

Gospel of John - episode 24

Chapter 13

Welcome to the second half of St. John's Gospel, which is called the Book of Glory. This will be a wonderful journey for us. John summarises the first half of the Gospel in all the events of the second half and makes it a very wonderful experience. The second half of John's Gospel is very different to the Synoptics. He takes a very different approach to the mystery of the Passion and Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The other Gospels narrate the different events, but John writes towards the end of the first century, when Christians had copies of the narratives of the Gospels from Matthew, Mark and Luke. So, John's interest was not in narrating the same things, but in picking up some of the episodes that they hadn't emphasised because he wants to put across a very deep, wonderful message. He does give us, of course, the main events, but people wonder why certain items in the Synoptic Gospels are missing.

When we come to Chapter 13 of John, the public ministry of Jesus is over, and it lasted three and a half years. Three and a half years is a very important statement; it is a prophetic sign. The prophets all speak about a period of 3 1/2 years, or they say 'a time, two times, and half a time'. 42 or 1260 days is the same thing. John, who is the writer of the Book of Revelation, also uses this prophetic timing. For example, in Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, he says that the church will be in the wilderness for 3 1/2 years - a time, two times, and half a time - just to indicate that it's an important signal. During his ministry, Jesus tried - in vain for many - to reveal that he, in his Incarnation, was the answer to all the cries of the Old Testament, looking for a Saviour, a Redeemer, the Messiah. He was the fulfilment of all their hopes and their dreams, but many didn't even notice. So, when we come into Chapter 13, the atmosphere of tension and confrontation between Jesus and the leadership is over. But while it is over and done, it's only over in the speaking sense, because Jesus's revelation has been completely rejected by the leadership, and their hatred of him has morphed into a sinister plot, not just to kill him, but to destroy him.

Now they are about to accuse him of blasphemy; the death penalty for blasphemy - according to the Jewish law - was stoning. They're not going to stone Jesus; that would be far too quick. They have a sinister plot to destroy him in the eyes of the people. They want to destroy all faith in him so, you realise that those who operate like this are from a very low level. At this introductory point, I need to remind you, that in John's Gospel we have two levels of operation. One is the level of below, the level of the unbelieving world, where nothing spiritual is understood, and everything is just physical, here, earthly, and ephemeral. Anybody at that level doesn't understand Jesus. The other level is the spiritual level, or how to see things from God's point of view. At this level, all the deep mysteries are uncovered. These two levels are extremely important in our interpretation of the second half of John's Gospel.

First of all, we find that the Sanhedrin want to arrest Jesus secretly. They are afraid the crowds will defend Jesus. But for us, reading this 2,000 years later, it is a terrible shock to find men who are dedicated to God, who are officially his representatives to the world - to witness them publicly breaking all of God's laws just to get rid of God Incarnate from their midst! They want to kill God. It's absolutely incredible to us. They work hard to destroy the greatest divine visitation the world has ever known. They want to



extinguish the light of the world (John 1:5). So, we are coming into high drama, much greater than people realise. Right from the very beginning, we can put the blame for the death of Jesus, fairly and squarely, on the Sanhedrin first, on Pilate and the Roman soldiers second and the nation of Israel as a whole last. It's completely clear.

Right now, we are going to go into the Cenacle with Jesus and his Apostles. For a short time, we shut the world out - that is the cosmos, the unbelieving world - and we enter into a warm, loving atmosphere with Jesus and the men he has chosen to continue his mission to all the world. Jesus will reveal himself to them in a completely new way. But be warned, things are not what they seem. It may look cosy to us, but there is tension in this room also, for several reasons. One is that according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus foretold his Passion and Resurrection three times before the event. So, there is a sense of foreboding in the Apostles. They sense that some alarming events are about to happen, but they don't realise what they are just now. Prophetic events have come upon them, and things will happen during this supper which will change them, and history forever.

There will be a lot of shock, alarm and sadness in this love feast of Jesus. The reason for the tension, at least at the beginning, is the fact that Judas Iscariot is present. He represents the level of below; he is the agent of evil. According to the Synoptic Gospels, he has already been to the Sanhedrin; has already agreed to betray Jesus, and has already been paid. So, the paid informer is present... now, we are in Israel - called Palestine at the time - but was absorbed into the Roman Empire, with Greek and Latin spoken as well as Hebrew. This is going to be important at the Death of Jesus, with the notice that Pilate will put over Jesus's head. The dilator - the paid informer - was one of the most hated people in the Roman Empire. For the church, the dilator was going to be a complete horror because both Peter and Paul died as a result of the paid informer.

The paid informer turns up at the last supper - or to use our language - he turns up at the first Mass. It's really scandalous. When Jesus points out the betrayer to the beloved disciples, they don't get the message because they have forgiven Judas so much, so often. They have learned from Jesus to forgive 70 times the seventh time, so, they think Jesus is asking Judas to just go out and do something. They are not thinking, 'why should Judas be absent from Passover'? That doesn't make sense. Every Jew is obliged to celebrate Passover. So, if Jesus sends him out, the Apostles should have questioned it, but they don't.

The context for this entire mystery that we will be dealing with in the second half of John's Gospel is Jesus's Passover, his Hour. The powers of evil will try to claim that it is their victory over this silly man who thinks he is the Son of God. If we keep in mind that it is Jesus' Passover, then we'll get everything in perspective. Now, some of the details - as I already said - John will omit. But for John, it's very important for us to know that Jesus dies on Passover Eve, the evening before. He dies at exactly three o'clock in the afternoon when the priests are slaughtering the lambs in the temple, and Jesus is buried before the Holy day. On that particular year, it happened that the Passover fell on a Sabbath, so, it was the most solemn Passover they could have possibly have because the Sabbath is sacred. So, Jesus has his Sabbath rest after the labour of his Passion, just as God the Father had his sabbatical rest after the labour of

Creation: Genesis 2:2. Of course, Jesus has already told us in John 15:9, that whatever the Father does, the Son does also. John will remind us of hyssop, and of broken bones when it comes to the Death of Jesus

This, too, is a reference to Exodus 12:46, and a pointer to the fact that Jesus is the true Lamb of God. So, in all of these events, John is going to illustrate that Jesus is not only the true shepherd of his sheep. (We got that in chapter 10), but he is also the sacrificial Lamb. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist pointed out in chapter 1:29. But it's not only that. He's not only the shepherd and the lamb. He is also the altar, the sacrifice and the priest. Let me give you that in other language. Jesus is Christianity. Christianity is not an institution. We have institutions, but Christianity is Christ. It's a person. Now, we have already seen, and John will illustrate it for us in the second half of his Gospel again, that Jesus is the complete replacement of the temple of Jerusalem. We got the teaching about that in chapter 2, that Jesus replaces all the feasts of Israel: (chapters 3 to 9). The reason is because he himself is the temple (chapter 2), and he himself is the altar, the sacrifice, the priest. He is all in all. He is everything.

When the Risen Jesus reveals himself to John in Revelation 1:17, he says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and at the end". Now, when it comes to this Passover of 30 AD in which Jesus was killed, the only people who penetrate anything of the depth of this mystery are those who are on the level of above. Those on the level of below don't get it at all. If you who are coming to listen, read and study the Gospel of John are still on the level of the unbelieving world, questioning everything in your mind, wanting to understand according to your rational brain, you won't understand John. John is for mystics and saints. But if you are at the level of above, if you have a deep prayer life, and you are letting the Holy Spirit guide you to open your mind and heart to understand the scriptures, you will find this a wonderful treasure.

So here is our challenge right at the very beginning. Which level am I on? The wonderful thing is, if you're on the wrong level, you can always shift. You can always get the Lord to change you and bring you to the right level. At Calvary, in the depths of this mystery, those who penetrated it were Jesus's own mother, John himself, who was a contemplative and a mystic, Mary of Magdalen, one of the greatest lovers of Jesus of all time, the women disciples who are totally faithful to him, and a little group that are not normally mentioned even in the Gospels; they are the group of shepherds who remained faithful to Jesus from his Birth to his Death. Jesus revealed that to the Italian mystic Maria Valtorta.

One of the things that amazes people about John's Gospel is that he doesn't mention the institution of the Eucharist. He doesn't have to. The Synoptic Gospels were with the Church for many years; everybody knew about the institution of the Eucharist. John gave us the teaching about the Eucharist in chapter 6. At the end of the first century, the Christians didn't need to hear a third time or a fourth time that Jesus had Instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. They needed to hear something that they hadn't grasped. So, what John does is that he picks out an incident that the Synoptic writers don't even mention, and he is able to explain the mystery through the foot washing. Here you have the gift of the mystic; he can pick up something that others don't even notice and be able to explain it all through that.

The washing of the feet is big in John's Gospel, and I'll give a big amount of time to it as well. Immediately after the washing of the feet, Jesus begins his final discourse which covers Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16. In other words, a big block of the second half of the Gospel. It's his farewell discourse. You could call it his last will and testament, and it is unique to John's Gospel. And yet it isn't! It's unique in the way it's done. There is precedent in the Old Testament for a last will and testament of a great leader. For example, The Farewell Discourse of Jacob in Genesis Chapter 47..... of Moses is in Deuteronomy Chapter 32.... of Joshua Chapter 23.... and of David is in the First Chronicles Chapter 28. In the New Testament, of course, we have the Eschatological Discourse of Jesus, - that's the way the Synoptics deal with this Farewell Discourse. They only pick out certain aspects of it. Of course, in Acts Chapter 20, we have Paul's Farewell Discourse to the Church at Ephesus also. So, you would expect somebody like Jesus to have a Farewell Discourse! What John wants to say is that in the first half of the Gospel we learned all about Jesus. In this farewell discourse, we're going to hear all about the Church, who she really is.

The setting is the most suitable place for this discourse - the Cenacle. The most proper time was at the Last Supper after Judas had left, not before. It was only then that they had the privacy to be who they truly were in the eyes of God and in the eyes of each other. One final thing: in the first half of the Gospel which we call the Book of Signs, you always got the discourse after a sign was given. But here in the second half, you have to get the discourse before the events of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus for obvious reasons. Everything has to be explained ahead of time. The challenge that John and the Lord gives to us is that we - the readers of the Gospel - must look at these events in their proper perspective so that we can grasp the fullness of what is being said and allow ourselves to be transformed by it.

So, what is the essence of this message? You will hear this again and again. John is saying, that Jesus must be lifted up on the cross before he's lifted up in glory. This was introduced in chapter 3. Why must he be lifted up on the cross before he is lifted up in glory? It's because his ascent to the Father will prove his descent in the Incarnation. It's in the lifting up on the cross and the lifting up in glory that we realise he truly died for who he really was. He was the Son of God. Thank you for listening.. Goodbye. God bless you.

INTERVAL

Welcome to the second half of John's Gospel. I need to give you an introduction to Chapter 13 because we presume that we understand everything. You will find with a lot of the episodes that I'm going to do with you, that I'll give you an introduction to a chapter to make sure that you move into the deeper issues that are involved. So, before I read the text, I want to give you this introduction.

Every year, the chosen people celebrated Passover, or should have celebrated Passover, to renew the grace that was given to them at the time of their liberation from Egypt. They understood that the Passover was a renewal of the Covenant and a public expression of God's love for them as a people. It was also a renewal of God's choice of them as his chosen people. Notice, a revelation of God's love and of his



choice of them. This is where John's going. John will pick up that and explain it at a much deeper level. They sacrificed the Passover lamb yearly because it was this sacrifice that made all the difference to them leaving Egypt. If you go back to the Book of Exodus, there was a lot of preparation for leaving Egypt. Moses gave them God's Word, and God's signs, but they needed a sacrifice to actually leave Egypt. All of that is the preparation for what we are experiencing here. They also understood that it was the blood of the Lamb which they put on the lintels of their doors that actually saved them on that terrifying night of the Tenth Plague. They realised that this little figurative lamb, pointing all down the centuries to the Lamb of God that we are dealing with - that it was the blood of that Lamb that had saved them - and that the lamb had died in their place. In other words, he gave up his life to save theirs.

This is why to understand the Gospel, you need the background of the text. You need to go back to the Old Testament where everything was prepared. This yearly celebration was in the month of Nisan, which is March-April for us. Thousands of lambs were sacrificed in the temple representing the various groupings in Jerusalem. It was done at exactly three o'clock in the afternoon because that was the time when Abraham offered his son Isaac to God. The mystery of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis Chapter 22, is a prophetic forecast of the Father offering his Son for us on Mount Calvary. One points to the other. One was the prophetic preparation for the other. To understand something of Abraham and Isaac, and that sacrifice helps you to understand what the Gospel writers presume you know. So, as we go into this greatest of all traumas, we find that the scriptures are fulfilled all the time because it is God, the Father, who is offering his only Son to us. Abraham offered his only son to God also, but the sacrifice didn't have to go through. A ram was given in place of the child, but in the case of God's Only Son, the sacrifice did occur. The events that are about to happen are so awesome and terrifying that we protect ourselves by not entering deeply into them. Yes, we read it on the surface and say 'this happened and that happened', but that doesn't penetrate the mystery. If we really go deeply into the mystery - which I'm hoping to do with you now in this series - you will find it will radically change your life.

As we go into Chapter 13, Jesus has already entered the Cenacle, leaving the world outside. If you go back to the Synoptics, you will find that he cried over Jerusalem before he went into the Cenacle because he knew Jerusalem was going to be 'the sin city' in all the events to come. The house that Jesus was in was owned by his friend Lazarus, who was a very wealthy man. He owned about two-thirds of Bethlehem and had lots of properties in Jerusalem and elsewhere. He also owned what we call the Garden of Gethsemane. These properties were free for Jesus to use. (Jesus himself revealed this to the mystics).

On this particular Passover in 30 AD, even though Jesus goes into the upper room with his disciples, he alone in the whole of Israel knows that this Passover is the event that Moses' Passover prepared for. This is the key Passover. This is the great event. This is going to be a **real Passover** because Jesus will pass over through Death to Resurrection and into glory. The implications of that are all going to be explained to us in the final discourse, because Jesus, the new Adam, will return to Paradise and become the first born among the dead. He will inaugurate the new exodus of a new people of God, and it will be worldwide. It will involve all peoples, because God is not a respecter of persons. All people, regardless of who they are, are his children; it will last until the end of time. Now, how do we know that? Go back to the Book of Daniel, Again, I'm showing you that the more you know about the Old Testament, the more you will



understand the events happening here. In Chapter 7:13-14, Daniel said that the Kingdom that Jesus was about to inaugurate would last forever.

But in the last Exodus Moses took them from one physical country, through a wilderness to another physical land. That is not what's going to happen now. What will happen now is that Jesus will take the human race from the level of below to the level of above, where the glory of God can break out on humanity with the Kingdom of God established on the Earth. Jesus will show us that the great issue in the Kingdom of God is love. He left us one word, **love**. It is his law. The Kingdom of God is built and works on love because God is love. He created us out of love. He intended us to be conceived in love, reared in love, to marry in love, and to give birth to other children in love so that the human race could continue as a race of people born of God. That's what He intended. When we destroyed his plan, He redeemed us out of love, and only those who love will get back into his Kingdom of Love in Heaven.

We must all take this exodus from the level of below to the level of above so that we can join Jesus in this love feast of the Kingdom of God. In the realm of above, love, joy, peace and fraternity reign. Jesus will pray for that in chapter 17. Jesus has prepared his disciples for this. He has given them all the teaching. The Synoptic Gospels show that when things deteriorated between the leadership and Jesus, that he concentrated on preparing his disciples for the future, so, they are ready, but they don't realise it.

Now, I want to approach the Passion from a different angle than you might expect. What were the motives behind the events that are coming? I want to show you some motives on the part of God, on the part of the world, and on the part of the Sanhedrin, and finally, the motives of Jesus Incarnate. It will open the mystery up, and it will make much more sense when we get to the text.

First of all, let us see what was God doing in allowing his Son to be tortured and killed in Jerusalem. John tells us in 1 John 4:7 that "God is love". Psalm 145:17 tells us that God can only ever act out of love. Whatever God does, his motive is Love. Even when He sends chastisement upon the Earth, his motive is love. It is His inexplicable love for the children that He made. In the Passover we discover that God is prepared to pay any price to save His children. But, who is He paying? Let's go back a bit first. In John 10:30, Jesus said, "the Father and I are one". Now look at a crucifix, and your life will change. "The Father and I are one". Of course, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Whatever one of the persons in the Trinity does, the other two concur with it. So, the Blessed Trinity is involved. This is shocking. It is shockingly wonderful when you penetrate the mystery at this level.

So, **Love**, is the Triune reality. God was prepared to pay an infinite price for the one He loved, but the one He loved didn't love him! In this Passover, we witness a terrifying event that our omnipotent, eternal, ever-living, ever-lasting God came to the Earth in the Incarnation. He came into the slave markets of sin, and He paid the price demanded for the human race by the Prince of this world, the enemy, Satan. If you go to Saint Paul's letter in Philippians 2:6-11, you will see this terrifying event 'that his state was divine, and he didn't cling to it. He descended to become one of us. Even worse than that, he accepted death and the worst form of death - death on a cross. Then God raised him and gave him the name that is above all names'. The name that is above all name is the sacred name of God. **Hashem**, as the Jews

say, The Name. If Jesus was merely a man, not God, he wouldn't have been able to pay for the whole human race.

Human nature can't do that. The fact that he was divine as well as human meant that the price he paid was infinite, and therefore not only paid for the human race, but for any other races on any other worlds in the entire universe, because infinite means unlimited, immeasurable. It's just we don't know about other races on other planets, but if they needed redemption, Jesus has paid. So that's the motive on God's part, that he loved us to such an inexplicable degree that he would pay any price to save us (John 3;16). Now, if that doesn't melt your heart, nothing will.

On the part of the Jewish Sanhedrin, we are told in the Synoptic Gospels, for example Mark 15:10, that Pilate understood that Jesus was handed over out of jealousy! But as you go through John's account, you will realise that jealousy was only one of the many sins they committed. There was absolute hatred of Jesus also. Now, hatred is the mark of Satan. Why would they hate Jesus without cause? Why would they want to destroy him? They are definitely on the level of below; they have to be. Otherwise, they could never have crucified the Lord of glory, as Paul said. They are on the side of the unbelieving world, and that's going to become clearer as we go through these texts. That, for me, is an unbelievable scandal. These men wearing these wonderful religious robes, going through wonderful liturgies representing God for everybody, and they could be more worldly than anyone! This is a great warning to us: clothes don't make the monk!

The second thing is that the Jewish Sanhedrin reject Jesus because they wanted him to be a political Messiah. They wanted political salvation; therefore, salvation for them was here, in this world, and on the ground; utterly limited. He was never going to give them political salvation. It is still the temptation of nations today to look for political salvation rather than turn to the Saviour who will save us from our sins, because that is what the angel said to St. Joseph in Matthew 1:21. Political 'salvation' is wrong for many reasons, one being that if you overcome one government, won't another one take over? If you overcome one system of government, another system of government will take over. It is a trap.

The third reason why the Sanhedrin hated Jesus without cause was his holiness, the purity of his life, the extraordinary generosity of his being, the fact that he reached out to all those whom they hated, the poor, the sick, the blind, the lame - all the people they rejected. This showed that they were not men of God, and they didn't accept that. They hated him for it because they lost face and popularity in the eyes of the people. So, they want to kill Jesus in such a way that he will be destroyed in the eyes of the people, so that they will no longer believe in him. That's why they want to give him such a terrifying death.

Now let us come to the unbelieving world, represented by Pilate and the Roman soldiers. One of the terrible shocks of the Passion is how cruel the Roman soldiers were to Jesus. When they see that they have somebody meek and humble on their hands, why would they brutalise him? The cosmos or the unbelieving world represents sin, unbelief and malice; the powerful dominating the little people, manipulating and controlling. The Prince of this world, Satan, is their Prince (ruler). That will be simple enough to understand.

Let's come to Jesus' motives, because after all, he had motives! Why did he do it? Why did he allow this to happen? When we come into chapter 18, John is going to make it perfectly clear that there was no way anybody could arrest Jesus before he personally surrendered. John is the only Evangelist who clarifies this. He wants you to understand that Jesus sacrificed himself, and he did it as a perfect expression of his love for his disciples. St. Paul says in Romans 8:35, "who could separate us from the love of Christ?" He is a tremendous lover! He is the one who loved us for no reason. We've never done anything for him. Most of the human race doesn't ever say thanks, shows no gratitude, but John will tell us in the very first line of the second half of this Gospel, Chapter 13:1, "Jesus always loved those who were his in the world, and now he was going to show them how perfect, how complete, how totally limitless his love was".

Now you have it. He is the Second Person in the Most Blessed Trinity, and God is love. So, what we're going to see in the Passion is that Jesus shows the utter limits of love. Another way to say this is that he loved them to the very end of his life, but that is a bit lame for what we're trying to say. What we're trying to say is that Jesus's love **was so pure**, it was **so Godlike**, It was **so divine** that it was going to release his disciples from slavery to sin and self to become copies of himself. It was going to transform them, absolutely. His love was so divine that his own executioner was converted! The soldiers who brutalised him unbelievably at his last breath said, "this man was a son of God"! This is some man! We've never seen anything like this. I'll take it up from there next week.

Thank you for joining us. Goodbye. God bless you.