

STUDY 5 - MATTHEW 26:69-27:10

While Jesus' trial is going on the attention shifts to two of his disciples. Both have played an important part in these chapters so far. Peter has boldly declared that he would never leave Jesus (see 26:33), and he has followed Jesus from a distance (see 26:58), but these verses show how Jesus' prediction of his denials are proved true.

At the beginning of chapter 26 we saw Judas making arrangements for handing Jesus over to the authorities, and in 26:47-50 we saw him do it in an act of intimate betrayal. In these verses we see what becomes of Judas.

It is no accident that we have the accounts of Judas and Peter side by side. They are similar, but very different in outcome. However at the centre of them - in 27:1-2 - we see Jesus, bound and delivered over to Pilate to be crucified, going as the shepherd alone - because of Judas' actions, and going to pay for Peter's sin.

26:69-27:2

The account here is self explanatory. It is worth noticing that of all the disciples, Peter did at least follow Jesus right up to the courtyard of the High Priest. However when it comes to the test, Peter denies him 3 times.

The emphasis in the narrative is on the fulfilment of prophecy. Matthew has been focused on that throughout his gospel, but this is the first time there has been a fulfilment so close in time to when the prophecy was given. Verse 75 refers back to verse 34. "This very night" Peter has disowned Jesus. It also fulfils what Jesus said back in verse 31 - the prophecy from Zechariah. Peter has fallen away on account of Jesus - it was when he was challenged about his relationship to Christ that he fell. This is important because up to this point Peter was so self confident about his ability to stand.

It is no accident that this is placed immediately after the account of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Jesus has given witness as to who he is, and the priests have been unable to find people to give false witness. Peter however refuses to give true witness to Jesus and his relationship to him.

The third emphasis in these verses is on Peter's response. Verse 75 is a sad verse - Peter weeps bitterly, presumably because he remembers Jesus' words. However, as we move on through the gospel accounts we see that these are true tears of repentance and not simply remorse. Unlike Judas (as we shall see) Peter does not run from Jesus after he has done this - he runs to him, and Jesus forgives and reinstates him (see John 21:7, 15-19 and Mark 16:7 - note the "and Peter"). Jesus is going to the cross to pay for Peter's sin (see 27:1-2).

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Why does Peter come to be sitting in the courtyard of the High Priest (see 26:58)?

What do the people ask Peter? How does he respond?

How does this contrast with how Peter has said he would respond? (See 26:33)

How does this fulfil what Jesus has promised? (See 26:34 and also 26:31)

How does what is going on in the courtyard contrast with what has been going on inside (remember verse 57-68)?

What do Peter's tears signify? (Verse 71) What hope does he have? - Look forward to Mark 16:7, John 21:7, John 21:15-19)

What can we learn from Peter about

- the dangers of spiritual self confidence
- forgiveness and hope after great sin

27:3-10

The decision has been made to put Jesus to death (vs 1-2). When Judas discovered this, he appeared to have a change of heart. We are told "he changed his mind". It would be wrong to see this as repentance, or the same as what Peter goes through in verse 75. The fruits of Judas changed mind are revealing - he does not cast himself on the Lord, he goes back to the elders and chief priests. Instead of trusting in God to pay the price for his sin, he entered utter despair and killed himself.

The full hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders can be seen in these verses. They are unconcerned about condemning an innocent man to death (verse 1-2), but they are concerned about receiving back Judas' money. See Matthew 23:23-24.

Matthew shows that even this unhappy turn of events is in fulfilment of God's word. He quotes from two passages from the Old Testament, Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah (probably 19:1-13 and 32:6-9). The way Matthew exposites those texts and sees their fulfilment in this event is not straightforward, but neither is it a case of getting 'the right doctrine from the wrong texts'. I will pass on a photocopy of a discussion of this passage from a commentary - but don't get too bogged down in it in the study.

Putting Judas and Peter side by side we get a helpful illustration of the truth of the difference between worldly sorrow for sin and godly repentance, as written about in 2 Corinthians 7:10.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What is Judas' reaction to the condemnation of Jesus?

How is this different to Peter's response to his denials?

How do we see the hypocrisy of the chief priests clearly in this passage?

How do we know that even this event was not out of God's control?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. In the light of what we've seen, what is the difference between godly grief/sorrow over sin and worldly grief/ sorrow over sin?