



Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-38; John 13:36-38

Jesus' Prophecy of Peter's Denials

After observing the Passover Supper, Jesus and the disciples left the upper room singing the Great Hallel (Psalms 113-118). The Hallel means "Praise the God!" Matthew tells us, "After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). The music was a simple chant. The Jewish Talmud says the Jewish people sang Psalms 113 to 118 at different points in the feast. They sang it in two parts, 113-114, and 115-118. At this point in the narrative they are probably singing the second part or Psalm 136.

The apostle John tells us it was after Jesus gave words of encouragement to His disciples in John 14 concerning His immediate death. After concluding these words Jesus told his disciples, "Arise, let us go from here" (John 14:31b). They walk together to the Mount of Olives, down to Kedron Valley, through vineyards, and by the fires burning the dead vine cuttings along the way.

Matthew, Mark and Luke do not give an account of the teaching of Jesus to His disciples in John 14-17. They proceed with Jesus leaving the upper room after the Passover Supper and then cross the Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane on the slopes of the Mt. of Olives. Jesus often went with His disciples to the Mount of Olives we are told in Luke 22:39. Gethsemane is the name of an olive orchard on the slopes of Mount of Olives. The name Gethsemane is the transliteration of a Hebrew phrase meaning "oil-press."

The special teaching for the disciples in John 14-17 took place between the singing of the Hallel and reaching Gethsemane. A. T. Robertson is of the opinion that Jesus tarried in the Upper room and they may have gone out to the street after John 14:31. This great discourse could have taken place as they walked along slowly down to the brook Kidron and up to the base of the mountain. The full moon of the Passover shone over them, lighting up the deep ravine outside Jerusalem. "It is likely that more was said than any of the Gospels give, or all of them together," suggests John Broadus. However, we do have exactly what the Holy Spirit led the Gospel writers to record for us.

At the meal Jesus surprised Judas Iscariot by declaring to everyone present that he would betray Him (Matt. 26:21-25), and now He tells the disciples that they too will deny Him before the night is over. Jesus sees this as a fulfillment the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7. The Hebrew prophet declared long ago that God would strike the Shepherd and the flock would flee. Jesus said to His disciples, "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" (Matthew 26:31 NASB). (All Scriptures are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update unless otherwise noted). The context of Zechariah's prophecy refers repeatedly to Yahweh as the Actor. The divine purpose was fulfilled when Jesus was struck and the disciples scattered. Matthew follows the Hebrew rendering of Zechariah. "To take the passage as referring to the Messiah, corresponds to the idea of the Messiah as king, since kings were often described as shepherds," writes John Broadus (*Matthew*, p. 533). Isaiah 53:6 says, "The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." The LORD God laid on the Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, all our iniquities, and He spared not His own Son (Romans 8:32). "It was He who 'struck him down,' 'bruised him,' 'put him to grief,' 'made his soul an offering for sin'" writes William Hendriksen (*Matthew*, p. 913).

PROPHECY OF JESUS' IMMEDIATE DEATH (26:31-32)

The disciples are caught off guard when Jesus continued to speak of His death which will take place this very night (vv. 31-32). Over the past six months Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples that He would be put to death in Jerusalem and rise again (Matt. 16:21; 17:22f; 20:8f). "At the close of His public teaching, He declared that He should at the Passover be delivered up and crucified." Jesus told His disciples, "You know that after two days, the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion" (Matt. 26:2). "Now He is perfectly definite as to the time" (Broadus, *Matthew*, p. 533). After going out to the Mount of Olives 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.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee" (Matthew 26:31-32).

Jesus gave them a specific time (v. 31).

Jesus was not taken by surprise. For the first time Jesus gives them a specific time in v. 31. It would take place "this night." "You will fall away because of Me this night."

All of the disciples will "fall away" in a few hours. They will run away out of fear. They will be overwhelmed by what will suddenly happen to Jesus. Leon Morris observes, "Jesus is not saying that they will really fall away or abandon faith in Him." They will "have a grievous lapse, even though it will be a lapse out of character" (*Gospel According to Matthew*, pg. 664).

Jesus gives them hope (v. 32).

"But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." He assures them of His resurrection. Jesus the Good Shepherd will go before them into Galilee where His ministry began when He called them as disciples. This was His primary field of ministry. He will be there waiting for them (Matt. 28:7, 10). The Father will raise Jesus from the dead. "The Good

Shepherd will die, and His sheep will be scattered, but in due course he will lead them again" (Morris). Jesus will go on ahead and will be waiting for them in Galilee (Matt. 28:10, 16ff).

Like Jesus' disciples we overlook words of reassurance and camp on the night at hand.

PERSONAL WARNING TO PETER (26:33-35)

As usual, Peter is the disciple who speaks up. He is very emphatic declaration in his self-defense. There is no doubt that he meant every word. With passion he wants to remain loyal to Christ regardless of the circumstances.

However, there is a bit of over confidence, conceit, even arrogance in his attitude. Peter assumes all is well, but in his self-confidence he takes the first step to his fall. Broadus suggests, "Here is the distinct assumption that he loves the Master 'more than these' (John 21:15), indeed more than any one whatsoever loved him. When bitter experience had chastened him, he made no more comparisons, but said only, 'You know that I love you'" (*Matthew*, p 534).

Be careful not to miss the strong emphatic emphasis between Jesus' and Peter's responses to each other verses 33-35.

A. T. Robertson observes, "Peter ignored the prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus and the promised meeting in Galilee (v. 32). The quotation from Zech. 13:7 made no impression on him. He was intent on showing that he was superior to 'all' the rest. Judas had turned traitor and all were weak, Peter in particular, little as he knew it. So Jesus has to make it plainer by pointing out 'this night' as the time (v. 34). 'Before the cock crows.' No article in the Greek, 'before a cock crows.' Mark 14:30 says that Peter will deny Jesus thrice before the cock crows twice. When one cock crows in the morning, others generally follow. The three denials lasted over an hour" (*Word Pictures of the New Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 210-11). M. R. Vincent says, "A little more graphic if the article is omitted, as in the Greek. Before *a single cock* shall be heard, early in the night, you shall deny me."

Peter is very emphatic, "Even though all . . . I never." Others may fail, but he will never fail His Lord. He is emphatically negative and so self-assuring in his commitment to Christ. But his overconfidence is his fall. "But Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away'" (Matthew 26:33). Peter is emphatic using a double negative in the Greek, "I will certainly never deny you." In Peter's mind it was unthinkable that he would ever deny Jesus. The other disciples made the same affirmation. In their heart of hearts they never dreamed of disloyalty. Others may flee, but not me. Peter's defense grows stronger and stronger, louder and louder. "Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You" (v. 35). Hendriksen emphasizes the emphatic "certainly not deny You." Mark tells us "Peter kept saying insistently" (14:31). All of the disciples with the exception of Judas had this passionate love for Jesus that night.

Jesus' reply to Peter is just as emphatic as Peter's. Jesus singles out Peter. "Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' 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" (Matthew 26:34-35).

Once again Peter is emphatically negative. "I will not deny You" (v. 35). I certainly will not. It is a double negative in the original, *ou me* with a future indicative. No, I will not deny You.

This crowing does not refer to the third Roman watch, but the actual crowing of a rooster. Because of the fanciful religious regulations the Jews were forbidden to keep fowls in Jerusalem, but the Romans would have no problem. However the Talmud repeatedly mentions cock crowing. Broads says, "The Rabbinical rule did not exist in the time of Christ, or else was not strictly observed" (p. 534). Somewhere lurking in the shadows was a rooster waiting for God the creator's command. God's sovereignty over the rooster should remind us of the day when Jesus sent Peter out to catch a fish telling him that the very first fish that he would catch would have a coin in its mouth that Peter would use to pay the tax (Matt. 17:24-27).

Alfred Plummer sees the heartrending irony of the disciple's undisciplined commitment and our Lord's agony. "The apostles are so sure of their own strength that they will not allow the possibility of failure, even when they are forewarned of it by Christ. The Son of Man is so conscious of the weakness of His humanity that he prays to the Father that He may be spared the approaching trial. He feels the need of being strengthened by prayer." Jesus abides in the strength of the Father, but the disciples proceed in their own frailty.

PETER AND DISCIPLES DENIAL OF JESUS (26:56, 69-75).

"But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets. Then all the disciples left Him and fled" (Matthew 26:56). Mark adds what may be a personal note saying, "And they all left Him and fled. And a certain young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he left the linen sheet behind, and escaped naked" (Mark 14:50-52).

All of the disciples fled

"'But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.' Then all the disciples left Him and fled. Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome" (Matthew 26:56-58).

Peter's three denials (Matt. 26:69-75)

"Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:69-75).

Upon denying Jesus three times Matthew tells us that Peter "began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:74-75).

Michael Wilkins observes "The difference between Judas and Peter (and the rest of the disciples) is demonstrated by their behavior *after* their failures. Judas is satanically driven to accomplish his treachery (cf. Luke 22:3-4; John 13:2), because he never was a true believer (John 6:60-65). Peter and the other disciples falter, but their repentance later brings them back to Jesus for restoration" (*Matthew, The NIV Application Commentary*, p. 840).

Abiding Principles and Practical Applications

1. "The things we least anticipate are our falls," observes Alfred Eldersheim.
2. The beginning of Peter's sin of denying Jesus began when he disagreed with the Lord. Peter thought he was better than the other disciples. Peter was intent on showing that he was superior to all the rest of the disciples. Peter would have had a different outcome if he would have repented of his arrogance and obeyed Jesus' warning.
3. Peter is usually the one we immediately think of denying Jesus, but all of the disciples fled. "We have no reason to believe that any of the ten did formally deny their Lord, though they all left Him and fled, Peter and John presently returning (Mat. 26:56)" (Broadus, p. 534).
4. God uses the prophetic warning of Jesus, the look of Jesus in the night and the crowing of a rooster to bring Peter back to repentance.
5. Carefully note the difference in Peter's denial and that of Judas. One repented, the other hanged himself in bitter remorse. Both denied Him, but only one repented.

6. Luke 22:31-32 gives us insight into the restoration of Peter. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). The Lord stored up in Peter mind words which would be used in the days to come. After Jesus was raised from the dead the angel in the empty tomb told the women to "go tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you'" (Mark 16:7). Be sure and tell Peter! Be sure and tell the disciple who denied Him. Luke also tells us the resurrected Jesus has a personal interview with Peter. "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34). The apostle Paul speaking of the resurrection of Jesus said that Christ "appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve," and over five hundred saw Him on one occasion (1 Cor. 15:5-6). In a post-resurrection appearance Christ challenged Peter to love the brethren and to feed the sheep (John 21:1-23). Galilee was the home of the disciples and where Jesus had called them as disciples.

7. Even though Jesus warned the disciples they would deny Him, He gave them the reassuring promise that He would be raised from the dead and meet them in Galilee. None of them appropriated that promise.

Title: Matthew 26:30-35 Jesus' Prophecy of Peter's Denials

Series: Life of Christ

Message by Wil Pounds (c) 2013. Anyone is free to use this material and distribute it, but it may not be sold under any circumstances whatsoever without the author's written consent.

Unless otherwise noted "Scripture quotations taken from the NASB." "Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission."

(www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://www.bible.org/>. All rights reserved.

Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries from 1972 until 2005. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist missionary and teaches seminary extension courses and evangelism conferences in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador.