

“FRIDAY”

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished’. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” —JOHN 19:30

In the days before His crucifixion, Jesus is in the temple courts in Jerusalem. His teaching and actions have demonstrated the corruption of God’s chosen people, their rejection of Him, and His consequent invitation for all people to participate in His kingdom. In this, Jesus has been on the attack. He has placed the Jewish hierarchy on the defensive, and exposed them as excluded from the kingdom of God by their rejection of the Messiah. The door to God’s kingdom has now been opened to those who were on the outside.

This provoked the religious leaders who took up the offensive, and laid plans to arrest and kill Jesus. The plot to kill Him was implemented two days before Passover, and with a sense of urgency as they did not want it to take place during the celebration. The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus happened very quickly. It will take the High Priest and Sanhedrin Council a little over 36 hours to accomplish their deed.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to Peter, James and John, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). He then prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (26:39). His disciples failed to keep watch

and slept while Jesus made the same request of His Father two more times. The soldiers came and arrested Him. During the course of that night till the early morning hours, Jesus endured six mock trials. The first was with Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest, then to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, back to Pilate, and finally to the people. As an act of good will at Passover, the Roman government allowed one criminal to go free, and the people were given a choice between Barabbas, a notorious killer and insurgent of the people, or Jesus. They chose Barabbas.

Jesus went willingly to the cross, but He did not waltz to it. He went in great anguish and sorrow, not only because of the horrendous brutality He knew lay ahead, but the far more significant and painful transaction of “him who had no sin to be sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). At the ninth hour, He cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” - which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). We cannot fathom what Christ endured on the cross as God turned His face away. In His last breath, He said, “It is finished.”

The Sanhedrin council is triumphant over an apparent victory, and has one weekend to enjoy their success.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, may I always be mindful of what You endured on the cross for me. Thank You, Lord, with all my heart.

TO REFLECT UPON: What does the cross of Christ mean to me?