

Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66
(or Matthew 27:11-54)

The customary responses before and after the Gospel are omitted. The congregation may be seated for the first part of the Passion. The Passion Gospel is announced in the following manner: The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

NARRATOR: One of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

JUDAS: What will you give me if I betray Jesus to you?

NARRATOR: The priests paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment Judas began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus. On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying,

PETER: Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?

NARRATOR: Jesus said,

JESUS: Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples."

NARRATOR: So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, Jesus took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said,

JESUS: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.

NARRATOR: And the disciples became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another,

PETER: Surely not I, Lord?

NARRATOR: He answered,

JESUS: The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.

NARRATOR: Judas, who betrayed him, said,

JUDAS: Surely not I, Rabbi?

NARRATOR: Jesus replied,

JESUS: You have said so.

NARRATOR: While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said,

JESUS: Take, eat; this is my body.

NARRATOR: Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying,

JESUS: Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

NARRATOR: When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to his disciples,

JESUS: You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered," But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

NARRATOR: Peter said to him,

PETER: Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.

NARRATOR: Jesus said to him,

JESUS: Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

NARRATOR: Peter said to him,

PETER: Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.

NARRATOR: And so said all the disciples. Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to them,

JESUS: Sit here while I go over there and pray.

NARRATOR: He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them,

JESUS: I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.

NARRATOR: And going a little farther, Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed,

JESUS: My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.

NARRATOR: Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,

JESUS: So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that

you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

NARRATOR: Again Jesus went away for the second time and prayed,

JESUS: My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

NARRATOR: Again Jesus came and found the disciples sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,

JESUS: Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

NARRATOR: While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given the crowd a sign, saying,

JUDAS: The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.

NARRATOR: At once Judas came up to Jesus and said,

JUDAS: Greetings, Rabbi!

NARRATOR: and kissed him. Jesus said to him,

JESUS: Friend, do what you are here to do.

NARRATOR: Then the crowd came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him,

JESUS: Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?

NARRATOR: At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,

JESUS: Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.

NARRATOR: Then all the disciples deserted Jesus and fled. Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, Peter sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none; though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said,

FALSE WITNESS: This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days."

NARRATOR: The high priest stood up and said to Jesus,

HIGH PRIEST: Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?

NARRATOR: But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to Jesus,

HIGH PRIEST: I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

NARRATOR: Jesus said to him,

JESUS: You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

NARRATOR: Then the high priest tore his clothes and said,

HIGH PRIEST: He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?

NARRATOR: The scribes and elders answered,

SCRIBE: He deserves death.

NARRATOR: Then they spat in Jesus' face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying,

ELDER: Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?

NARRATOR: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said,

SERVANT 1: You also were with Jesus the Galilean.

NARRATOR: But Peter denied it before all of them, saying,

PETER: I do not know what you are talking about.

NARRATOR: When Peter went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders,

SERVANT 2: This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

NARRATOR: Again Peter denied it with an oath,

PETER: I do not know the man.

NARRATOR: After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter,

BYSTANDER 1: Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.