

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 26:1-5 | The Plot to Kill Jesus
Sunday January 18, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.



REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we ended our study on the Olivet Discourse—Jesus' sermon throughout Matthew 24 and 25.

Over the past eight weeks, Jesus taught on the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple, the signs of His Second Coming, three prophetic parables that address our faith, faithlessness, being ready and alert, using our talents and spiritual gifts until He returns, and judgment and hell.



INTRODUCTION:

Today, we turn the corner.

For the past four years and twenty-five chapters later, the story of Jesus' life has been moving towards these last three chapters in Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew's story started slowly with Jesus' genealogy, but over the years it's been building in its drama and intensity—the Olivet Discourse proves that.

We are entering the final act as we move into chapter 26.

Matthew 26 is a seismic transition into the final hours of Jesus' life.

These hours are called “The Passion.” (McL (Gibson's Movie))

The term comes from the Latin word *passio*, which means suffering.

Traditionally, *The Passion* refers to Jesus' betrayal, His suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, His mock trial, abuse by soldiers, the crown of thorns, the Scouring, crucifixion, and His burial.

Sometimes we hear *The Passion* referred to as Jesus' zeal to save the elect—but the older, more conservative theological view emphasizes Jesus' willingness to endure suffering, which goes back to the original Latin meaning.

Within this transition to Matthew 26, a lot is going on:

1. The plot and conspiracy to arrest and kill Jesus.
2. How a woman prepares Jesus for burial
3. How a man, Judas, prepares to betray Jesus.

Believe it or not, we are still on Wednesday of Passover week. —Wednesday evening

Thursday, Jesus will spend the day with the Disciples and eat the last Passover meal, which is the first Lord's Supper.

Then on Friday, Jesus will be arrested, tried, and crucified.

Before we get there, we have much to learn about how and why the religious leaders plan, plot, and scheme to kill the very Son of God.

How does this scheming, plotting, and planning apply to you? Let's find out together!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

 **Matthew 26:1**—When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he told his disciples,

 **Matthew 26:2**—“You know that the Passover takes place after two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

Matthew 26:3—Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas,

Matthew 26:4—and they conspired to arrest Jesus in a treacherous way and kill him.

Matthew 26:5—“Not during the festival,” they said, “so there won’t be rioting among the people.”

These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

God of my praise, do not be silent. For wicked and deceitful mouths open against me; they speak against me with lying tongues. They surround me with hateful words and attack me without cause. (Psalm 109:3)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 26:1—When Jesus had finished saying all these things,

What things? → Olivet Discourse

- To be ready and alert for His Second Coming.
- To pay attention for the signs of the times.
- To watch out for false teachers and wolves.
- To do our job as the church—participating in the Great Commission.
- Using our spiritual gifts and talents for the building and maturing of His local church.
- To realize that half the church is filled with nonbelievers who ignore God’s Word and have no heart to serve, but only take from the Lord and His people.
- Lastly, to understand that our actions speak louder than words—we are to examine ourselves to see if we’re in the faith and repent of our sin and disobedience on a daily basis.

These are a sample of the things that Jesus taught.

As we transition into *the Passion* narrative, we'll see how and why the last 48 hours of Jesus life are so important to us and our faith.

In fact, *the Passion* narrative is so important to the Christian faith that it fills up nearly 1/3 of all pages in the Gospels.

33% of all four Gospels deal with the last 48 hours of Jesus' life.

 **Matthew 26:1**— he told his disciples,

Jesus now transitions the Disciples from His sermon on the future of His Second Coming into the reality of what lies ahead for the next two days.

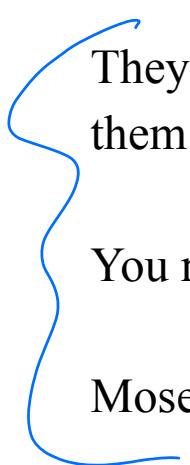
There is much to do in the next 48 hours—and the Disciples are not prepared for it.

So Jesus starts to prepare them.

 **Matthew 26:2**—“You know that the Passover takes place after two days,

Passover is the biggest celebration of the year for the Israelites.

Literally hundreds of thousands of people would travel from far and wide to reach Jerusalem for this week-long celebration.

 They were to remember how the Lord, using Moses as His prophet and pastor, led them out of slavery from Egypt into the Promised Land.

You remember the story!

Moses kept going directly to Pharaoh, saying, “God says, let my people go.”

Throughout that timeframe, God sent nine plagues/curses:

1. Nile River turned to blood
2. Frogs

3. Gnats / lice
4. Flies
5. Livestock disease
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness

After all that drama, God vowed to send one more plague/curse upon Egypt—death.

Every firstborn child in Egypt will die (Ex. 11:4–5).

But God promised that if the Israelites would sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on the doorframe of their homes and tents, their firstborn would be spared.

First, notice that the Jews' faith is not a hidden faith—it's painted on their front door.

Second, notice what the blood resembles—the cross.

Where God saw the blood, He *passed over*—hence the name of the celebration—*Passover*.

Not so for the Egyptians—every firstborn child and animal died.

And so began *The Exodus* from Egypt.

Just as the slaughtered lamb was the symbol of life for the Israelites, Jesus now becomes the new Moses who leads His disciples on a new spiritual exodus, not from physical slavery, but the spiritual slavery of sin.

Ironically, at the Passover, Jesus not only offers a sacrifice on behalf of His people, but He Himself is the sacrifice for our sins—Jesus is both the offering and the offerer.



Matthew 26:2—and the Son of Man

Jesus continues to use His favorite title for Himself—“The Son of Man.”

It’s His favorite designation because *the Son of Man* captures Jesus’s dual identity—truly divine and truly human.

He is both fully God and fully man at the same time.

Jesus identifies Himself as the all-powerful God/Man described by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel portrays this Man as an awesome, inspiring individual who is exalted to the right hand of the Ancient of Days (God the Father).

Daniel also communicates how this Man’s authority and kingdom will never end.

And Jesus says, it’s this God/Man who...



Matthew 26:2—will be handed over to be crucified.”

Needless to say, God certainly works in mysterious ways.

Jesus, as the High Priest, offers Himself as the Lamb of God who is to be slain.

“Handed over” means *betrayal* or to be *delivered over*.

The Creator of the universe will be handed over to His creatures.

This is now the fourth time that Jesus tells His disciples how He will die. (Matthew 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:17–19).

These prophecies grow increasingly detailed—

- The first mention merely tells of Jesus' death and resurrection;
- In the second prophecy, Jesus adds his betrayal.
- The third involves the Gentiles in His mocking, flogging, and specifically His crucifixion.
- Lastly, Jesus reveals that this will happen after two days.

Being “handed over” reveals that Jesus was well aware of the schemes of the chief priests and elders.

Up to this point, in all of human history, no other events have been more important than these four prophecies. Why?

Because they are the turning point of human history, the very center of Christianity.

Jesus predicts exactly what will happen to Him, when it will happen and how it will happen in great detail.

And it does happen with 100% accuracy.

KEYPOINT 1:

Because Jesus repeatedly predicts His death, we understand that He controls life and death.

Nobody takes Jesus' life from Him—He gives it freely as a sacrifice for sinners.

Second, Jesus doesn't run from suffering—He embraces it.

Jesus chooses to trust the Father over His feelings and comfort.

Jesus' will is the Father's will.

Now, in verse three, it's like Matthew changes scenes to a different location.

If we were watching a movie, we would see an edit/transition to a different scene
—same timeframe, different location.

Matthew 26:3—*Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest,*

“Then”— the antagonists enter the scene—the chief priests and elders.

The chief priests and the elders are different than the Pharisees.

The Pharisees cared about God, His Word and His ways.

But they couldn't get Jesus to come to their conclusions about God, His Word and His ways.

The Pharisee's interpretations and applications of God's ways were radically different than Jesus'.

This angered the Pharisees—it angered them so much that they wanted to kill him.

Proverbs 19:21—*Many plans are in a person's heart, but the LORD's decree will prevail.*

Although the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus, they didn't have the authority to kill anyone.

Nevermind the sixth commandment on God's top ten list of things not to do—
“Thou shall not kill!”

But the chief priests/elders, on the other hand, had a different agenda from the common Pharisees.

They certainly didn't care about Jesus—here's why:

high society—privileged

The chief priests/elders were the aristocrats, politicians, and servants of Rome—not shepherds to Israel.

They fooled the Israelites into thinking that they were godly men.

*S*The chief priests and elders represent the Sanhedrin— the ruling body in Jerusalem.

Think of these men as members of our Supreme Court.

These men are the leaders of leaders, with the most influence, money, and power; therefore, they make the most important decisions for the entire nation.

The problem is that this is not a formal session—these guys are meeting privately.

***Matthew 26:3**—assembled in the courtyard of the high priest,*

We know this is not a legitimate formal meeting because they're meeting in the high priest's backyard.

Let's talk about the position of the high priest.

Initially, the position of high priest was passed from father to son through the Levitical line—the tribe of Levi.

The priesthood started with Moses' brother, Aaron, and his sons.

But fast-forward to the first century, when the Romans seized control of Israel, it was Rome that began appointing the high priest.

When that happened, the high priest became Rome's political puppet.

So, although our thoughts may seem “religious” when we hear the term “high priest,” the position was actually much more political than spiritual.

These men in the Sanhedrin were not shepherds, they were religious businessmen and entrepreneurs taking advantage of God’s people.

So, as sin begets more sin—bad company attracts wicked men.

The picture here in this courtyard shows these men like members of the spiritual mafia, gathered in a basement somewhere in New Jersey. → “Godfather”

Now we meet the mob boss...

 **Matthew 26:3**— who was named Caiaphas,

Joseph Caiaphas was the ringleader of the religious circus— He replaced his father-in-law, Annas.

Caiaphas served as high priest for 18 years, from AD 18 to 36.

Caiaphas's tenure is quite impressive because holding the office of high priest for that long required an intimate relationship with Rome.

To give you an idea of how difficult working with Rome was— there were 28 different high priests over a 100-year period before Caiaphas.

That’s an average of 3.5 years each, however many guys didn’t even make it a year — Caiaphas’s successor lasted only 50 days in office.

The irony is that the office of high priest was supposed to be a lifelong term.

Like his father, Caiaphas was a wicked man who dominated Israel.

How so?

First and foremost, Caiaphas was a thief—he embezzled from the Temple.

That's why he was so upset when Jesus turned all the money tables over.

Second, Caiaphas is a liar—he failed to be an honest judge because he was driven by greed.

Third, Caiaphas was a murderer— in every passage where he is mentioned, he is seen plotting, scheming, and pursuing the death of Jesus.

The irony is that, as wicked as he was, he was the only person who could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and offer the yearly sacrifice.

Talk about God's amazing grace!



Matthew 26:4—and they conspired to arrest Jesus...

Conspired—they meditated, consulted, and advised each other on the premeditated murder of the Son of God.



Matthew 26:4—... in a treacherous way and kill him.

Treacherous—these men are skilled/experts in deception.

Stop and think about what was happening at this moment in time.

The so-called “pastors, priests, and ministers of Israel” are calmly and irrationally discussing the premeditated murder of the Savior of the World—as if planning the next church potluck

Just as Cain planned his brother Abel's murder. Just as King David planned the murder of a prized soldier, Uriah—they want to kill the Creator of life.

Has there ever been a more diabolical conspiracy in the history of the world?

The chief priests of Israel thought that the King of Israel was worth more dead than alive.

Ironically, in a way they never intended, they were absolutely right—at least temporarily.

Jesus, as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world, had to be sacrificed at the hands of sinners. Why?

There is no other way for us to be forgiven.

 **Hebrews 9:22**—without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

A Man had to die for our sin because it was man who sinned.

But it couldn't be any man—it had to be a Perfect Man—the God/Man who could endure the entirety of the Father's wrath on sin to bring about perfect justice.

Theologically, this justice is called *propitiation*—the appeasing/satisfaction of the guilty verdict.

People trying to kill Jesus is nothing new.

The first attempt on Jesus' life was made shortly after He was born, when Herod massacred all the baby boys in Bethlehem.

Later, when Jesus was teaching in His hometown of Nazareth, the people became angry and tried to throw him off a cliff.

After Jesus healed the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda, the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him (John 5:18).

All of those attempts failed because it was not God the Father's time or way for God the Son to die.



Proverbs 16:9—A person's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps.

Do you see the disconnect? *We usually have a heart problem/alignment,*

John's Gospel adds more details of this diabolical meeting—after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.



John 11:45—Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him.



John 11:46—But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

The next verse shall say that they fell to the ground in repentance.



John 11:47—So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, “What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs?



John 11:48—If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”



John 11:49—One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all!



John 11:50—You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.”



John 11:51—He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,



John 11:52—and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God.

John 11:53—So from that day on they plotted to kill him.

John 11:54—Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples.

John 11:55—Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover.

John 11:56—They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will he?”

John 11:57—The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him. — *Belo → be on the lookout.*

Don’t miss the inescapable irony that the Judge of the universe is about to be judged—and judged guilty for being the Son of Man—the Savior of the World.

Back to Matthew’s version.

Matthew 26:5—“Not during the festival,” they said, “so there won’t be rioting among the people.”

Verse five is all about timing—the decision has been made to murder the very Son of God—now the plot thickens with the details of when.

Why did the chief priests and elders not want to arrest Jesus during the Passover?

First, the common people loved Jesus—they had His support.

Second, Rome had extra military in town because of the Passover.

Third, the chief priests and elders worked for Rome—they didn't want to cause any additional problems for Rome for fear of losing their jobs.

Ironically, Jesus told the Disciples that he would be crucified in two days—during the Passover.

But the chief priests and elders planned to wait until after Passover, two days plus an additional seven days of the feast.

They plan to kill Jesus in nine days—but Passover was the time God the Father had chosen.

Why is it important that Jesus be crucified as the Lamb of God during Passover?

First, OT prophecy and imagery is fulfilled.

Up until this point, every lamb that was slain in every Passover since the Exodus pointed to Jesus.

KEYPOINT 2:

Jesus embodied what the Passover lamb could only symbolize.

As the Lamb of God, Jesus is the only one who could truly atone for our sin.

In other words, Jesus is the only one who could reconcile the broken relationship we have with God the Father—started in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve deliberately ate the fruit.

→ reconciliation begin

We see this as the preincarnate Christ, shed blood in the Garden of Eden to make a covering for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21).

But the covering would never satisfy the justice of the Father. Why?

Hebrews 10:3—But in the sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year after year.

Hebrews 10:4—For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

So OT prophecy is fulfilled. *When Jesus is crucified during Passover.*

Second, the issue of timing is just as important as the sacrifice itself.

The timing of Jesus' death during Passover is not coincidental but theologically intentional by God the Father.

As the priests were sacrificing thousands of lambs inside the city,

BTW, Jewish historian

According to Josephus, over 250,000 lambs were slain during a typical Passover in a matter of hours.

those But the sacrifices of all those lambs were but faint symbols of what the Lamb of God would accomplish.

The Lamb of God wasn't even in the Holy City—Jesus was thrown out.

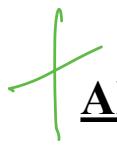
God the Father sacrificed His own Son outside the city.

Hebrews 13:12—Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that he might sanctify the people by his own blood.

KEYPOINT 3:

If Jesus had died at any time other than the Jewish Passover and in any other way than by crucifixion, there would have been no atonement/reconciliation.

The death of Jesus alone was essential for the atonement, but He had to die at the proper time and in the proper way.



APPLICATION:

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