

Matthew Chapter 26-28 – The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – Part 3
Matthew 26:30-35 – Jesus Predicts the Disciples’ Failure

Introduction

This section in Matthew is the final narrative of the book. This section records events from the Mount of Olives to the last Passover, from Gethsemane to Golgotha, from the cross to the resurrection, and for the eleven, from their status as followers to commissioned apostles.

Last time, we studied Matthew 26:17-30 and reviewed the last Passover Jesus has with the disciples. Jesus does this to keep the Law and because of His love for the disciples. Jesus does this to give them something to remember until He returns.

During the early years after Jesus’ resurrection and through today, the church commemorates this event in what we call the Lord’s Supper.

- The intent for the “Lord’s Supper” was to bring a nuance to the Passover meal.
- The bread and the cup would now remind them of Jesus in conjunction with the exodus of Israel.
- This does not prohibit our use of this remembrance, but we should understand the Lord’s Supper in its original setting.

Jesus Predicts the Disciples’ Failings – Matthew 26:30-35

Matthew 26:30 – The setting changes. They leave the upper room and head to the Mount of Olives. It is during this trip that John 15-17 takes place, although it is not recorded in Matthew.

Matthew 26:31 – All of the Gospels record a prediction of Jesus stating that the disciples will fall away and an interaction with Peter is highlighted.

It is interesting that each of the four Gospels records this. Why is this information important?

Three reasons are evident:

1. It shows the inability of the disciples without Jesus.
2. It demonstrates Jesus as the Messiah Prophet.
3. It is a fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 13:7)

There is another reason that becomes clear in relation to apologetics:

4. It provides verification of the testimony of the disciples.

Fall away - σκανδαλίζω skandalizo - to cause to be brought to a downfall; caused to sin. In the NASB, the word is translated as fall (away), offense, or stumble. This is in the Future Passive Indicative. This is an absolute certainty as seen by God. The passive voice indicates that they will be caused to stumble, caused to sin.

What causes them to stumble? ...*because of Me*. Their association with Jesus as His closest followers will cause them to fall away from Him because of His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. This is not difficult to understand, but we need to be clear that Jesus is telling them explicitly that they will not remain with Him and that all of them will fail.

We tend to focus on Peter, and rightfully so, but all of them fail when Jesus is arrested.

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Matthew 26:32 – Jesus then gives them assurance and comfort: He tells them that after these events, *I will go ahead of you to Galilee*. Jesus will be struck down, but He will rise again and will once again be with His disciples for a time (Matthew 28:6-10, 16).

Matthew 26:33 – It is interesting that the encouragement from Jesus is ignored in the narrative. Peter immediately focuses on the prediction that he will fail. Even though all the others may fail, I will not! The implication of Peter’s statement is clear.

1. Peter sees himself as superior to the rest.
2. The Gospels present Peter as the de facto second in command.
3. Peter speaks presumptuously, forgetting Who is speaking.

The statement “I will never fall away” is an emphatic negation. “οὐδέποτε ουδέποτε” – not, but, where. There is no place, no way, and no circumstance this would happen. Peter insists that he will not fail, and the situation isn’t even impossible (Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38).

From Peter’s perspective, is this a reasonable statement? Peter has been the strongest, the most loyal, and the disciple with the most insight. He has been at the front of the line at every opportunity. Jesus also has blessed that character with tremendous blessings. Peter was one of three to see the Transfiguration. Peter has put his life on the line many times already.

Where does Peter go wrong? Nobody knows how they will respond in the most stressful times. Peter should not have made this insistent statement because nobody knows how they will handle that kind of pressure. Peter is still in the flesh and perseverance is a difficult virtue to obtain.

Matthew 26:34-35 – Peter and all the disciples had resolved to follow Jesus to the death, but failures would precede their successes. Peter, indeed, does fail (Matthew 26:69-75). All of the disciples fail (John 20:19). But after Jesus ascends, Peter and the apostles lived lives of perseverance and served as apostles to the death.

Acts 4:1-3, 18-21, 5:12-18, 40-42

As we know, all the apostles were eventually killed for their testimony. Peter, according to secular reports, was imprisoned and crucified upside down.

Peter writes about suffering in his epistle.

1 Peter 1:13 – He tells the audience to prepare themselves for action. Literal translation: “Wherefore having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, complete, **you hope** in the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Hope is the imperative here – This is to trust and rely on the promises of God and not to despair at the trials that they may endure. Earlier in verse 7, the phrase *tested by fire* may indicate that some of them had already endured harsh persecution.

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1 Peter 2:13-17 – Considering Peter’s history, this is a phenomenal statement. He was abused by human institutions, but he still submitted to them and incurred their wrath because he was steadfast in doing as the Lord commanded him.

1 Peter 2:18-20 – The word for *suffer* here is “πάσχω pascho,” which indicates suffering due to punishment, physical persecution. *Endure* is “ὑπομένω hupomeno,” to remain under and persevere through difficulty.

1 Peter 2:21-23 – Peter obviously learned from his mistakes and understands now that he can endure harsh punishment for doing what is right, and he also knows how to teach others to do the same.

1 Peter 3:8-17 – In verse 14, *if you should suffer* is a Fourth-Class Conditional clause. This indicates that this situation is unlikely but is desired that it should occur. Peter endured suffering for the sake of righteousness, and he is, indeed, blessed.

1 Peter 4:1-2 – Since Christ has suffered, be prepared to do the same. Peter now teaches that every believer needs to be prepared to suffer for the testimony of Jesus, even though it is unlikely.

Conclusion

Matthew 26:31-35

What do we learn from this passage?

The first thing we need to recognize is about Jesus.

1. Jesus is demonstrated as the Messiah Prophet.
2. Jesus fulfills Scripture.

The second thing we must observe is about the apostles.

1. The apostles were men who had the same nature as ours.
2. Even though they were confident, they did not know how they would react.
3. However, they learned their lesson and became examples for all believers, living lives of perseverance and faithfulness to death.
4. Peter, using Jesus as the model, became a model himself, enduring persecution with hope, hope not in this life but in the future inheritance, in Jesus Christ and the promises of the Father (Romans 5:1-5)

We must all likewise be prepared.