

STUDY 3 - MATTHEW 26:30-46

Vs 30-35

After the meal, Jesus and his disciples (now numbering 11, Judas having left at some point during the meal) leave the house and walk to the Mount of Olives. Jesus has spoken of his death, and of his betrayer, but now he addresses the rest of his disciples. He has some terrible news - but there is hope within what he says.

Jesus tells the disciples that they will all fall away during this night. Note the reason - it is not because they are going to be forced away by enemies, but they will go "because of me". It will be a conscious choice because of what will happen to Jesus. To prove this Jesus quotes from Zechariah 13:7. In that chapter the LORD promises to banish uncleanness from the land and deal with false shepherds of his people, and does so by striking his faithful shepherd king. Once this happens the sheep scatter, some will perish under judgement, while others will suffer a refining trial and will have their covenant with the LORD renewed. Jesus makes it clear that although the disciples will be scattered, they are part of that latter group - Jesus will restore his scattered disciples and Jesus will meet them again in Galilee.

Peter does not grasp this though. He believes his hope is his ability to remain faithful to Jesus and proudly declares his loyalty. Notice the arrogance in what he says ("though THEY all fall away I will never fall away"). The rest of the disciples join in this protest. But Jesus is the shepherd who must die, they are the sheep who will be scattered and restored.

POSSIBLE QS

So far in this chapter, what has Jesus already said about what will happen this night?

What does Jesus say will happen to him and his disciples here?

Look up Zechariah 13:7-9 to see the context of what Jesus quotes. What hope does Jesus give that the disciples are part of the group mentioned in Zechariah 13:9 who are scattered but restored?

Where does Peter think his hope for the future lies?

Vs 36-46

Jesus and his disciples now move on to Gethsemane, an olive orchard on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives.

This scene is very important, and incredibly moving. It is the scene of a great spiritual battle. Jesus is facing his greatest temptation - not to go to the cross, or to go to the cross unwillingly. He humanly recoils at what is to come, yet in what he prays he shows that it is not simply the fear of a violent physical death that troubles him. He knows this death is a "cup" (See Isaiah 51:22 and 53:4-10) To resist the temptation to run from it he prays, and in this time of prayer his prayers are answered and his will and his Father's will are united. The fact that Jesus prays at this time shows that although he was tempted, he did not sin. He went to his Father with his temptation, falling on his face before him.

One important thing to notice from this prayer is that the cross was necessary. If salvation could be accomplished by any other means it would have been. It was not possible (verse 40) for the Father to answer Jesus' prayer affirmatively. This could not pass until Jesus drank the cup of wrath (verse 42). This does not mean the Father did not hear his Sons prayers - Hebrews 5:7-10 tells us he was heard, for his and our sakes.

Although it may be true to say that we see the humanity of Jesus very vividly here in his desire to be accompanied by Peter and the sons of Zebedee, there may be more going on in his request for them to stay awake than simply his desire for company. Jesus knows they are facing a time of great trial too - he has just said that they will scatter, even though they have protested that they won't. Their spirit is willing, but their flesh is weak (verse 41). They need to watch and pray they don't fall (verse 41). Jesus takes his disciples out of care for them (so they pray, and to prove their own weakness), not because he is weak.

After Jesus has finished praying, he calls his disciples to go. Verses 45 and 46 are very important in that they show the fact that Jesus is completely in control of the situation. He is not caught off guard in what happens next. They also show his complete submission to his Father's will. He does not run from the garden. He sets his face to go to the cross.

POSSIBLE QS

In verses 36-38 what indications do we have of Jesus' state of mind?

What temptation is Jesus facing? What does he do with that temptation?

Why is Jesus so sorrowful? Is it just fear of a violent physical death? (Look up Isaiah 51:22 and 53:4-10)

Does the Father hear the Sons prayer in Gethsemene? (Read Hebrews 5:7-10)

How would you use this passage to respond to someone if they said that "God doesn't need the cross to forgive someone"?

Why does Jesus take Peter and the Sons of Jesse with him? Is it simply because he needs companionship? (See verses 40-41)

What do we learn about Jesus from what he says in verses 45 and 46?