

18. Explain how blood and covenants are connected in the plan of God, then apply this understanding to Jesus' use of these terms in connection with forgiveness of sins.
19. Jesus said, "I shall . . . drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." To what astounding reality does this promise point?
20. Were Jesus and His disciples accustomed to sing a hymn in connection with Passover? If so, what hymn was it?
21. What does the Lord's Supper say to the participant about the purpose of Jesus' death?
22. Show the meaning(s) of the Lord's Supper by quoting passages of Scripture that state or imply its meaning.

SECTION 66

JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIALS AND OTHERS' FAILURE

(Parallels: Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-38; John 13:31-38)

TEXT: 26:31-35

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee. 33 But Peter answered and said unto him, If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended. 34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35 Peter said unto him, Even if I must die with thee, *yet* will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you think Jesus announced the disciples' failure ahead of time? Would not this tend to discourage them from doing better? What specific advantage(s) did He seek, by giving them this advance notice?
- b. What does it mean for someone to "be offended in" Jesus?
- c. Why did Jesus inform the disciples that, "After I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee"? How could the anticipation of His return to Galilee do anything for them in their bewildered state?

- d. Do you think Peter heard Jesus' clear reference to His resurrection and anticipated return to Galilee? What makes you think so?
- e. What combination of traits caused Peter to deny the possibility of his failure? Why did Peter react this way? How does his reaction to Jesus' warnings differ from that of Judas when the latter was faced with Jesus' predictions of his betrayal?
- f. Why do you think Jesus predicted Peter's denials? to show Peter how wrong he was? to show Himself omniscient? or something else?
- g. In what ironic way did the disciples practically deny their discipleship by their vigorous protests of unswerving faithfulness?
- h. Jesus predicted Peter's denials would occur in connection with a cock's crowing. What does this tell you about the time intended? What does it tell you about Jesus?
- i. Luke says "this day" whereas Matthew says "this very night" Peter would deny the Lord. How would you resolve this apparent contradiction?
- j. On the basis of this incident what may we learn about: (1) Satan and temptation? (2) the weakness of human nature, even in disciples? (3) Jesus?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

"Tonight," Jesus said to His men, "you will all feel deeply shocked because of me. In fact, the Scriptures say, 'I [God] will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of his flock will be scattered.' However, after my resurrection from the dead, I will be back in Galilee before you are!"

To this, Peter protested, "Even if everyone else stumbles and loses faith in you, I will never desert you!"

Jesus demurred, "I solemnly assure you—yes, you Peter, today, in fact this very night, even before the rooster crows twice, will disown me three times!"

But Peter protested even more vehemently, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you!"

All the other disciples kept saying the same thing.

SUMMARY

In harmony with Zechariah's prophecy, Jesus warned the Twelve that they would be deeply shocked because of Him. Impetuously,

Peter refused to accept this possibility and led the others to affirm their undying loyalty, despite Jesus' predictions of their failure.

NOTES

Deserters unanimous

26:31 **Then saith Jesus unto them. All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.** *Then*, as they were leaving the City to make their way toward the Mount of Olives. The following warning is probably not the first. Rather, as Luke (23:31ff.) and John (13:36-38) indicate, Jesus broached the subject with Peter while still in the Upper Room, distinctly predicting his failure. Now, because of the rapid approach of their break-down in courage, the Lord repeats His warning, first generalizing it to include everyone, then specifying Peter's denials again.

That two separate warnings could occur and be followed by two distinct protestations of faithfulness is psychologically possible both for Jesus and for Peter as also for the others. During the washing of the disciples' feet, several arguments were required before Peter genuinely acquiesced. Since the disciples remained so naive as to their own strength under fire and so unbelieving as to His rapidly approaching suffering, Jesus must bring them back to reality in the hope of saving them from their not inevitable cowardliness. But His repeating this prediction would undoubtedly result in the repetition of the same bad scene Peter played earlier, with the difference that now the others second his vehement objections.

All ye: was there to be no one left faithfully brave until the end? At first "all deserted Him and fled" every man for himself (26:56). However, John boldly infiltrated the arresting contingent and succeeded in entering the palace of the high priest himself and later procured Peter's admission too (John 18:15ff.). *Shall be offended in me:* Earlier (11:6), Jesus had challenged John the Baptist to believe Him without wavering due to his personal concepts of what the Messiah had to be. Now the meaning of His strange Beatitude touched His men personally. The personal prejudices of the Twelve would leave them exposed to extreme psychological shock when they saw their Lord tied and dragged away to the slaughter like a common criminal. Even though He had revealed it many times before, they had not the faith to see Him as God's Lamb taking away the sins of the world.

They could not interpret the arrest and trials as minor incidents on His way to the Throne at the center of the moral universe by the only route that could take Him there (Rev. 5). *This night*: The relative calm with which they had enjoyed the Passover supper and Jesus' subsequent instruction and prayer must not disguise the suddenness and fury of the tempest that would break around them within a few hours.

All ye shall be offended in me this night. This important text sharpens our understanding of what it means to cause others to stumble. Jesus clearly warned His men that *He Himself* would be the cause of stumbling for them. However, *He did not swerve from His path of duty to accommodate their scruples and points of view that were the true cause of their shock.* He had done everything in His power to correct their misapprehensions and misguided expectations as to His kingly Messiahship. Their minds remained largely unchanged. Now, however, He must do the will of God, even if His conduct caused them to stumble. (Cf. Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus because of Christian's prejudices and his circumcising of Timothy because of Jewish feelings. Gal. 2:1-5; Acts 16:3 in the context of Acts 15! Paul continued to proclaim the Gospel, even though it was scandal to the Jews. I Cor. 1:23.) This understanding frees us from guilt when we do proclaim the will of God and, to our chagrin and deeply-felt anguish, cause hard-headed, unconvincible people to declare themselves scandalized. It does not, of course, exonerate us from that gentle sensitivity that seeks to protect the weak conscience of the ignorant (I Cor. 8:7). It does free us from slavery to the opinionated who would impose their prejudices on believers. (See notes on 26:10.)

He must awaken His much-loved companions to their vulnerability. To see Jesus overpowered by His foes would severely tempt them to question whether He were God's Anointed or not.

1. To steel them for the blow soon to strike them, He predicted their downfall. This pessimistic outlook counselled them to take appropriate measures to resist the shock. His meek, voluntary surrender to His enemies must not come upon them unexpected.
2. But because they would desert Him anyway, He must point to the way back from their debacle. So doing, they would not drown in despair, because He Himself will have already shown them His forgiving spirit. That He foresaw everything and still did not reject them, warms them with His love, leaving them the hope, hence, the power to repent and repair the damage of their desertion.

3. The knowledge that the Scriptures too had foreseen their failure would actually rebuild their sagging faith and rekindle their courage, because, if the Scriptures were right about their failure, the Bible could be trusted about their ultimate victory too and dependable to lead the stunned disciples back to reasonableness and faith.

I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad (Zech. 13:7). *I will smite* is a free quotation from the Hebrew, since the Hebrews imperative ("Strike the shepherd") is reworded as a simple future, changing from God who orders the striking, into the one who does it. What one does by means of an agent may correctly be said to have done for himself. The result of this alteration is to affirm even more clearly that God is in full control of the events, even if it would appear that evil men are authors of what must appear to the disciples as inexplicable chaos surrounding Jesus' death. History is in God's hands, so everything will proceed according to His design, even if men cannot understand or accept it. Pointing to Isaiah, Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 913) justifies Jesus' rewording:

It was Jehovah himself who 'laid upon' the Mediator 'all our iniquities' (Isa. 53:6). It was he who 'struck him down, "bruised him," put him to grief,' 'made his soul an offering for sin.' . . . It was God the Father who 'spared not his own Son' (Rom. 8:32).

That the smitten *shepherd* in question is the Messiah, is amply sustained by an examination of Zechariah's larger context (Zech. 9-13). The King who came to Israel meek and riding on an ass (Zech. 9:9) is the Shepherd they detested and priced at 30 pieces of silver (11:12f.), the one who was pierced (12:10ff.) in whose day a fountain of cleansing from sin and impurity would be opened (13:1). Most convincing is the identification of "my *shepherd*" as the direct companion of the Lord Almighty (Zech. 13:7a).

Family reunion in Galilee

26:32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee. Whatever else this promise means, it sings of Jesus' forgiveness for their foreseeable desertion. He thus empowers them to recover themselves, believing that their cowardly unbelief was not beyond help or hope. "Though you desert me, I will not desert you." When they later reflected on their bad showing and His loving warning, they would be stronger and able to gather around Him once again.

I will go before you (proàxo humàs), just as would a Shepherd (John 10:4). This touch is reminiscent of the second part of Zechariah's prophecy whereby those who survived the severe trials God would bring upon them would belong to Him in the closest fellowship imaginable (Zech. 13:7b-9).

I will go before you into Galilee suggests three things:

1. They would naturally return to Galilee after the feast, because it was home, but this time, instead of slinking ashamedly back to their homes like beaten men, they would return with high heads and singing hearts, as old friends to a long-awaited rendezvous. Jesus deliberately gave them an appointment to meet their risen Lord as a hope to steady them during the emotional earthquake of the cross. (Cf. 28:15; John 21 and possibly I Cor. 15:6?).
2. Why *Galilee*? Because it was home for Jesus too. With stunning cheerfulness in the face of impending disaster, He challenged them to believe that He Himself would enjoy that comforting joy of returning home among the loved and familiar before they would. It was as if He said, "Don't let the intervening crisis shake you so: I'll be back home in Galilee before you are!"
3. Did He prefer Galilee because the area around Jerusalem in Judea would be too turbulent to permit calm teaching after the resurrection and in consequence of it? (Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:40, 41.)

Why didn't Jesus mention also His appearances to them at various times in and around Jerusalem first on the very day of the resurrection? The point here is that He encourages them to believe that, despite the shock, sadness and horror of the crucifixion and entombment, the time would come when they would all walk together in the fresh air and sunlight of Galilean springtime as truly as they had done in happy days gone by. Just when they were crushed by their own unbelief and timidity, He rallies them with thoughts of home!

The grave danger of self-confidence

26:33 But Peter answered and said unto him, If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended. Just as Peter took the initiative to confess Jesus as Lord, he impetuously pledges his loyalty. And just as before, he launches an entirely unjustified protest against Jesus' revelations (16:22). When Jesus Christ says something, no disciple has any right to object, demur or protest, because, even when Jesus puts

our loyalty in doubt, to disagree with Him is to prove Him absolutely correct in His evaluation! So, why did Peter protest so?

1. He was *prejudiced*. If he intended to cheer Jesus out of what must have seemed to him a dark, despondent mood, then it only proves how far he rejected the divine necessity of Jesus' death and to what extent the scandal of the cross menaced him personally. Peter would fail because his expectations of what Jesus would do when confronted by death were false. Peter could not foresee,—nor if told, accept—, the drastically changed conditions into which Jesus was even then moving. Like anyone else, he assumed that everything would go on as normal, Jesus would conquer all opposition and tomorrow would be another day like this. Hence, neither he nor the others could imagine what they must soon undergo. Nothing could be the same, because Jesus' hour had now finally come.
2. His overconfidence is grounded in his *self-reliance*. Of all men could he alone survive the avalanche of temptations that would bury all others? Although to be shocked at Jesus is not equal to betraying Him, yet it is no cause for bragging about one's faithfulness. What overconfidence and presumption to believe himself alone able to surpass the loyalty of everyone else! Only blind self-conceit kept him from confessing his own weakness and dependence upon God's grace. Earlier, along with the others, he had asked in severe self-examination, "Lord, is it I?" Now, however, he considers himself above the fears of common mortals. *Though they all fall away . . . I will never.*

In these horrified reactions of a zealous disciple whose loyalty has just been questioned, Alford (I,270) sees evidence that the following warning is not the first Jesus had given Peter. Hence, the warnings sounded in Luke 22:31-34 and John 13:36f. had possibly occurred before. He argues that Peter's anguished disjoining himself from the others so as to distinguish the level of his faithfulness above the rest, suggests that this is not the first time his reliability has been questioned that night. This explains his growing vehemence.

Cowardice in the crisis

26:34 **Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice.** Although the fisherman-Apostle was self-convinced that he must succeed better

than he understood himself, must inform him that he would do worse. Peter committed the common fallacy of trusting a heart unsustained by grace: his own. Peter had boasted, "Never!" but Jesus warns, *This night, before the cock crows*. Peter had said, "Not I!" Jesus retorted, *You!* Peter protested, "Not once!" but Jesus specifies, *Three times*. Not by hasty, thoughtless speech, but deliberately, hence with aggravated responsibility.

This night: although Luke (22:34) has "this day," there is no contradiction, because "this day" had already begun with sunset, therefore at the beginning of *this night*. Mark (14:30) reports both of these expressions together (*sémeron taùte tê nuktì*).

Before the cock crows. Where Matthew, Luke and John imply that Peter would deny the Lord before the rooster crowed even once, Mark's citation states "before the cock crows twice." This implies that the cock would crow, then Peter would deny the Lord, then the cock would crow a second time. Several explanations have been given:

1. The first cock crow might have occurred around midnight, the second about three or four o'clock in the morning. Between the two the denials would occur. Most people in a profound sleep at midnight would not hear the first cock and so would consider the second one as the first, whereas there were literally two. Problem: why did not Peter hear this first cock and be reminded of Jesus' words and repent?
2. Before the cock would have had opportunity to crow twice, Peter would have denied the Lord. Further, the night was divided into various watches (cf. 24:43; 14:25), one of which was nick-named "the cock-crowing" (cf. Mark 13:35 *alektorofonias*). In this way Jesus indicated the approximate hour of the denials. The pre-dawn stillness of the city would permit anyone awake to hear the rooster, making this a particularly precise signal to Peter.

Consider the high wisdom of Jesus: He planted in Peter's mind the very signal that would be the means of pricking the man's conscience at the appropriate moment and save him. However, who but a true Prophet could foresee that *this* humble fowl would crow at the right time and stab the moral sense of the fallen Apostle? This is the third time an animal would speak to Peter of Jesus' control over nature. (Cf. Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 17:27; cf. II Peter 2:16.) And yet, the precision with which Jesus predicted Peter's denial neither persuaded him nor dissuaded him from confidently depending on his own strength.

Imagine his shock when he heard that cock lustily crowing out the literal fulfillment of Jesus' solemn prediction! (For the fulfillment, see on 26:74.)

Lavish, impossible promises

26:35 Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. Stubbornly, Peter continued insisting both emphatically and excessively (Mark 14:31). Unquestionably, this warm-hearted man means what he says, because true love is genuinely hurt to hear its sincerity put in doubt. Further, Jesus' astonishing predictions must have seemed absolutely incredible to him. Only the sad fulfillment of the prediction would finally convince him of Jesus' accuracy.

Even if I must die with thee accurately measures the strength of the temptation. He admits death's power to question one's willingness to abandon his integrity at the cost of his life. Peter's bold affirmations, however, are not made while looking death in the face. Too easily he, and all the others with him, suppose themselves capable of doing anything. Too readily they feel offended when informed that they cannot do it and that their good intentions are no substitute for facts. But without the power and grace of the Spirit, without Jesus, what could they do (John 15:3, 5)? Earlier (John 13:38), Jesus questioned Peter's ability to surrender his life for His sake. Still the man continues to consider himself equal to his Master, not knowing, as does Jesus, "with what reluctance and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die. . . . His Master Himself struggled when it came to this, and *the disciple is not greater than his Lord*" (Matthew Henry, V,1106).

Likewise also said all the disciples. Earlier, when Jesus spoke of Peter's denials, the others, who believed Peter as solid a disciple as anyone, must have been astounded but remained silent at this disclosure of his weakness, since they themselves were not involved. Now, however, when Jesus repeated the puzzling prediction, implicating them too, they join Peter's fervent protest by ardently reaffirming their own undying loyalty. However, people are least prepared morally when—and precisely because—they believe themselves most incapable of failure. (Cf. I Cor. 10:12.) Believing themselves unable to betray Jesus, they feel themselves also safe against being shocked at anything He did or that happened to Him. All of them were unquestionably ready to follow Jesus in a patriotic power struggle for glory at

the head of the nation. This vision did not prepare them to walk in His footsteps down the footpath of humiliation and frailty. It was quite beyond them to welcome insults, scourging and death without being able to retaliate.

Although these sincere, earnest men immediately abandoned Jesus, just as He predicted, in later life, however, they heroically kept these inconsiderate promises. According to tradition, most did give their lives for Christ. John lived and served unflinchingly until a venerable age. But they triumphed not in their own strength, but in that of the Holy Spirit and by the grace of God, and not unlikely because of Jesus' pre-crisis admonitions here.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. When and where did Jesus predict the disciples' approaching failure: before they all left the Upper Room or after? Or both? Defend your answer.
2. Define the expression: "offended in me." What other texts help interpret it?
3. What prophecy (book, chapter and verse) predicted the scattering of the flock upon the overwhelming of the shepherd? Show how it rightly applies to Jesus and the disciples.
4. According to the above-mentioned prophecy, who would strike the shepherd in question? How would this feature serve to encourage the sheep to remove the despair from their souls?
5. In what picturesque way did Jesus guarantee the certainty of His victory over death?
6. What was Peter's reaction to Jesus' announcement?
7. How did Jesus treat Peter's reaction?
8. What was the reaction of all the other disciples?
9. What time of day is "cockcrowing"?

SECTION 67

JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE

(Parallels: Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46)

TEXT: 26:36-46

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.