

## Episode #933 Matthew 26 Part 6-Prayer in Gethsemane

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just completed giving His new significance to the bread and cup of the Passover that they had eaten together. Now, they had gone to their campsite at the Mount of Olives, and the Lord is preparing His disciples for what is to come.

III. All Will Stumble; Peter Will Deny. Matthew 26:31-35.

A. Verse 34. “Assuredly” is the Lord’s solemn assertion, “Amen I say to you.” Note that, though each gospel contains only one prediction of the Lord that this would take place, when we compare the gospels we find that these predictions did not all take place at the same time. Two gospels have Him predicting it during the Passover supper, and two others (including Matthew here) after they had left the upper room and gone out. This at the very least gives us two predictions. Yet differences between the predictions lead us to think that all four may be different. The Lord kept insisting that this abandoning Him was coming, and Peter kept arguing back that He must be wrong, as he would never do it.

B. Verse 35. Peter certainly speaks out of a depth of feeling and a true affection for his Lord, but he overestimates his own faithfulness. Poor Peter; how could he imagine the scenes this night would bring? He could imagine standing next to the Lord with a sword, fighting with Him against the tyranny and oppression of Rome. How could he imagine standing meekly with the Lord and letting himself be arrested without a fight? It is always easier to speak of dying for someone in theory than it is to carry through on that in reality.

1. The word “not” in Greek is the strongest possible “no,” *ou mE*, I will by no means deny. This Greek “no” is so strong that, seemingly whenever men use it, they fail to follow through on it every time. Peter knew not the future, and did not realize the circumstances that would lead him so soon to do just that.

2. None of the disciples actually believe they will do this. Yet all did abandon Him. Whether any others denied knowing Him like Peter did, we are not told.

IV. Praying in Gethsemane. Matthew 26:36-46.

A. Verse 36. “Place” is the Greek *chOrion*, meaning a field or farmstead. “Gethsemane” means “An Oil Press,” not an uncommon thing to find at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Mark in Mark 14:32 calls it Gethsemane as well. Luke 22:39-40 calls it a “place” at the Mount of Olives. John 18:1 is the only one that calls it a “garden,” though he does not name it as Gethsemane. Thus we make a composite when we call it the “Garden of Gethsemane.” “Pray” is the typical word for prayer, *proseuchomai*. Some find it very difficult to explain how the Lord could pray and yet still be God. This is communication between the Source and the Outflow. Sellers: When my hand pains me, it cries out to me and says, “Do something.” If I cut my hand, the burst of pain and the spurt of blood say, “Do something.” So I have to do something for my hand, and yet my hand is me. If we have a concept of God as One Who has expressed Himself and declared Himself, then we will understand this without difficulty.

B. Verse 37. Of course we recognize “the two sons of Zebedee” as James and John. These three: Peter, James, and John; were His most favored disciples and shared the

- greatest revelations, including the transfiguration, the raising of the sleeping girl thought dead, and Gethsemane. He was sorrowful or depressed in mind, cast down. It is clear a horror of what He was about to yield to came upon Him, and at the same time a deep, physical suffering that threatened to bring about His death right there, without being able to complete His great work.
- C. Verse 38. “My soul” is the Greek *psuche*, meaning He Himself, or His emotions. He says He was overcome with sorrow.
1. The Lord was at the very end of His strength, as a Man, of course. Bullinger says “crushed with anguish.” We often speak glibly of being “sick to death” of certain things, but the Lord literally was at death’s door, as the dramatic statement in Luke 22:44 makes clear. He received an angel’s ministry to make it through it, and yet His fate was still in doubt even then.
  2. This was said so that we might know the reality of His death. He was not just going to suffer from man, though He will know suffering from man as they drive the nails through His hands and His feet; He is going to suffer from Satan as all of Satan’s fury is poured out upon Him, and He is going to suffer from God. He is going to be cut off from the Father; this is the hard part. He is going to be cut off because in being made sin for us He cannot express the sinless One, and in death He cannot express the living One. Then He will say, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
  3. “Watch” means to keep watch. He asked for the moral support of His closest friends on earth, and yet they were unable to give it
- D. Verse 39. “If possible” is the Greek *dunatos*, meaning inherently possible or if there is the power for this to be so.
1. We can only imagine what it would be like for the source of all that is good and just and righteous to take on Himself the blame for every horrific and corrupt thing that has been done on earth; not to mention for the One Who was God to separate Himself from the blessed fellowship He had ever been in with His Father (Source) in everything as He took on the character of the worm and no man. Surely this was far more horrific to Him than the mere stripes He received or the mere physical agony of the cross, which many of His followers would later go to the cross singing praise to God Who had granted them to suffer as their Savior had done. The Lord did not quail at sufferings some of His people would later face manfully. He quailed at horrors which sinners such as we are can barely imagine.
  2. Yet at the same time, did the One Who came to drink this cup at the last moment lose courage and ask His Father to find some other way, when He knew there was no other way? Would He not heed His Own advice in John 18:11? The cup of wrath He was to drink on the cross He drank to the dregs without a complaint. I do not believe He lost courage here, nor that He begged the Father for something He refused to grant.
  3. He was close to drinking a cup here that He and His Father had never planned for Him to drink: that His soul would die even right there in Gethsemane under the anguish of anticipation and an attack of Satan (for this event much corresponds with His temptation in the wilderness). Luke 22:44 gives a phenomenon known to medical science called hematidrosis, wherein under

extreme distress the blood pressure is raised to such an extent that the blood is forced out the pores with the sweat, and this is often followed seconds later by heart rupture and death in minutes. If He drank the cup of death then, He could not have drunk the proper cup later that He was intended to drink. I believe that this request was granted, and He was brought through the agonies of the garden to drink the even more terrible cup that was planned for Him.

4. "Will" is the Greek *thelO*, meaning wish or desire. He was ready to yield all His will to the Father if He saw fit. Yet His will spared Him to face His fate in the proper way at the proper time the next morning.
- E. Verse 40. "Asleep" is the Greek *katheudO*, the word for composing yourself to fall asleep purposefully. (*Koimaomai*, not used here, means to fall asleep involuntarily.) They had reached the end of the evening's journey, and this was where they intended to spend the night and sleep. The Lord was keeping them up for a reason they did not fully understand, after telling them some very disturbing things and wearing them out emotionally. Without electric lights, people in those days were not used to late nights. All these things worked together to make them very sleepy, and being left to watch and pray, they instead fall into slumber, and apparently without too hard a struggle to stay awake. Interesting that the Lord singles Peter out, when James and John did the same. Maybe this was because of Peter's insistence earlier that he was the most faithful one of all. Now his faithfulness was not even strong enough to keep him awake? "You" here is plural, however, as they all failed to stay awake. We wonder if this time in the garden was literally one hour long? Maybe including all three returns to His disciples? Or was this just meaning for a short time?

V. Conclusion: The Lord insisted that His disciples would abandon Him this night, but Peter would not believe it. Yet when they came to Gethsemane and the Lord asked them to pray with Him, even Peter, James, and John would not stay awake to do it! Do we overestimate our own loyalty and strength to serve the Lord? Let us learn that it is His power we must rely on, for though our spirits are willing, our flesh too is weak!