

Gospel of Matthew



Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 26:1-75

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. In Matthew 26:5, the chief priests and the elders of the people who are gathered at the palace of the high priest decide not to arrest Jesus during the feast of Passover “lest there be a tumult among the people.”
2. The woman at Bethany’s use of costly perfume to anoint Jesus indicates his immense value. While the disciples criticize the waste of such expensive ointment, Jesus recognizes in the woman’s generous act a sign of reverence and worship. In addition, the woman’s gift of pouring out her valuable ointment prefigures Jesus’ gift of his own blood that will be poured out to bring about salvation for all men and women.
3. The 30 pieces of silver identify the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel as slaves to sin by linking Judas’ betrayal of Jesus with Exodus 21:32, which records that amount of silver is the price stipulated by Moses for an injured slave: “If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.” It also is the exact amount of money specified in the Old Testament as the wages given the prophet Zechariah for his duties as a shepherd, as recorded in Zechariah 11:12: “Then I said to them, ‘If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.’ And they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver.”
4. In Matthew 20:20-22, the mother of the sons of Zebedee asks Jesus to allow James and John to sit at Jesus’ right and at his left in the kingdom of heaven. In response, Jesus tells her that she doesn’t know what she’s asking, and he then asks his two disciples: “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” using the image of a cup to symbolize his suffering and death.
5. The original Passover involved two deaths. For the Egyptians, it resulted in the death of the first-born son in every family. For all of the families of the 12 tribes of Israel, it involved the death of a Passover lamb. Jesus is both the first-born son and the Passover lamb. His blood is poured out for the salvation of others. But Jesus’ death isn’t intended to save only the children of Israel. As the first-born Son of God, Jesus’ blood is shed for all people.
6. Paragraph 1340 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus’ passing over to his Father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.”

Matthew Lesson 26 Suggested Responses

7. In Matthew 26:28, which describes the institution of the Eucharist, Jesus uses words that make it clear the sacrament is irrevocably tied to the forgiveness of sins: “[F]or this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness will be accomplished by Jesus’ death, which is the sacrifice that seals the covenant bond between God and his people. This echoes the covenant sacrifice described in Exodus 24:8: “And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”
8. Psalm 118:1-4 and Psalm 118:29 five times repeat the phrase: “His steadfast love endures forever,” emphasizing God’s great loyalty to his chosen people. In Matthew 26:31, this gives way to a harsh prediction Jesus makes concerning his disciples’ loyalty: “You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”
9. In John 2:19, Jesus says: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” In Matthew 26:61, false witnesses twist Jesus’ words and claim that he said: “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.” In Matthew 26:64, Jesus tells Caiaphas: “But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” This is a clear parallel to the messianic prophecy recorded in Daniel 7:13-14: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”
10. Matthew 26:74 records that the third time Peter is accused of being one of Jesus’ followers, Peter denies this with an oath: “Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know the man.’ And immediately the cock crowed.” Previously, in Matthew 5:34-35, Jesus taught his disciples not to swear any oaths. In Matthew 26:64, after being adjured, or commanded by the Caiaphas to swear under oath, by the living God, Jesus admits to being the Son of man. Peter uses an oath to lie about his relationship with Jesus, while Jesus, when pressed to testify under oath, tells the truth about his relationship with God.

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.