisely what the world so desperately needs today. Love is the supreme characteristic of God, as First John 4:8 succinctly affirms, “God is love.” When people love God (as they should), other interests fade because the Lord is the focus of one’s actions and feelings. Jesus was so committed to love that He gave his life for the benefit of others. Matthew 26 reveals the power of steadfast love.

PREPARATION AND PRONOUNCEMENT

(*Matt 26:1-25*) Matthew 26 records the final days leading to Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. Jesus warned his disciples regarding things to come in relation to the fulfillment of his work on the cross (vv. 1-2). His disciples were likely encouraged by the prophecy of Jesus’ coming with power and great glory (cf. 24:29-31), and needed to be reminded that He must first suffer. Controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders would climax in the plot to kill Him (26:3-5). Although the leaders did not want to murder Him during the Passover that is what occurred, thereby subtly indicating how Jesus was in control of the events. Divine providence is such that God can use sinful actions to accomplish his purposes.

The anointing at Bethany occurred prior to the triumphal entry (21:1-11), yet the placement of the event in 26:6-13 is to contrast the woman’s action with Judas (vv. 14-19, 47-56). The expensive ointment poured over Jesus’ head was an expression of gratitude and love, yet Judas and others considered it wasteful. Certainly, it is more than appropriate to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ.

The notion that the perfume should have been sold and used for the poor was countered by Jesus’ words: “you always have the poor with you” (v. 11). Poverty will never be eliminated by economics or politics because it is a matter of the spirit, and until Jesus returns and restores all things, the poor will always be present. Therefore, the answer to poverty is a change in the heart of people. Jesus did recognize the importance of ministry to the poor (cf. Deut 15:1-11) and those opportunities will always be abundant, yet the woman had a unique occasion for ministering to her Messiah (even if she did not understand the significance of her actions in entirety, vv. 12-13).



The account of Judas' treachery with the chief priests (vv. 14-16) is a reminder that **the promise of money will always disappoint when the profits involve harming someone else**. Jesus' preparation for the Passover was done privately (vv. 17-19) probably because the Lord did not want to be hindered by outside interference. Some people unwisely say too much and thus confidentiality is prudent.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IS SUCH THAT GOD CAN USE SINFUL ACTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES.

During the Passover meal with the twelve, Jesus revealed that one of them would betray Him (vv. 20-21), which was a terrible thought to those present. The timidity, uncertainty, and volatility of the disciples is evident as they all wondered, "Surely not I" (v. 22), while Judas asked with deceitful treachery (v. 25). Jesus knew Judas would betray Him yet everything would occur precisely as revealed in the prophetic Word (vv. 23-24a). Nevertheless, **prophecy does not excuse personal accountability** because it occurs through the responsible actions of those who proceed accordingly (v. 24b).

PARTICIPATION AND PROCLAMATION

(*Matt 26:26-75*) The institution of the Lord's Supper (vv. 26-35) was in relation to the Passover (vv. 20-25). Jesus' words, "This is My body" (v. 26), indicate He was mindful of his atoning death as fulfillment of the Passover imagery. The symbolism of sacrificial provision is evident so that "is" (Gk. *estin*) means "represents." The bread represents Christ's body and the cup signifies his shed blood. Faith in Jesus precedes sharing in the Lord's Supper. **God's plans will be fully consummated in the Lord's coming kingdom** (vv. 28-29). The hymn (v. 30) was the last part of the Hallel (Ps 115-118), a collection of Psalms (Ps 113-118) that concluded the Passover.

Matthew 26:41 – "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Jesus then prophesied that all the disciples would sin ("fall away") by denying they were his followers (v. 31), yet would be forgiven and restored subsequent to his resurrection (v. 32). Pride goes before the fall (Prov 16:18), and for all his boasting, Peter discovered he was not as resolute as he imagined (Matt 26:33-35). As opposed to praying, "Lord, help me!," Peter spoke "insistently" (Mark 14:31). **Some people will not listen and must learn in a difficult manner.**

PRIDE GOES BEFORE THE FALL (PROV 16:18) . . .

Knowing that intense physical and spiritual suffering was near, Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray. He asked three of his disciples to accompany Him, yet three times found them sleeping (Matt 26:36-46). **If they had prayed as Jesus did perhaps they would have overcome the temptation to deny Him** (v. 41). In his own prayer, Jesus struggled with his human nature yet He was victorious with the internal battle regarding his willingness to endure the cross. The incident is an evident contrast between Jesus' humble dependence upon the Father (v. 39) and Peter's self-confidence (v. 33).

Signifying his sovereign control over every aspect of his betrayal, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus said, "the hour is at hand" (v. 46) and indeed it had (vv. 47-56). Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and abandoned. Jesus' sufferings in Gethsemane were anticipatory, yet now He would begin to experience the pain resulting from his trials (vv. 57-68) and crucifixion (27:33-56), **all the while being steadfast in his love for fallen humanity.**

By law, trials could not be held at night, which means Jesus' religious trial was illegal. Jesus no longer veiled his identity. **When asked if He was the Messiah (26:63), Jesus spoke unmistakably, "You have said it yourself" (v. 64).** The religious leaders manifested their intense hatred toward the Son of God in the only manner that sinful people would know (vv. 67-68). Matthew 26 concludes with Peter's denials (vv. 69-75) and his weeping remembrance of Jesus' words (v. 75). Peter's example proves the need to be less confident in self and more dependant upon God.

First Peter 2:20 – For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

Jesus lovingly came to earth as the sacrificial servant who would save from the eternal condemnation of their sins those who trust in Him. Suffering for doing well might not always be fair, yet it can result in blessing (cf. 1 Pet 2:20-21). **When life seems unjust, remember Jesus and what He endured for those He came to save.** Know that God sees and knows all, and He keeps excellent records to reward accordingly (Ps 56:8; Heb 6:10; 11:6; Rev 20:12).

Thank you for the privilege in providing you with the Capitol Commission Bible study. If we can serve you in any manner, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission exists to minister gospel hope and spiritual strength to legislators, staff, lobbyists (i.e. the entire Capitol community). The focus of our ministry is people as opposed to politics, and thus to be a spiritual resource to the legislature. Our ministry strategy is expressed by pastoral presence, the proclamation of the Bible, and fervent prayer for every legislator.

God values civilization. The Hebrew word *shalom* ("peace") testifies to the Lord God's desire for society. When peace describes society, it refers to a prosperous and wholesome civilization. God has a high standard for governing authorities, referring to them as his ministers (Rom 13:4). He desires their salvation and for them to have knowledge of his truth (1 Tim 2:1-2). Our passion is the same as the Lord God, which is why Capitol Commission provides hope "behind the scenes" through a ministry of presence.

The gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). The Bible provides equipping "for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Capitol Commission state ministers value prayer because we exist as a ministry to people. God hears and answers prayer! "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas 5:16b).

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As the Lord Jesus said, "look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35). If you would like to partner with Capitol Commission, Georgia with your talents, time, or treasure, please contact us by email, mail, or phone; or, visit online at <http://capitolcom.org/georgia/donate>.

