

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series - Matthew

(Lesson SB_MT26C – Jesus Denied by His Own Disciples,
His Last Hours in Gethsemane, and the Six Trials of Jesus)

Mathew 26:31-75

Jesus Predicts His Disciples (and Peter's) Denial (26:31-35)

Notice that Jesus indicates that “all of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night” (26:31). All of Jesus’ disciples forsook Jesus, not just Peter. The disciples, no doubt, knew that they had not been fulfilling His commission to them in Matthew 10 with as much fervor as they should have. Each knew the doubts that they still had regarding whether Jesus would ever manifest the Messiah-like rule and kingly authority they (and others) expected of the Messiah. They had seen His miracles and witnessed His Person and message, yet they most likely continued to wonder about when and if He would establish the kingdom. Perhaps this understanding sheds some light upon the disciples’ response in 26:22 to Jesus’ announcement at the Last Supper that one of them would betray Him.

Jesus indicates that after His resurrection, He would precede them to Galilee (26:32). Most likely, Jesus chose to minister to His disciples in Galilee for at least a couple of reasons. First, all of them were from Galilee and second, He wanted a place where they could be free of the opposition while He instructed them. However, we know that much of what transpired in the days following Jesus’ resurrection occurred in Jerusalem (see such passages as Luke 24:49 where just prior to His ascension, Jesus commands His disciples to remain in Jerusalem). Jesus’ instruction of His disciples during this period after His resurrection is recorded in such passages as Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:17-49; John 20:19-21:25; Acts 1:3-8.

Jesus responds in the manner He did to Peter because evidently Peter made his declaration in front of the rest of the disciples. He had to be corrected in front of the rest of the disciples. Notice that “all the disciples” joined in with Peter and declared their allegiance to the point of death (26:35).

The Prayer in the Garden (26:36-46)

Gethsemane means an oil press. This garden was full of olive trees and was to the east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. Jesus left eight of His disciples there and took Peter, James and John (26:37). This was the third time that Jesus had singled out the three to accompany Him for a specific purpose (see also the Transfiguration in 17:1-13 and the raising of Jairus’ daughter in Matthew 9:18-26 & Luke 8:49-56).

Notice that Jesus indicated to His disciples that “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (26:38). We know that Jesus never sinned, therefore this sorrow was not sinful. The Greek word is *perilupos* and means “to be deeply grieved.”¹ This passage, perhaps more than any other, reveals Jesus’ humanity. As human, Jesus was torn between what He knew He must do and the fact that He didn’t deserve to die.

This passage illustrates the temptation Jesus faced to succumb to selfish desires instead of yielding to the Father’s plan for His life. The agony is the result of temptation; it is not the evidence of sin. This is different from the believer who agonizes or grieves over a disappointing

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 648.

turn of events in his/her life when self-pity, anger, or some other mental sin is the cause of the grieving.

Principle: Be careful not to exaggerate your own sense of importance in God's plan. The Father's Plan can be accomplished without you or me. An exaggerated sense of self-importance is evidence of subjective thinking in one's life (i.e. focusing exclusively upon one's personal circumstances to the exclusion of the divine perspective). Total objectivity is a necessity to properly execute God's plan in our lives. As we have seen in our *Review of the Spiritual Life of the Believer* series, such objectivity can only be present where there is an understanding and application of such overarching truths as the Angelic Conflict among others.

While Scripture doesn't reveal how, the Father would have had a way in which to satisfy His righteousness even if Jesus had failed at this point. Jesus knew He had an option and that was the source of temptation. He was the second and last Adam. Had He failed, He would have become just like Adam after the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

I think that there was also another aspect to Jesus' grieving. Jesus grieved that He had to face this spiritual battle alone. None of His disciples whom He had nurtured for more than three years were spiritually in sync with Him. Jesus grieved or had sorrow in His soul for them and their lack of spiritual insight. Jesus faced the crucifixion alone without the solace of His disciples.

Principle: The spiritual leader (any believer – not just the pastor or communicator – who is advancing and serious about his/her relationship with the Lord) will be alone on many occasions even when surrounded by people. This person will not be fully understood by others. However, the comfort such a person receives from the Holy Spirit's ministry in his/her life will sustain the spiritual man/woman in spite of his/her loneliness.

Of course, God is omniscient and knew from eternity past that Jesus would make the right choice; therefore, the Old Testament is full of prophecies beginning in Genesis 3:15 that God's Plan would be accomplished through Him (e.g. Psa 22; Isa 53). Jesus was truly the most humble man Who ever lived. He submitted to the Father's plan without a single sin even to the point of dying for others who didn't deserve to live (see 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pe 2:24). In addition, Jesus did not do the Father's will in a passive manner. Jesus actually pursued the Father's will (compare 26:42 with 26:46). Wow! What a man and what a Savior!

Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane (26:47-56)

Judas was accompanied by a large crowd which included both Roman soldiers (Jn 18:3) and Jews from the temple guard (Lu 22:52) who had been dispatched by the chief priests and the elders. They had swords, clubs, torches and lanterns (26:47 cf. Mark 14:43; Jn 18:3) to insure that Jesus did not get away.

We know from John 18:10 that the swordsman was Peter. Peter must have drawn one of the two swords that the disciples carried (perhaps for self defense against animals and maybe robbers as they fulfilled their commission – see Luke 22:38). Peter struck Malchus, the servant of the high priest (John 18:10). Luke mentions that Jesus healed the servant's ear (Luke 22:51). What an impression that would have made upon the servant of the high priest!

A Roman legion numbered about 6,000 men; therefore, Jesus is indicating that He could have summoned about 72,000 angels. However, such was not the Father's plan. Jesus knew the power that was at His disposal; yet He humbly submitted Himself to death on a Cross (Phil 2:5-18).

Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin (26:57-67)

One basic theme that underlies all of Jesus' trials is that the religious leaders were trying to put together a legal case against Him. They sought to find witnesses against Jesus. This was highly unusual. They found it almost impossible to find false witnesses against Jesus who could agree (26:59-60). Finally, they found two who could agree that Jesus at the outset of His ministry had stated that He could destroy the temple and in three days rebuild it (Jn 2:19). Even this was a misquotation and misapplication of Jesus' words (Jn 2:19-21). The religious leaders knew that they really had no case against Him, even for this statement. Since Jesus had not been accused of any real crime, He remained silent in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7. However, once the high priest put Jesus under an oath by the living God, Jesus responded (Jn 26:63-64). After Jesus' response which referenced His divine nature, the high priest then tore his clothes which He was forbidden to do by the Law (Lev 21:10). Ultimately, the reaction by religious people is one of the flesh.

Jesus' Six Trials

Of the six trials that are recorded in the Gospels, two were held before Pontius Pilate. All four gospels record the fourth and sixth trials. The first three trials (before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) are religious trials and the last three trials (before Pilate, Herod, and Pilate) are civil trials.

The First Trial (John 18:12-14) – Before Annas

- The “officers of the Jews” were a part of the Temple Guard.
- The “band and the captain” were Roman soldiers.
- Annas was the former high priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the sitting high priest (Matt 26:3).
- Because Annas was no longer the high priest, he was not a judge. The fact that Jesus was brought before Annas points to the gang-like mentality that existed in Jewish religious life during Jesus' day. Annas was so despicable that the Roman government deposed him from office. Even bands of robbers in the Negev desert region owed their protection to him.
- This first trial is developed further in John 18:15-24.

The Second Trial (Matt 26:57) – Before Caiaphas

- Caiaphas had inadvertently prophesied the death of Jesus as recorded in John 11:50 when he stated that “it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”
- Caiaphas was a practical man who realized that a scapegoat for the anti-Roman activities that abounded in Israel needed to be found. He knew that Rome would demand that such activities be rectified and if Israel herself cleaned up such matters, then all the better.
- This trial took place in the wee hours of the morning (i.e. at night) which made it contrary to Jewish practice.
- This trial had false witnesses, which made it illegal (Matt 26:59-61).
- There was no defense attorney.
- Matthew 26:62 represents a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7.
- Jesus knew the principle of Romans 12:19.
- Matthew 26:67 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 52:14 and 53:3.

The Third Trial (Luke 22:66-71) – Before the Sanhedrin

- This trial was held early the next morning by the Jews just before they passed him off to the Romans.

The Fourth Trial (John 18:28-38) – Before Pilate

- This trial is covered in all four Gospels.
- The Jews wanted to keep their hands clean so that they might eat the Passover that night.
- Luke 23:2 records the Jews response to the Roman governor, Pilate. The Jews falsely testified that Jesus had refused to give tribute to Caesar.
- This was a lie (see Matt 22:21).
- Jesus could not have a kingdom OF this world (John 18:36) until Satan's strategic defeat at the Cross.
- The Jews really put the pressure on Pilate when he declared Jesus innocent (see Luke 23:5).
- When Pilate realized that Jesus was Galilan (Luke 23:6), Pilate passed Him off to Herod who ruled over Galilee.

The Fifth Trial (Luke 23:8-12) – Before Herod

- In times past, Pilate and Herod were virtually enemies; however this event brought them together.

The Sixth Trial (John 18:39-19:12) – Before Pilate

- Pilate declared Jesus' innocence again.
- The Jews wanted the crown and a king, not the Cross and a suffering Messiah.
- The people chose to be led by the religious leaders who no doubt were being used of Satan. Satan didn't want Jesus to go the Cross and it was Satan who was behind the dream of Pilate's wife (see Matt 27:19).
- Pilate did not want to place himself in a position in which he could be accused of opposing Caesar; therefore, he followed the politically expedient route of crucifixion.

Peter Denies Jesus (26:69-75)

There is little that I can say about this passage that you have not already heard. However, I think that we should all realize that Peter was a great man in his own right. He realized his failure, He owned up to it, and later became one of the most significant leaders in the early church. It was through Peter also that Israel was given the opportunity after Christ's crucifixion to accept Jesus as the Messiah during the transition period of opportunity prior to the intercalation of the Church Age – see Acts 3:19. (We shall study this issue shortly). Tradition indicates that because of the events recorded in this passage, Peter opted to be crucified upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner as the Lord. We should admire Peter and any believer who repents of erroneous thinking so as to be used of the Lord.