



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Sheep Without A Shepherd

MAY 18-20, 2011

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Matthew 26:31-35 *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ 32) But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.’ 33) But Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.’ 34) Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.’ 35) Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you.’ All the disciples said the same thing too.”* (NASB)

“MATTHEW REVEALS HOW, IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD, THE DISCIPLES’ FAILURE ACTUALLY ENHANCES AND INTENSIFIES THE GRANDEUR OF THE LORD’S ACHIEVEMENT. BY WAY OF CONTRAST, THEIR IMPOTENCE SERVED TO MAGNIFY HIS POWER, THEIR UNFAITHFULNESS SERVED TO MAGNIFY HIS FAITHFULNESS, AND THEIR DISHONOR SERVED TO MAGNIFY HIS MAJESTY.” JOHN MACARTHUR

Is Christ presenting a scandal here? Why does Jesus predict their unexpected desertion of Him when, humanly speaking, He needs them most? Does the use of Scripture to back Jesus’ prediction speak of His habits in relating to His disciples? How does Jesus continue in His leadership as a Shepherd even after His death? Is Peter asserting here that He is more devoted than all the other disciples? Why does Jesus use a rooster to punctuate Peter’s failures? What trap has Peter already fallen into that insures his failure? Why do all the disciples join Peter rather than assuming that Christ’s words about them are true?

FOCUS ON FUTURE SATELLITE BIBLE STUDIES:

- MAY 25-27: MATTHEW 26:36-46 THE SON STRUGGLES IN PRAYER
- JUNE 1-3: MATTHEW 26:47-56 THE TRAITOR’S KISS

This is the final evening in the life of Jesus Christ before He is crucified. Peter and John had been sent to prepare the Passover meal. When Jesus brought

the remaining disciples there, before the meal was eaten, Jesus had washed their feet to example before them how they should treat one another (Jn. 13:15). Then He identified His betrayer, Judas Iscariot, no less than three times. Yet there was no repentance or remorse and he had gone out into the night to do his most evil deed. When Jesus had mentioned that one of them would betray Him, they initially wondered with introspection, “Surely not I, Lord?” and then they began to discuss who it might be (Lk. 22:23), and finally, “The disciples began looking at one another” (Jn. 13:22). That then led to their fighting with one another over who was the greatest (Lk. 22:24-30). It did not take them long to move from the foot washing lesson on humility to fighting over superiority. As well, it did not take them long to move from questioning themselves to contradicting the words of Christ Himself and the Word of God in order to affirm and defend their strength of resolve.

“THIS EPISODE BOTH PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS WITH THE PREDICTION OF JUDAS’ BETRAYAL. IT SHOWS THAT JUDAS WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE SERIOUSLY TO FAIL HIS MASTER. IN FACT, ALL TWELVE WILL FALL AWAY. THEY WILL FLEE (V. 56) AND HIDE (JN. 20:19), FEARING FOR THEIR OWN LIVES AND SO ABANDONING JESUS IN THE TIME HE MOST NEEDED THEIR SUPPORT.” CRAIG BLOMBERG

I. THE INCLUSIVE PREDICTION MT. 26:31-32

Jesus had reminded them of His new commandment to “love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:34-35). Then, while they were still in the upper room, Jesus predicted Peter’s three denials before the cock crowed (Lk. 22:34, Jn. 13:38). Then, later in the night after they had sung a hymn and gone out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus predicts that all of them will “fall away” (Mt.

BIBLE STUDY LOCATION INFORMATION

WEDNESDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – DENNYS ON RT. 1, 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS AT NOBLEWOOD PLAZA
THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – RT. 10, IRONBRIDGE SPORTS Pk, NOON – WYTESTONE PLAZA – 8TH & MAIN – 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – IN THE TIDEWATER AREA (CALL 804-683-2285 FOR SPECIFICS)

Virginia

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26:31, Mk. 14:27). The verb for “*fall away*” is the word from which we get our word “scandalize” and it referred to being trapped. The noun form was used to describe the trap trigger on which the bait was placed.¹ All the disciples would consider Jesus to be a trap that they needed to get away from immediately! Thus the word pictured their disloyalty in their abandonment of Christ when He needed them most. To confirm their future treachery in loving terms, Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7, “*Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.*” It was the Lord’s habit to quote Scripture so that His disciples might be taught to memorize and quote it for others. Yet, as their Shepherd, He not only forgave them but promised to lovingly gather and lead them again, “*But after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee.*”

“HE DOES NOT REBUKE THEM, HE DOES NOT CONDEMN THEM, HE DOES NOT HEAP REPROACHES ON THEM OR CALL THEM USELESS CREATURES AND BROKEN REEDS. FAR FROM THAT, HE TELLS THEM THAT WHEN THE TERRIBLE TIME IS PAST, HE WILL MEET THEM AGAIN. IT IS THE GREATNESS OF JESUS THAT HE KNEW HUMAN BEINGS AT THEIR WORST AND STILL LOVED THEM.” WILLIAM BARCLAY

II. THE IGNORANT PRIDE MT. 26:33

Peter, who had already been singled out earlier in the upper room, cannot imagine himself being offended or considering Christ a trap or becoming a stumbling block regarding his loyalty to Jesus. So he boasts that he is above all the other disciples in his unswerving loyalty, “*Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.*” Even though he has been told beforehand that he will do much worse than the rest and not just desert Christ in time of need, he will actually deny that he even knows Him—three times! Peter confidently asserts that he is above such

despicable treason against his Master and pridefully declares that he will never even “*fall away*” or desert Him. This is probably the greatest example of the truth taught in Jeremiah 17:9, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” Certainly Jesus knew Peter’s heart better than he did! Paul gives a similar reminder in I Corinthians 10:12, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*” Yet Peter had already fallen into the most dangerous trap of failing to take Christ and the Scriptures at their word!

“PETER’S ESTIMATE OF HIS OWN POWER, BASED ON THE CHARACTER AND ENDOWMENT RECEIVED FROM THE LORD, WAS A PROFOUND MISCALCULATION IN THAT IT FAILED TO RECOGNIZE CHRIST AND NOT PETER AS THE FOUNTAIN OF IT. ANY ‘RIGHTEOUS PERSON’ WHO HAS BEEN KEPT BACK FROM GROSS SIN SHOULD THANK, NOT HIMSELF, BUT THE LORD FOR HIS VICTORY. PETER’S BLINDNESS TO THIS TRUTH MADE IT NECESSARY FOR CHRIST TO TEACH HIM THROUGH BITTER EXPERIENCE THAT ALL MAN’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS AS FILTHY RAGS.” BURTON COFFMAN

III. THE INDIVIDUAL PREDICTION MT. 26:34-35

When “*Jesus said to him,*” the verb “*said*” is in the imperfect tense meaning that He repeatedly said, “*Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.*” In Mark 14:30 Peter gives even greater detail, “*before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.*” This verb for “*deny*” means to completely deny. But almost before Jesus has a chance to finish His words, Peter again doubts his Lord, shows his intoxication with self-confidence and crows of his allegiance, “*Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.*” Little does he remember those words of wisdom, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Prov. 16:18). He thought he was a “rock” but this night he was strutting like a cock! All the disciples self-confidently followed Peter and fulfilled Jesus’ words.

¹ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 441.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Do you prefer others above yourself in love or haughtily consider yourself better?
- 2) Are there times when you distance yourself from Jesus Christ when you should stand for Him and His Word?
- 3) Is your heart being guarded from deceitful pride by affirming the Scriptures or do you doubt that you are truly a sinner?