A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

Based on the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) — Public Domain

2026

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume covers the opening of the Passion narrative — the most carefully paralleled and most theologically weighty section of the entire Synoptic tradition. Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 cover events from the plot against Jesus through the arrest in Gethsemane. All three Synoptics are in close agreement throughout, with Luke contributing several unique elements: the dispute about greatness at the table, the promise to Peter and Satan's request, the two swords, and the appearance of an angel in the garden.

The Passion narrative begins the final movement of the Gospel story. Everything in the preceding fourteen chapters has been moving toward this night. The harmony presents the events in their chronological sequence: the conspiracy, the anointing at Bethany, Judas's betrayal agreement, the preparation and celebration of the Passover, the institution of the Lord's Supper, Peter's denial predicted, the agony in Gethsemane, the arrest, and the Jewish trials before the high priest.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

[Matt] = Matthew

[Mark] = Mark

[Luke] = Luke

[Matt / Mark], **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

Part Fourteen: The Passion of Our Lord

Section 162 — The Plot to Kill Jesus [Matt 26:1–5 / Mark 14:1–2 / Luke 22:1–2]

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified.

Then were gathered together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas; and they took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.

But they said, Not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people.

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death; for they feared the people.

Section 163 — The Anointing at Bethany [Matt 26:6–13 / Mark 14:3–9]

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head as he sat at meat.

But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

But Jesus perceiving it said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Section 164 — Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus [Matt 26:14–16 / Mark 14:10–11 / Luke 22:3–6]

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you?

And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to deliver him unto them.

And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went away, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might deliver him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he consented, and sought opportunity to deliver him unto them apart from the multitude.

Section 165 — The Preparation of the Passover [Matt 26:17–19 / Mark 14:12–16 / Luke 22:7–13]

Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the passover?

And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and make ready for us the passover, that we may eat.

And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we make ready?

And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house whereinto he goeth. And ye shall say unto the master of the house, The Teacher saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

Section 166 — The Passover Supper Begins; The Betrayer Identified [Matt 26:20–25 / Mark 14:17–21 / Luke 22:14–18]

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And he received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

And as they were eating, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto him every one, Is it I, Lord?

And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born.

And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Is it I, Rabbi? He saith unto him, Thou hast said.

Section 167 — The Institution of the Lord's Supper [Matt 26:26–29 / Mark 14:22–25 / Luke 22:19–20]

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins.

And he said unto them, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.

But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Section 168 — The Dispute About Greatness at the Table [Luke 22:24–30]

And there arose also a contention among them, which of them was accounted to be greatest.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

For which is greater, one that sitteth at meat, or one that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth.

But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Section 169 — Satan's Request and Peter's Denial Foretold [Matt 26:31–35 / Mark 14:27–31 / Luke 22:31–34]

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren.

And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.

But Peter answered and said unto him, If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. And likewise also said all the disciples.

Section 170 — The Two Swords [Luke 22:35–38]

And he said unto them, When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.

And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment.

And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Section 171 — The Agony in Gethsemane [Matt 26:36–46 / Mark 14:32–42 / Luke 22:39–46]

And they went out unto the mount of Olives.

And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him.

And when they were come unto a place called Gethsemane, he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me.

And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done.

And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words.

Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me.

Section 172 — The Arrest of Jesus [Matt 26:47–56 / Mark 14:43–52 / Luke 22:47–53]

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he: take him. And straightway he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Rabbi; and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, do that for which thou art come.

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

And behold, one of them that were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear.

Then saith Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

And he touched his ear, and healed him.

In that hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not. But all this is come to pass, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him, and fled.

Section 173 — Jesus Before the High Priest; Peter's Denial [Matt 26:57–75 / Mark 14:53–72 / Luke 22:54–71]

And they that had taken Jesus led him away to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.

But Peter followed him afar off, unto the court of the high priest, and entered in, and sat with the officers, to see the end.

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death; and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. But afterward came two, and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

And the high priest stood up, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace.

And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?

They answered and said, He is worthy of death. Then did they spit in his face and buffet him: and some smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that struck thee?

Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man.

And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man.

And straightway the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Fifteen

On the Passion Narrative as a Unified Account

No section of the Gospel tradition has been more carefully studied, more precisely compared across the four Gospels, or more extensively analyzed by scholars than the Passion narrative. The three Synoptics agree on the broad sequence and on numerous specific details to a degree that exceeds their agreement anywhere else in the narrative. This closeness of agreement has led scholars from Dibelius to Jeremias to Bultmann to propose that the Passion narrative was the earliest continuous written narrative about Jesus — that it circulated as a unified account before the other Gospel traditions were assembled. Whether or not that reconstruction is correct, the result is a narrative of extraordinary coherence and precision.

On the Anointing at Bethany

The anointing at Bethany (Section 163) occurs in Matthew and Mark before the Passover supper, distinct from the Lukan anointing by the sinful woman at Simon the Pharisee's house covered in Chapter Eight. John's Gospel places a similar anointing at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus six days before the Passover and identifies the woman as Mary of Bethany. Matthew and Mark identify the host as Simon the leper. The relationship among these accounts is one of the classic problems of Gospel harmonization: some harmonists treat them as three

separate events, others as two, others as one. This harmony treats the Bethany anointing of Matthew 26 and Mark 14 as distinct from the earlier Lukan anointing.

What is theologically decisive in this anointing is Jesus's interpretation: she has anointed him for burial. He is not merely accepting an act of devotion; he is reading its prophetic significance. The extravagance that scandalized the disciples — ointment worth a year's wages, poured out in a moment — is precisely the measure of its appropriateness. And the promise Jesus makes: wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. In the providence of that promise, it has been.

On the Thirty Pieces of Silver

The price of Judas's betrayal — thirty pieces of silver (Section 164) — is the price set in Exodus 21:32 as compensation for a slave gored by an ox. It is a slave's price, and Matthew (who alone gives the specific amount) clearly has Zechariah 11:12–13 in mind: *"So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And Jehovah said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at by them."* The irony is devastating: the price the chief priests set on the Lord of glory is the legal compensation for a dead slave.

Luke's note that "Satan entered into Judas" (Section 164) does not exempt Judas from moral responsibility — Luke also records that Judas "consented" and "sought opportunity." The dual causation — satanic agency and human agency — is characteristic of the Passion narrative's understanding of the events: they are simultaneously the work of human wickedness and the fulfillment of divine purpose.

On the Institution of the Lord's Supper

The institution of the Lord's Supper (Section 167) is the central act of the Passion narrative and one of the most theologically analyzed passages in the entire New Testament. The harmony presents both Matthew/Mark's account and Luke's, which contain slightly different formulations. The key elements are constant: the bread identified with his body given; the cup identified with the new covenant in his blood poured out; the command to do this in remembrance of him (Luke alone, and paralleled in Paul's account at 1 Corinthians 11:24–25).

The phrase "new covenant in my blood" (*kainē diathēkē en tō haimati mou*) is the direct echo of Jeremiah 31:31–34, where God promises a new covenant written on the heart rather than on stone. The blood of the covenant recalls Exodus 24:8, where Moses sprinkled the blood of sacrificed animals on the people saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant." Jesus's words place his own death within this covenant-ratification framework: his blood is the covenant blood, his death the covenant-making act that the old sacrificial system had prefigured.

Matthew's account alone adds the phrase "unto remission of sins" (*eis aphesin hamartiōn*) with reference to the blood — the only time in the Synoptic institution narratives that the cup is directly connected to forgiveness. This phrase, drawing on Isaiah 53:12 (the Servant who "bore the sin of many"), makes the atoning significance of the death explicit in the liturgical act.

On the Agony in Gethsemane

The Gethsemane narrative (Section 171) is the most psychologically intense scene in the Gospel tradition. Three details deserve particular attention. First, the emotional language: Matthew uses *lupesthai kai adēmonein* — to be sorrowful and sore troubled, the latter word (*adēmonein*) indicating a state of anxiety bordering on distress and disorientation. Jesus says to the inner three: *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* — a phrase that echoes Psalm 42:5–6 and 43:5 but intensifies them beyond the psalmist's expression. Second, the prayer: three times he prays the same request, moving from "if it be possible, let this cup pass away" to "if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done." The movement within the prayer is itself a spiritual journey: from the human will expressing its natural recoil from suffering to the human will surrendering to the Father's will. Third, the disciples sleep: three times Jesus returns to find them sleeping, the same disciples who argued about greatness at the table and who swore they would never be offended. The gap between their protestations and their performance is already evident before the arrest.

Luke alone records the appearance of an angel strengthening him and the sweat becoming "as it were great drops of blood" (*thromboi haimatos*, literally clots of blood) — a phenomenon known in extreme psychological stress called hematidrosis, in which subcutaneous capillaries rupture under pressure. Luke, the physician, is the only evangelist to record this detail.

On Peter's Denial

Peter's denial (Section 173) is the most carefully narrated human failure in the Gospel tradition. The sequence is precise: the first denial to the servant girl in the gateway; the second to another servant girl as he moves toward the porch; the third to the bystanders who identify him by his Galilean accent. Between the second and third denial Peter takes an oath; between the second and the third he explicitly curses — the escalation from denial to sworn denial to cursing marks the progressive deterioration of a man trying to distance himself from the person he most deeply belongs to.

The cock crows. Luke adds a detail found in no other Gospel: "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." This single sentence — if Jesus was in the courtyard within Peter's sight — presupposes that the trial before the high priest was partially conducted in the open court, visible to those below. Peter remembers the word. He goes out. He weeps bitterly. The Greek *eklasen pikrōs* — he wept bitterly — is the same verb used of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, applied now to the man who will become the first witness of the resurrection and the leader of the earliest church. The weeping is not the end of Peter; it is the beginning of his restoration.

On the Jewish Trial

The night trial before Caiaphas (Section 173) is historically problematic on several points: Jewish law prohibited capital trials at night, and the Mishnah's regulations for Sanhedrin trials were, if observed, far more protective of defendants than the Gospel accounts suggest. Scholars have proposed various resolutions: that the Mishnaic regulations were not yet in force in the first century, that what is described was a preliminary hearing rather than a formal trial, or that the urgency of the situation led the authorities to violate their own procedures. What the Synoptics

present is not a formal legal proceeding but an attempt to produce a charge sufficient to bring before Pilate.

The decisive exchange is between the high priest and Jesus. The high priest adjures Jesus by the living God to say whether he is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replies: *"Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."* The response combines Psalm 110:1 (sitting at the right hand) with Daniel 7:13 (coming on the clouds) — the two texts Jesus has consistently applied to himself throughout the Jerusalem controversies. The high priest tears his garments: the charge is blasphemy. The penalty is death.

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