

(Matt. 17:22-23) – Our Lord is now entering the final six months of His public ministry. He now begins to spend more time with His disciples and less time with the general public. His purpose now is to prepare the disciples for what is to come in His death and resurrection and to prepare them for the work of ministry that awaited them after He would ascend unto His Father. Recall that He and His disciples had been in Caesarea-Philippi where the identity of Jesus as the Messiah (God manifest in the flesh and the Savior of sinners) had been proclaimed (Matt. 16:13-16). He then immediately announced that He must be killed and raised again (Matt. 16:21). It was after that proclamation that He took Peter, James, and John up on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8) and revealed His glory to them. When He descended from the mount with them and rejoined the other disciples, He once again manifested His power and authority over the powers of darkness (Matt. 17:18). These instructive events were all necessary in the educational and preparatory process of these men.

Having already announced to these men the necessity and certainty of His death, the Lord Jesus now builds on that foundation and tells them of His betrayal – *“THE SON OF MAN SHALL BE BETRAYED INTO THE HANDS OF MEN.”* The death of Christ for the sins of His people was ultimately and sovereignly by the purpose, will, and hand (power) of God. Isaiah prophesied, *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; HE hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand”* (Isa. 53:10). The Lord Himself said, *“I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do”* (John 17:4). Peter preached, *“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”* (Acts 2:23). Paul wrote, *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Gal. 4:4-5).

To accomplish His sovereign will to save His people from sin, establish a perfect righteousness that He imputes to them, and to ensure their spiritual life and complete salvation, God delivered His Son into the hands of sinful men *“for to do whatsoever [HIS] hand and [HIS] counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28). *“AND THEY SHAL KILL HIM”* – Christ’s death was (and is) necessary to satisfy God’s justice for the sins of His chosen people. He had to be a propitiation, a sin-bearing sacrifice to satisfy justice for His people (Rom. 3:24-26; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10). This is the foundation of our salvation and the heart of the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God, Christ’s righteousness imputed to them (Rom. 4:6-8) is revealed. From the viewpoint of sinful human beings, Christ’s death was murder as that is what was in the hearts of His enemies. From the view of the Father and the Son, Christ gave Himself to be crucified (John 10:15-18). Sinful humans could never have killed Him if it were not in God’s purpose and plan (Matt. 26:52-54). All of this involved the betrayal of Jesus by the

wicked man, Judas. It required His being taken into custody by the evil Roman soldiers, being judged and found guilty of blasphemy by the unbelieving and idolatrous Jews and Gentiles, and condemned to die on the cross by Pilate.

The death of a God-sent Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer had been revealed and prophesied since the fall of man (Gen. 3:15,21) throughout the Old Testament. But it was also revealed that His death would be a victory as He paid the sin-debt of His people in full and accomplished salvation as revealed by His resurrection from the dead – *“AND THE THIRD DAY HE SHALL BE RAISED AGAIN.”* Still, the talk of a betrayal and His death made His disciples *“EXCEEDING SORRY.”* They were still thinking in the flesh and not in light of the spiritual truths of the good news of the Gospel and their salvation.

(Matt. 17:24-26) – This *“TRIBUTE MONEY”* was a temple tax levied against the Jews, not by the Romans, but by the priests of the temple and paid with Jewish money. It was originally the ransom money that every man had to pay to maintain the house of God (Exod. 30:12-15) and which pictured the payment of the price of redemption for God’s chosen people by the Lord Jesus (Rev. 5:9; 14:4). Originally, this tribute was paid only when the Israelites were numbered, but the Jewish leaders made it an annual payment to fill their own coffers. When asked by the tax collectors if His Master complied with this temple tax, Peter answered, *“YES.”* The Lord, knowing Peter’s conversation with them, *“PREVENTED”* (anticipated to speak before Peter could speak) and asked, *“OF WHOM DO THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TAKE CUSTOM OR TRIBUTE? OF THEIR OWN CHILDREN, OR OF STRANGERS?”* Peter answered correctly – *“STRANGERS”* pay taxes to the king, but the king’s children are exempt. They are free from this obligation.

(Matt. 17:27) – Although they were under no legal obligation to pay this tax, Christ chose to pay it so as not to cause needless offence over non-essential matters. The battles we must fight against the world must be over true Gospel issues, matters of life and death, and not indifferent things. The Lord did not hesitate to preach the offense of the cross so as to expose the false gospels and idolatry of unbelievers (Matt. 23; John 3:19-20; 15:18ff.), but He wisely complied when it did not compromise His truth. He then performed another miracle that testified of His deity and sovereignty, and, again, which pointed to His ability to save sinners. He provided a fish with a coin in its mouth and told Peter to drop a hook (without bait) into the water and bring the fish up to provide a coin to pay tribute. As in salvation by God’s grace, though they had no money to pay tribute, the Lord provided all that they needed (Isa. 55:1-3). In the same way, Christ provided in Himself and His work for us all that we need for our salvation unto glory.