

The Final Hours, Matthew 26:17-56

Despite the significance of the central doctrine of the Christian faith, the atonement and its requisite death of Jesus, the majority of Christians quickly breeze through what we ironically call Easter, and move on to the “nicer” parts of the faith. We simply don’t get it: the passionate grief of Jesus in the last hours, the abuse he suffered, and his bloody death. The question that lingers in the uninformed subconscious of many is simply “why couldn’t God have just done it differently? Why can’t we do without the painful parts?”

The Last Night

The Upper Room Passover Meal, v.17-35

- Though the disciples didn’t know it, the location had been pre-arranged, v.17-19
 - “A certain man.” _____
“My time is at hand.” _____
 - The betrayal dialogue, v.20-25
 - “One of you will betray me.” _____
 - Each disciple said “surely not I, Lord?” _____
 - To Judas, Jesus said “you have said it yourself.” _____
- [The most extensive coverage of the upper room dialogue is in John chapters 13-17.]
- The Passover meal becomes “The Lord’s Supper,” v.26-29
 - *This is my body, this is my blood.* _____
 - Fulfillment of John 6:51-58. _____
 - “A rock of offense,” Isaiah 28:16, Romans 9:33. _____
 - The promise that He will wait for us to join him in the kingdom before he drinks it again. _____
 - To the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, v.30-46
 - Warning to the disciples “you will all fall away.” _____
 - Peter specified. _____
 - The grief of Jesus, v.38-39 (Mk 14:36, Lu 22:42, Jn 12:27)
 - God could have changed this moment, but . . . _____
 - The disciples slept from sorrow and confusion, Luke 22:45

- V.46, Jesus anticipates his betrayal, perhaps the weightiest moment of his life. _____
 - Once this event passed, he would be in the hands of his executioners. _____
- Betrayal and Arrest, v.47-56
 - Judas returns with lots of armed men, including priests and elders, (Mark 14:48) _____
 - Betrayed with a kiss, (Luke 22:48) _____
 - A severed ear (Luke 22:51) _____

The Cosmic Importance of this Moment

- The first irony: while the human leaders of the age plotted the demise of the one who would be their true God, the ruler of the cosmos and eternity, God, set the scene for the ultimate reconciliation of those who would depose and kill him.
 - *This hour and the power of darkness are yours,* Luke 22:53.
 - *But all this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled,* Matt. 26:56. _____
 - *But for this purpose I came to this hour,* John 12:27. _____
 - The redemptive election, *I could have called 72,000 angels,* Matt. 26:53. _____
- The second irony: the passion of the Son of God was not primarily for the benefit of humankind, but for the glory of God.
 - *Father, glorify your name . . . I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again,* John 12:28. _____
 - God previously demonstrated that he could simply destroy all of humanity if he chose. But for some unknown audience, perhaps himself alone, he chose to accept this horrific suffering of his son at the hands of mankind in order to demonstrate the scope of his love. _____

So, how does this sound? We fail miserably as a race created in the image of God, but still we benefit though God suffers, and his only Son is publicly executed at our hand. Yet, as a result, God is glorified and exalted. On its face, this proposition sounds very implausible. Yet as a result of his love; not just his love for us, but his love for all of creation, God could do nothing but this. The concept of the Atonement, in this light, seems to be an indivisible part of God’s nature. He cannot do otherwise.