

## Matthew 26:31-75

### Prediction of Desertion and Denial (26:31–35)

(Mark 14:27-31; Luke 21:31-38; John 13:36-38)

**Matthew 26:31** Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”

**all fall away....** “The failure which is predicted for the disciples is as serious as it could be short of final apostasy....”<sup>1</sup> “It will not be just Judas who fails; Jesus now expands his prediction to “you all,” a revelation that must have shocked them to the core.”<sup>2</sup>

**this night....** This night “makes clear how very soon the disciples’ defection and Peter’s denial will happen.”<sup>3</sup> The intimacy of worshiping with Jesus just moments before is quickly replaced with their denial of Jesus—treason to the very one they were so recently worshiping—and it will happen within minutes!

**For it is written....** “Jesus’ words “for it is written” show that the disciples’ defection, though tragic and irresponsible, does not fall outside God’s sovereign plan.”<sup>4</sup>

**I will strike the shepherd....** Outwardly it appeared that it was Rome and Israel that struck Jesus, but in fact, it was the Father.

*“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”*  
(Zechariah 13:7–9, ESV)

And thereby the Father and the Son take upon themselves the punishment for our sins.

*“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”* (Isaiah 53:4, ESV)

*“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”* (Isaiah 53:10, ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (pp. 997–998). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>2</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 976.

<sup>3</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 540). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 540). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

**and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.** “The disciples will become one with the nation of Israel in being “scattered.” When Jesus, the true shepherd of Israel, is struck and killed, the disciples will scatter to the winds and join Israel in “apostasy.””<sup>5</sup>

**Matthew 26:32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”**

**raised up**<sup>6</sup>.... His is not a hopeless resignation to death, Jesus knows that he will soon rise again. But, since this word has a broad range of meaning, **it does not appear that at this point the disciples really understood what Jesus was addressing**—his resurrection from the dead. Yet, Jesus spoke of it many times.

*“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Matthew 16:21, ESV)*

*“And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”” (Matthew 17:9, ESV)*

*“and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed.” (Matthew 17:23, ESV)*

*“and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.” (Matthew 20:19, ESV)*

**Although the disciples never seemed to get it, yet the chief priests and Pharisees fully understood him.**

*“Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’” (Matthew 27:63, ESV)*

**I will go before you to Galilee ....** “Most of the resurrection appearances took place in or near Jerusalem. But Matthew insists on Galilee. He has the angel instruct the women to tell his disciples to go into Galilee (28:7), informs his readers that Jesus told them the same thing (28:10), and goes on to recount an appearance there (28:16–17). So here he records Jesus’ prophecy that he would see his followers in that region.”<sup>7</sup>

The initial appearances were in Jerusalem, **but most of the 40 days that followed were in Galilee.**

*“Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” (Matthew 28:7, ESV)*

*“Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” (Matthew 28:10, ESV)*

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<sup>5</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 976.

<sup>6</sup> *raised up ἐγείρω* “...to cause someone to live again after having once died—to raise to life, to make live again.” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>7</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 664). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

*“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.”* (Matthew 28:16–17, ESV)

Most of Jesus' followers were Galileans and he appeared to most of them in Galilee and it was there that he taught his final lessons on the Kingdom before he ascended to the Father.

*“Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”* (1 Corinthians 15:6, ESV)

It is this Galilean crowd that came to Jerusalem with Jesus for the Passover. No doubt the unexpected death of Jesus sent them back to Galilee just as depressed and confused as were the disciples.

***Matthew 26:33 Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”***

***I will never fall away....*** “Since he did not know what he would be called upon to go through, it was a thoughtless and foolish boast, **but it reflects the deep-seated loyalty in the heart of this disciple and his determination at the time he spoke to be faithful**, whatever the circumstances.”<sup>8</sup>

*“Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”* (John 13:36–38, ESV)

***Matthew 26:34 Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”***

***Truly, I tell you....*** This phrase is a solemn warning.

***this very night....*** “Peter says, “Never!” and Jesus responds, “This very night!”<sup>9</sup>

***rooster crows....*** “The meaning of the rooster crowing is debated. ... roosters crowed at 12:30 a.m., 1:30, and 2:30....”<sup>10</sup>

*“And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”* (Mark 14:30, ESV)

**This suggest that Peter denied Jesus three times by 1:30 a.m.,** not many minutes from this point in the garden.

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<sup>8</sup> Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 665). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>9</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 977.

<sup>10</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 977.

**deny**<sup>11</sup>.... “to dispute, disavow, disown, say no, repudiate, renounce.”<sup>12</sup>

**three times**.... For Peter the thought of denying Jesus one time was unthinkable, three times would be incomprehensible. It is approaching midnight; **within 2 hours** Peter will deny Jesus three times.

“...not only will Peter’s fall be **deep** (“you will completely turn your back on me”) and **swift** (“before the rooster crows”), but it will even be **repeated** (“three times”).”<sup>13</sup>

““Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.””  
(Luke 22:31–34, ESV)

Peter’s response was that unlike the others, he would not deny Jesus. Jesus’ response was that unlike the others, he would deny Jesus three times.

**Matthew 26:35** Peter said to him, “**Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!**”  
**And all the disciples said the same.**

**deny**.... When it is all said and done, we all have the same two choices as well, we can deny Jesus, or we can deny self.

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24, ESV)

Most people adamantly refuse to deny self.

“Peter thinks that his deeply felt commitment will last forever—“I will never.” Jesus tells him that it will not last the night.”<sup>14</sup>

Peter and all the disciples are on dangerous ground.

“but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:33, ESV)

Some have criticized the disciples for so glibly insisting on their loyalty. Yet, even though their instance soon proved wrong, still the resolution in their mind to do the right thing is to be praised. **To have no resolution to stand with Jesus would be unconscionable.**

<sup>11</sup> *deny* ἀπαρνέομαι “...to refuse to give thought to or express concern for—‘to disregard, to pay no attention to, to say No to.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 355.

<sup>12</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 389.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 644.

<sup>14</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 643.

“The painful irony, as we know, is that the very man who here exalted himself over all the others was the man who (except for Judas) fell more deeply than any of the others....”<sup>15</sup>

### **Gethsemane (26:36–46)**

**Matthew 26:36** *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”*



A stand of old olive trees in the traditional Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>16</sup>

Up to this point the disciples are somewhere on the Mount of Olives:

*“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”*  
(Matthew 26:30, ESV)

**place....** This “place” John identifies as a “garden.”

*“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.”*  
(John 18:1, ESV)

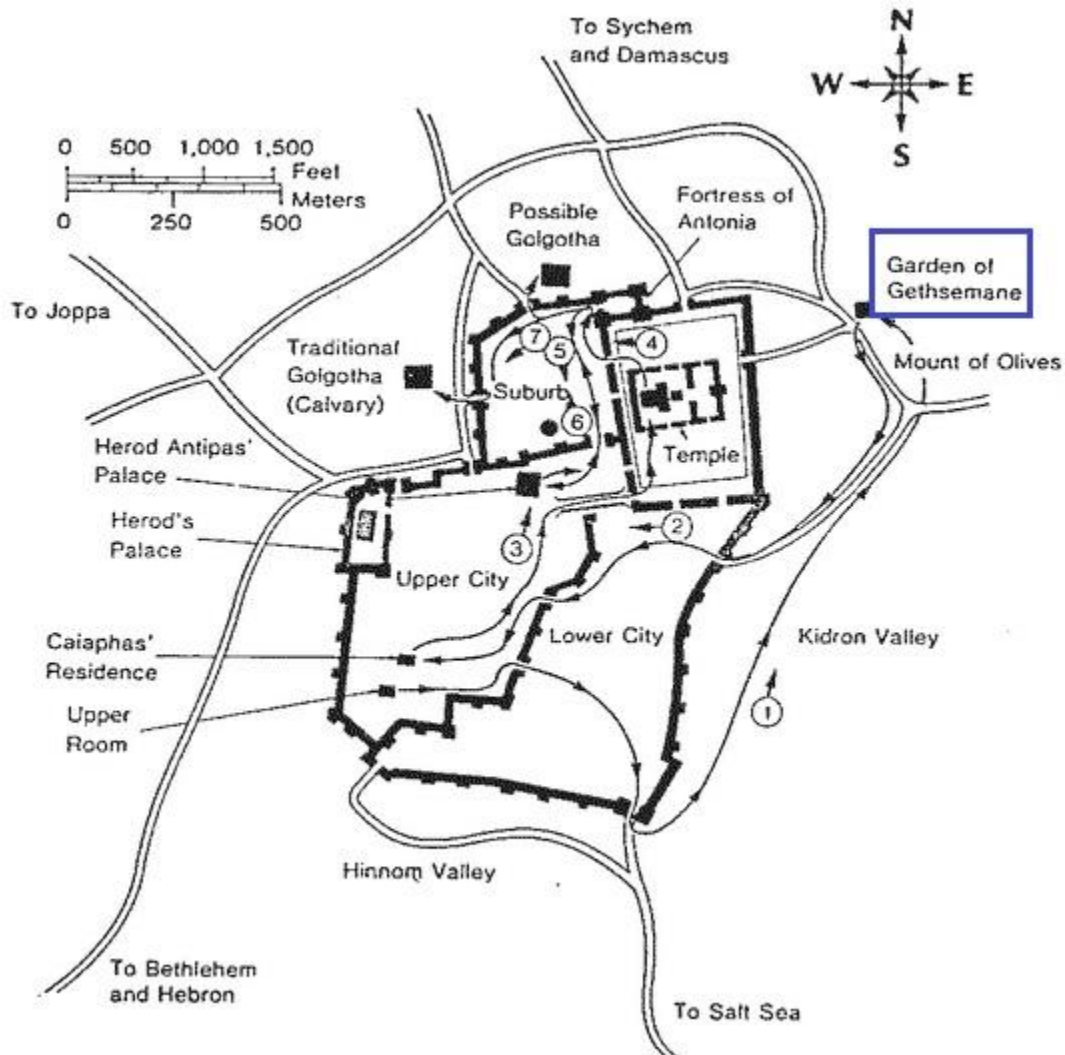
**It was a place well known to Judas.**

*“Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.”* (John 18:2, ESV)

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 642.

<sup>16</sup> Brisco, T. V. (1998). Holman Bible atlas (p. 235). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

**Gethsemane....** This garden is called Gethsemane near or a part of the Mount of Olives. "...the disciples may have reached Gethsemane as early as 10 p.m."<sup>17</sup>



"The name 'Gethsemane' is probably based on the Semitic *Gat šēmānīm* ('Oil Press'), which suggests that we may be dealing with the site of an oil press within an olive grove. No evidence has survived of its location, but on the basis of v. 26 we can locate it on the western slopes of the Mount of Olives, and since olive trees apparently grow better on the lower than the upper slopes, we might be inclined to look for it there."<sup>18</sup>

**pray....** "The important thing is that he saw the need for quiet prayer, time alone with his Father, before the terrible ordeal he was facing."<sup>19</sup>

**Matthew 26:37** *And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.*

<sup>17</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 637.

<sup>18</sup> Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1096). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (pp. 666–667). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

**taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee....** “The scene is reminiscent of the story of the transfiguration of 17:2–8.”<sup>20</sup>

“It is as if Jesus wanted his innermost core of disciples present at the two main displays of what the church came later to call Jesus’ two natures. ... Traditionally, these two events have been the classic revelations (before crucifixion and resurrection) of Jesus’ *true deity (the Transfiguration)* and *true humanity (Gethsemane)*.”<sup>21</sup>

The words *sorrowful*<sup>22</sup> [grieved] and *troubled*<sup>23</sup> [distressed] are words **we identify with in our own lives**. They, therefore, remind us of his full humanity. **He was like us**; he was not simply a stone like figure who never felt emotions, but in fact he identified with us in every aspect of our humanity—except that of sin.

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:15, ESV)

“This text is the Magna Carta of depression.”<sup>24</sup> From this we can see that it is not a sin to be sorrowful and troubled. But like Jesus, we must reject the various sinful ways to react to these problems and instead turn to the Father crying out in faith for his direction. Sometimes his direction is for us to go through the valley of the shadow of death—as it was for his own son.

*“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”* (Hebrews 5:7–8, ESV)

It is interesting that at times like this obedience is often the one thing that least characterizes our behavior. We cry out in pain and shed distressing tears but have little confidence that there is a God in heaven who cares. At these points we are stripped of everything but faith—and that faith is in rags. But God’s call is to faith...

*“but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”* (Hebrews 10:38, ESV)

**“In suffering, much depends on how a person decides to face the suffering.”<sup>25</sup> And it is here that we too must learn obedience through what we also suffer. And this is why so**

<sup>20</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 395.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 648.

<sup>22</sup> *sorrowful* λυπέω “1. to cause severe mental or emotional distress, vex, irritate, offend, insult, 2. to experience sadness or distress....” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>23</sup> *troubled* ἀδημονέω “...be in anxiety, be distressed, troubled” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 649.

<sup>25</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 648.

many fail in their depression—there is no obedience. There are pills, drugs, drink, anger, tears, violence and emotional breakdown—but no obedience! Jesus sought the will of the Father, resolved himself to that will and then obeyed. That is what we are to do as well.

There is a difference in our depression that was not in Jesus' depression, ours is often preceded by sin. So if this element exists in our case, this must be addressed as well. But in all these points the one word we must confront is still—obedience.

*“Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.**”*  
(Hebrews 5:8, ESV)

*“Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* (Hebrews 2:17–18, ESV)

**Matthew 26:38** Then he said to them, **“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”**

**sorrowful**<sup>26</sup> This word is a cognate of the word sorrowful in verse 37. Its repetition heightens our understanding of his *intense emotional state*.

**even to death....** This phrase suggests a sorrow so deep it almost kills. “The weight of depression is so heavy that Jesus feels the forces of death crushing his life out....”<sup>27</sup> Others often feel the same thing and Jesus' example at this point is the key to solution. In Jesus' case it was the will of the Father that he go through the valley of the shadow of death. In your case, that may not be his will, he may provide a way to escape—but then again, he may not. He may ask you to walk through that valley too. But if he does, he will walk with you. He knows the way, he's been there before!

This is where Peter would soon find himself—and not for the first time.

*“He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.””* (Matthew 14:29–30, ESV)

We do the same thing, we take our eyes off Jesus and then we begin to sink. Do what Peter did, cry out “Lord, save me.” Only as we look through the crisis and the pain of our own situation to Jesus, will we be able to survive. If we instead look at the storm, we will without doubt begin to sink. So,

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus**

O soul, are you weary and troubled?

<sup>26</sup> *sorrowful* περιλυπος “Surrounded with grief, severely grieved, very sorrowful....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 651.



No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free.  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.

The simplicity of these words should not diminish the power of the message.

*"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."* (Psalm 42:11, ESV)

**watch with me....** "...his words "with me" (only in Matthew) imply that he wanted them to keep awake and go on praying."<sup>28</sup>

**Matthew 26:39** *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Luke describes this prayer this way:

*"saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."* (Luke 22:42–44, ESV)

**fell on his face....** His posture demonstrates his extreme anguish of soul, not unlike what we sometimes experience as well.

**possible**<sup>29</sup>.... "...if at all possible, Jesus wants out...."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, **it was possible**—but to the destruction of the human race, and therefore not the will of the Father.

*"And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."* (Mark 14:36, ESV)

"The contemporary church is besieged by the false gospels of health, wealth, prosperity, and victory that tell us it is *always* possible to have bad things removed ("*all things are possible for the person who believes!*") and that it is always God's will to give his children health, wealth, prosperity, and victory—"life, and life abundant" (John 10:10)—if we will just follow God's divine laws of faith.

<sup>28</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 543). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>29</sup> *possible* *δυνατός* "...pertaining to being possible, with the implication of power or ability to alter or control circumstances—"possible." Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 654.

See, for example, Kenneth Hagin's [one of many false prophets—died in 2003] specially revealed "How to Write Your Own Ticket with God" series.... According to this material, it is *wrong* to pray "if it is at all possible" when we worship a God for whom all things are possible, and it is *wrong* to pray "if it is your will" where Scripture clearly teaches the will of God to heal. **Jesus did not know this wonderful theology and so prayed here not only for a knowledge of God's will but for a knowledge of what might be possible for God.**"<sup>31</sup>

*cup*<sup>32</sup>.... The cup of life's experiences can be simply too much and we desperately seek to avoid drinking that cup of sorrow; he did too. Generally the "cup" refers to judgment.

*"Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering."* (Isaiah 51:17, ESV)

This cup would be God's judgment on sin.

***pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will....*** "...Jesus is tempted to seek an alternative to sin-bearing suffering as the route by which to fulfill his Father's redemptive purposes."<sup>33</sup> *"Yet not as I want, but as you want!"* "He learned—*obedience.*" The obedience of the Son was learned, not automatic. **How can Jesus' will—"I want"—and his Father's will—"you want"—be two different things and Jesus remain the sinlessly unblemished Son?** A struggled, learned, prayed-for obedience is a true obedience. A part of Jesus' fidelity was his telling the Father the truth about his wants.... Another part of Jesus' fidelity was his asking correction if his request was wrong."<sup>34</sup> Do you make corrections when your request are wrong? He is not asking us to do anything more than what he did for us.

"His prayer was not a *resigned* "but, oh well, your will be done." Rather, Jesus told the Father the honest truth about his present want—"If possible, please take this cup away"—but then he prayed with equal ardor, "But the main thing I want is *not* what I want; it is what you want, yes!"<sup>35</sup>

But it was the will of the Father that he drink from the cup. "That CUP was at his lips, *upturned by his Father's hand*, the last drop of penal woe passing from its brim when in untold woe he cried, "ELI! ELI! LAMA SABACHTHANI?" and gave up the ghost, baptized into death!"<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 655.

<sup>32</sup> *cup ποτήριον* "Metaphorically from the Hebr. meaning lot, portion, under the emblem of a cup which God presents to be drunk, either for good ... or for evil .... In the NT the cup of sorrow, meaning the bitter lot which awaited the Lord in His sufferings and death (Matt. 20:22, 23; 26:39, 42; Mark 10:38, 39; 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11)." Zodiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

<sup>33</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 544). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>34</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 655–656.

<sup>35</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 656.

<sup>36</sup> Dale, J. W. (1874). *An Inquiry into the Usage of ΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΟΝ and the Nature of Christic and Patristic Baptism* (pp. 36–37). Philadelphia: Wm. Rutter & Co.

**Matthew 26:40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour?”**

“...the first test of the disciples’ strength is the unlikely battlefield of sleep, that seemingly harmless friend. The disciples lost this primal battle. Peter’s three denials in the courtyard follow Peter’s three naps in the garden. **If we do not say our prayers, we cannot resist our temptations—it is that basic....**”<sup>37</sup>

**Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

**that you may not enter into temptation....** “The immediate purpose of prayer is defeating temptation.”<sup>38</sup>

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13, ESV)

“As it was, the disciples did not pray and so they did in fact plunge headlong into temptation....”<sup>39</sup>

**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak....** The question here is what spirit does this statement address? God’s Holy Spirit or the human spirit? Both make sense. But most commentaries believe it is our spirit that is addressed. “This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit but makes a “distinction between man’s physical weakness and the noble desires of his will”.... Spiritual eagerness is often accompanied by carnal weakness—a danger amply experienced by successive generations of Christians.”<sup>40</sup>

The “human spirit, the meaning is that the image of God in us, the self deep down inside, the creature beneath the sinner, wants what is right. .... “I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,” Rom 7:22 NRSV ... “but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind....”<sup>41</sup>

**but the flesh is weak....** “The Greek word *sarx*, “flesh,” represents what we in English call human nature, humanity, human resources, human potential. Jesus’ estimation of humanity’s natural powers is not high. .... Christian doctrine teaches that fallen and even disciplined human nature is always in profound need of divine help.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 657.

<sup>38</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 657.

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 658.

<sup>40</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 545). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.  
NRSV The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989)

<sup>41</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 658.

<sup>42</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 659.

**weak**<sup>43</sup>.... “The sickness of human nature to which Jesus refers here is not a good sickness. It is the sickness of powerlessness, of big talk and low performance (cf. 17:14–19). The human-potential movement can be helpful to some in teaching psychological truths, but deep down it too is sick because it deludes the human race into thinking human resources can answer the great issues of human life. Deep down, the human race does not have these resources. On the word of its Master here, the human race is sick.”<sup>44</sup> “Every day in every way I’m getting better and better” is a great hope—but a false one.

**Matthew 26:42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”**

There is a change in this prayer. “In this second prayer Jesus does **not ask** for the cup’s removal, as if he is saying, “I’m beginning to think that you don’t want that cup to go away except by one route—my drinking it.”<sup>45</sup>

**your will be done....** “In the first garden “**Not your will but mine**” changed Paradise to desert and brought man from Eden to Gethsemane. Now “**Not my will but yours**” brings anguish to the man who prays it but transforms the desert into the kingdom and brings man from Gethsemane to the gates of glory.”<sup>46</sup>

“Loving God does not always mean that they *want* to face what God calls them to face; it does mean that they choose to face it anyway.”<sup>47</sup>

Jesus had earlier taught the disciples to pray this very way; now he exemplifies it.

“*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:10, ESV)

**Matthew 26:43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.**

**Matthew 26:44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.**

**the third time....** “In the ancient world, doing something a second time (e.g., John’s double “amen” structure for Jesus’ teaching, cf. John 5:19, 24, 25; 6:26; et al.) emphasizes it greatly, **while a third time makes it superlative or ultimate** (e.g., “holy, holy, holy” in Isa 6:3 and Rev 4:8 means ultimate holiness, and “666” in Rev 13:18

<sup>43</sup> *weak*.... ἀσθενής ‘weak, powerless’.

① pert. to suffering from a debilitating illness, *sick, ill*

② pert. to experiencing some incapacity or limitation, *weak*. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 142.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 659.

<sup>45</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 660.

<sup>46</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 545). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>47</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 639.

means ultimate finiteness or sinfulness). So Jesus becomes the ultimate model of intense, persevering prayer.”<sup>48</sup>

If the inner circle was asleep, how does Matthew know what Jesus prayed or that he prayed a second and third time? It is questions like this that delight the sceptic. It is not that they are improper questions, they are not. It is that they provide opportunity to the cynic to attack the integrity of the passage. This the cynic lives for.

But to the answer; we have two main possibilities: 1) Supernatural revelation of the event. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, God provided these unknown details to Matthew as he wrote. 2) During the 40 day period after the resurrection, Jesus goes over his earthly ministry with them, filling in many details they never fully understood the first time, information necessary for them to tell his story correctly, material that they did not then possess. The result was the full revelation of Jesus’ life on earth, God’s gospel to mankind.

**Matthew 26:45** *Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. [Or, Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?] See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

**he came to the disciples....** We are reminded of “the earlier remonstrances of these three once seemingly solid but now soundly sleeping disciples—the two sons of Zebedee when they had **confidently promised that they could drink Jesus’ cup of suffering** (20:22), and Peter in the immediately preceding paragraph (vv. 33–35), in his **proud claims of complete dependability**.”<sup>49</sup>

“*Are you still sleeping and getting rested?*” Our oldest Greek manuscripts did not have punctuation; we cannot tell whether many sentences were questions, exclamations, or simple statements. Often we can only guess, and hope that the context will make the guesses intelligent.”<sup>50</sup> But consider Mark and Luke:

*“And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”* (Mark 14:41, ESV)

*“and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*” (Luke 22:46, ESV)

Here the translators see them as questions, therefore, Matthew 26:45 is no doubt a question as well.

<sup>48</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 981.

<sup>49</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 663.

<sup>50</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 662.

**later on**<sup>51</sup>.... “The hour of the Passion is near: it is too late to pray and gain strength for the temptations ahead.”<sup>52</sup> They are to sleep “later” for now they must rise and be going.

**the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners....** “Has something gone wrong? Or is this the plan of salvation by substitution that we have seen at work all through God’s history with the world, from the sacrificial system to the Suffering Servant (Exodus to Isaiah)? Is the Son of Man going to die before a human tribunal so that, in the Great Reversal planned from eternity, sinners would not have to die at the tribunal of the Son of Man?”<sup>53</sup> Nothing has gone wrong; this is God’s plan.

This has been predicted many times by Jesus.

*“But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.”* (Matthew 17:12, ESV)

*“As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,”* (Matthew 17:22, ESV)

*““See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death”* (Matthew 20:18, ESV)

*““You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”* (Matthew 26:2, ESV)

*“The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”* (Matthew 26:24, ESV)

**the hands of sinners....** “One can find irony here: At the beginning of the ministry Jesus announced that he came to *call* ‘sinners’ (Mark 2:17; [Matt 9:13]; [here] at the end he is *given over into* their hands.”<sup>54</sup>

**Matthew 26:46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”**

**“Doubtless Jesus could see and hear the party approaching as it crossed the Kidron with torches and climbed up the path to Gethsemane.** The sleepers for whom he would die have lost their opportunity to gain strength through prayer. By contrast Jesus has prayed in agony but now rises with poise and advances to meet his betrayer.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *later on* λοιπός “...something *remaining* (adv.):— besides, finally, furthermore, (from) henceforth, moreover, now, + it remaineth, then.” Strong, J. (1996). *The New Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>52</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 545). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>53</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 663.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 663.

<sup>55</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 545). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

## **Identified by Judas, Jesus Is Arrested (26:47–56)**

**Matthew 26:47** *While he was still speaking, [look] Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.*

**While he was still speaking....** Jesus having seen the approaching mob and before he finishes his last statement, and while still speaking, they arrive and confront the twelve.

**Judas came....** “Judas Iscariot (see on 10:4; 26:14–16, 25; 27:3–10) arrived with armed men. What he received payment for was probably information as to **where Jesus could be arrested in a quiet setting with little danger of mob violence.**”<sup>56</sup> He has done just this. He has earned his pay.

John adds that there was also a band of soldiers with them.

*“So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”*  
(John 18:3, ESV)

These soldiers were probably Temple police, not Roman soldiers. “The guards Judas led to Jesus probably belonged to the Levite temple guard ... and the armed auxiliary police who worked for them....the high priest’s servants were notorious for their use of clubs in the temple, as was the use of clubs in quieting unrest. Contrary to many proposals, it is unlikely that Pilate, who probably had recently arrived and knew little of Jesus, would have dispatched *Roman* troops from the Fortress Antonia at their request, especially with Jewish officers at their head.”<sup>57</sup>

**one of the twelve....** “Matthew highlights the treachery by referring to Judas as “one of the Twelve.” This is insider betrayal, an unbelievable exploitation of a trusted relationship.”<sup>58</sup>

**with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.** The fact that Judas brought people with **swords and clubs** shows that he had fully joined with those who were seeking to kill Jesus.

*“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.”* (Matthew 26:3–4, ESV)

**Matthew 26:48** *Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”*

**betrayer**<sup>59</sup>.... An ugly word well suited to the man and his deed.

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<sup>56</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 546). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>57</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 640.

<sup>58</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 858.

<sup>59</sup> *betrayer παραδίδωμι* “...to deliver a person into the control of someone else, involving either the handing over of a presumably guilty person for punishment by authorities or the handing over of an

**The one I will kiss....** The need for pointing out the right man was especially acute, not only because it was dark, but because, in a time long before photography, the faces of even great celebrities would not be nearly so widely known as today.”<sup>60</sup> In addition, Jesus is a Galilean and therefore not well known in Jerusalem.

**seize**<sup>61</sup> or **take hold....** They seek to do that which even the grave cannot do.

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:24, ESV)

**Matthew 26:49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.**

**at once....** There can be no delay, the other disciples may soon figure out what is going on and try to stop them.

**kissed**<sup>62</sup>.... “To identify Jesus, Judas chose the kiss (thereby turning it into a symbol of betrayal).”<sup>63</sup>

“but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48, ESV)

“The intensive form for ‘kissed’, κατεφίλησεν, is used here (but not in v. 48), either to mark the perfidy of betrayal with a kiss or to suggest that **the kiss was prolonged to make sure the crowd had time to mark their man.**”<sup>64</sup>

“Except when obscured by clouds, the moon would illumine the countryside during Passover ...; yet **others around Jesus, the shade of olive trees, and the importance of getting the right person immediately (before resistance or flight could allow his escape) demanded that Judas specify the right person.... Yet visibility was probably less to the point than trying (however vainly) to make the expedition look more peaceful than it was; the authorities needed to capture mainly the ringleader and wished to minimize confrontation and bloodshed (cf. Lk 22:38).**”<sup>65</sup>

**Matthew 26:50 Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.**

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individual to an enemy who will presumably take undue advantage of the victim—“to hand over, to turn over to, to betray.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 484.

<sup>60</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 546–547). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>61</sup> *seize* κρατέω “To take hold of, grasp, hold fast....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> *kissed* καταφιλέω “...to love, kiss. To kiss eagerly, affectionately, or repeatedly....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

<sup>63</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 546). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>64</sup> Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1110). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

<sup>65</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 641.



**Friend, do what you came to do.** or “Friend, why have you come?” or “*Friend, for this you have come.*”

**Friend....** “The designation “friend” (*hetairos*) is found three times in Matthew. The preceding two times Jesus used it in parables to address a person who abused a privileged relationship (20:13; 22:12). Here Judas has violated the most privileged relationship with Jesus Messiah. **He has scorned and taken advantage of the love and friendship Jesus extended to him.**”<sup>66</sup>

Jesus loves Judas and in his response, Jesus does what he teaches.

*“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”*  
(Matthew 5:44, ESV)

**they came up....** They had been hanging back waiting for Judas to make clear which man they were to arrest.

**and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.** One remembers Jesus’ earlier statements.

*“As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,”* (Matthew 17:22, ESV)

*“Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”* (Matthew 26:45, ESV)

**Matthew 26:51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.**

**one of those who were with Jesus....**

*“And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?””* (Luke 22:49, ESV)

It is “those”, a plural, who ask if they should strike with the sword.

*“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)”* (John 18:10, ESV)

“Peter delivers his blow at the first man that is near him, the slave of the high priest, intending to split his head open; but the man evidently sought to avoid the blow, and the sword sheared off his right ear, being stopped by the heavy armor on the shoulder.”<sup>67</sup>

**the servant of the high priest....** Servants or slaves occupied many rolls in the ancient world—some very elevated! One of the servants of Nero was immensely wealthy and served as an embracery of Nero. His presence brought the power of the

<sup>66</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 858–859.

<sup>67</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (p. 1050). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

crown and with it a concomitant fear. This Malchus, a servant of Caiaphas, may have been such a man and perhaps the leader of this band sent to arrest Jesus.

**cut off his ear.** It was Peter who acts before Jesus could answer and swung the sword at Malchus and severed his ear. Probably Peter is still thinking in terms of nationalistic messianism—the revolt will now begin!

*“But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.”*  
(Luke 22:51, ESV)

**Matthew 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.**

At this point Jesus again separates himself from the Zealots who would take up the sword to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. In fact, “The Christian community rejects war as a means for advancing God’s Cause....”<sup>68</sup> If there was ever a reason for the Church to take up the sword, surely this would be it! Yet here, at the very apex of a justified reason for violence to protect the Head of the Church, Jesus’ response is no, we don’t do that.

The next question is this—**does Jesus here advocate absolute pacifism for any reason for all that would follow the Christian faith?** This is a different question from the first, this question is not about defending Christ and advancing the kingdom by means of violence. This question is about common people in their everyday lives resisting violence by violent means. **It is about self-defense.** For instance, one author says:

“For Jesus the consequence derived from this maxim is absolute defenselessness and absolute rejection of violence. He himself offers no resistance at his arrest, and he also forbids the same to his disciples. With the gnome of v. 52b that he offers as a justification, his behavior becomes a general rule for Christians. Verse 52 reminds the readers of the fifth antithesis of the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not resist the evildoer” (5:39). With his own behavior Jesus illustrates what that means—radical, uncompromising pacifism that has no room even for self-defense.”<sup>69</sup>

Is this true? **It is not.** The following is from my book *The Stipulations of the Covenant*; this paragraph summarizes over 30 pages of carefully developed argument on Matthew 5:38-48. Studying those pages will clarify the historic conundrum around Christianity and pacifism.

“Pacifism Revisited: Earlier we introduced the subject of pacifism noting the influence it had in Christianity and observing that this influence has been rooted in the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount especially Matthew 5:38 through 5:48. Now that we’ve looked carefully at these verses we asked again, do they teach pacifism? The answer is yes and no. **Yes, when living in an unjust world under the heel of a tyrant, and no when living in a world where justice is a reasonable hope.** This study explains why pacifism, although the way of the early church, fell out of favor early in the 4th century. At that point, with the

<sup>68</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 672.

<sup>69</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 419.

legalization of Christianity, **justice became possible**. In keeping with the just nature of God, believers then began to pursue it. They were no longer endangered by a tyrant who would strike them, steal from them, imprison them and defraud them if they sought justice. Under these prior circumstances, they understood that Jesus was telling them to keep a low profile and endure the injustice, to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves. **But when justice became possible**, the abuse of injustice was no longer endured. At that point, as Church history shows us, pacifism was not commonly practiced. And yet, from time to time pacifism has returned, and should return, to the Christian community **to the degree necessary to endure the evil State**—in keeping with the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>70</sup>

In other words, if you can pursue justice, do so for that is the very nature of God. But if justice is not possible, bide you time and endure the tyranny of the tyrant—until justice can again be pursued.

Our passage here concerning the arrest of Jesus is a **unique circumstance**. Jesus did not come to fight but to die. *“So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”*” (John 18:11, ESV). These instructions are for that event, they do not address other problems of self-defense or attack by foreign enemies. However, much of the Old Testament does address these topics—pacifism is found in none of them.

These advocates of pacifism universally avoid this incident in Jesus’ life:

*“And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.”* (John 2:15, ESV)

Is this the behavior of a pacifist? Or the behavior of the Lord of the Temple seeking justice?

Avoiding material in the Old Testament and incidents like this in the New Testament that do not fit preconceived opinion does not engender confidence in the pacifists’ conclusions.

The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:38-48, gives us greater detail on this subject. It is a darling of the pacifists; but properly understood, it provides them no help at all. It would be helpful to study the Sermon on the Mount carefully.

***Matthew 26:53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?***

***my Father....*** “Jesus still calls “*my Father*” the God who called him to violent death in Gethsemane’s just-completed prayers.... **He still believes in a good God, even if everything externally is not looking too good.**”<sup>71</sup> There is a lesson here for us as well.

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<sup>70</sup> Bass, Ralph E. Jr., *The Stipulations of the Covenant*, Greenville, SC: Living Hope Press, 209.

<sup>71</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 674.

**twelve legions of angels....** Symbolically perhaps, one legion for each of the tribes of Israel or for each of the disciples of Jesus.

“If resistance were the right thing, Jesus had no need of swords or human assistance....”<sup>72</sup> “Jesus says, in effect, “I do not need twelve apostles defending me when I have twelve angel-legions....”<sup>73</sup>

This was “...an enormous number (a legion of Roman troops amounted to about six thousand; thus here more than 72,000 angels!)....”<sup>74</sup> In addition, each legion would have had 120 cavalry plus local auxiliaries. It is said that Rome’s standing army consisted of no more than 25 legions. “Caesar Augustus’s entire standing army had only 25 legions.”<sup>75</sup> Jesus is talking about a number roughly equal to half the standing army of the whole Roman empire. The number of men that have come to arrest Jesus was probably less than 100.

Angles play a God directed role in the affairs of this world.

*“The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,”* (Matthew 13:41, ESV)

Although this help was available, he refused to use it.

*“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”* (John 10:18, ESV)

Instead, this is one role that Jesus must face alone.

**Matthew 26:54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”**

“How could the Scriptures be fulfilled if I do not obey the will of my Father and summon armies of angels?”

**That it must be so?** This was divine necessity. This statement “...refers to the plan of God without referring to a particular passage of Scripture. Thus the meaning is: if Jesus does not obey the will of God and if he brings about a divine demonstration of power, the Scriptures that bear witness to God’s plan cannot be fulfilled.”<sup>76</sup>

*“By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?”* (Isaiah 53:8, ESV)

This *must be so*.

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<sup>72</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). Matthew 14–28 (Vol. 33B, p. 789). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>73</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 674.

<sup>74</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). Matthew 14–28 (Vol. 33B, p. 789). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>75</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 674.

<sup>76</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 421.

**Matthew 26:55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.**

“So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.” (John 18:12, ESV)

**At that hour Jesus said....** Not at that very second, but at some point, in the larger context of the arrest.

**Have you come out as against a robber,<sup>77</sup> with swords and clubs to capture me?** Jesus was not a Zealot, terrorist or bandit. He could have been arrested most any day of the week with no resistance at all.

Recently, Jesus charged that these very men had made his Temple a den of robbers. Soon the crowd will seek to save the life of a robber, *Barabbas*, over that of Jesus. And now, at his arrest, they treat Jesus as a robber or Jewish terrorist. He will be crucified between two robbers (insurrectionists).

“He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:13, ESV)

“They cried out again, “Not this man, but *Barabbas*!” Now *Barabbas* was a robber.” (John 18:40, ESV)

“And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.” (Mark 15:27, ESV)

Jesus was crucified with robbers, probably revolutionaries, because he was himself identified as one.

“The question in the NIV, “Am I leading a rebellion ...?” (26:55), clearly repudiates Jesus of any intention of being a militaristic insurrectionist.”<sup>78</sup> “But the temple authorities cover their own rebellion against God’s will by accusing Jesus of exactly what he has rejected, and this will be the charge that they lodge against him when they take him to Pilate.”<sup>79</sup>

**Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.** He was available for arrest day after day.

**Matthew 26:56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures [writings] of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.**

**all this....** We first read this at the beginning of Jesus’ life and now again at the end of his life.

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<sup>77</sup> *robber* ληστής, οὔ, “...① robber, highwayman, bandit ② revolutionary, insurrectionist, guerrilla....” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 594.

<sup>78</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 860.

<sup>79</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 860.

*“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.” (Matthew 1:22, ESV)*

“...all the events connected with Jesus’ arrest—took place so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. The formulation corresponds literally to the introduction to the first fulfillment quotation in 1:22 and forms with that text a frame around the entire story of Jesus that from the beginning to the end is to be understood as the fulfillment of the Scriptures.”<sup>80</sup>

“What happens does so not only in fulfillment of the plan devised by the chief priests and elders but, more importantly, in fulfillment of the scriptures....”<sup>81</sup>

***Then all the disciples left him and fled.*** “Peter’s impetuosity and desire to retaliate with force by wielding the sword make the disciples vulnerable to arrest along with Jesus, so they all run away. .... Once again at Jesus’ greatest time of personal need for human support, his closest followers desert him. He faces the cross alone.”<sup>82</sup>

*“Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” (Matthew 26:31, ESV)*

*“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.” (Zechariah 13:7, ESV)*

*“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3, ESV)*

“Looking back over the entire story of Jesus’ arrest, we can summarize several important features of the narrative. ... From the beginning to the end Jesus is the master of the event. He reacts in a sovereign manner to Judas (v. 50a), to the overzealous disciple (vv. 52–54), and to the mass of armed men who arrest him (v. 55). He emphasizes his divine power, although of his own free will in obedience to his Father he does not demonstrate it (v. 53).”<sup>83</sup>

### ***Jesus before the Sanhedrin, I (26:57–68)***

[Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54, 63–65; John 18:12–14, 19–24]

Those that seek the “historicity of the life of Jesus” ask how Matthew and the other gospel writers came to know the events that these later reported in their stories? They weren’t there. The answer is varied. Besides Peter, who was listening (Matthew 26:58), “Sources for the trial narrative may derive from Joseph of Arimathea (Mk 15:43), from connections within the high priest’s household (Jn 18:15–16), others who later became disciples or sympathizers (Jn 19:39; cf. perhaps Acts 6:7), or Jesus himself (cf.

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<sup>80</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 421.

<sup>81</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, p. 790). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>82</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 860–861.

<sup>83</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 421–422.

Acts 1:3)...<sup>84</sup> From these and other sources, the gospel writers, led by the Holy Spirit, would have pieced together the story.

***Matthew 26:57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.***

“Though this incident has traditionally been called “The *Trial* of the Sanhedrin,” most modern scholars doubt that it was a formal trial at all. It was, rather, “a Grand Jury proceeding” ... “a preliminary hearing” ... or even simply “a strategy session....”<sup>85</sup>

Before he appears before Caiaphas he appears before his father-in-law, Annas.

*“First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.”...“The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.” (John 18:13, 19, ESV)*

Annas was disposed by the Romans. However, most Jews still considered him the legitimate high priest. Not much could be done without his approval. He appears to have approved and sent him on to his son-in-law Caiaphas to “legally” move the process along.

*“Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” (John 18:24, ESV)*

***Caiaphas....*** “This will reflect the fact that it was Caiaphas who was the instigator of Jesus’ arrest. He was the leading Jew in cooperating with the Romans, and there is no reasonable doubt that he was anxious to ensure that Roman rule continued untroubled so that his own position would remain secure.”<sup>86</sup>

*“It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.” (John 18:14, ESV)*

Caiaphas had no idea how prophetic his statement was.

However, this meeting was irregular. “Trials in capital matters could take place only during daylight hours (Sanh. 4:1) and might not be held on the eves of festivals or sabbaths (*ibid.*). The Sanhedrin seems to have met somewhere in the temple area, so this gathering in the high priest’s house would have been an informal assembly.”<sup>87</sup>

“The legal restrictions that forbade trials at night were summarily set aside in the case of Jesus. ... The leaders who deliberately plotted the murder of Jesus were not men to balk at a technicality of legal procedure when they finally had their victim in their grasp.”<sup>88</sup> So, a preliminary gathering took place at night and a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin took place “legally” in the early morning.

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<sup>84</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 645.

<sup>85</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 678.

<sup>86</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 680). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>87</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 680). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>88</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (p. 1056). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

“The trial is full of anomalies: held at night, on the eve of a holy day, minimal attendance of members of the council, irregular location, without proper conditions pertaining to a capital case, no witnesses for the accused, and so forth.”<sup>89</sup> “Although an attempt was made at having a trial of sorts (cf. vv 59–62), by Mishnaic standards the trial was a sham.”<sup>90</sup>

“When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.” (Matthew 27:1, ESV)

**gathered (together)....** This reminds us of Psalm 2.

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,” (Psalm 2:2, ESV)

**Matthew 26:58 And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.**

(Mark 14:53 f.; Luke 22:54; John 18:15, 24.)

“There had evidently been no pursuit of the disciples. Peter was thus able to follow the posse that had taken Jesus.”<sup>91</sup>

“Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.” (John 18:15–16, ESV)

John is probably the one called “another disciple.”

**following him at a distance....**

“My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off.” (Psalm 38:11, ESV)

“It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ’s disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter’s denying him; for to follow him afar off, is by little and little to go back from him.”<sup>92</sup>

**he sat with the guards....** “Peter is brave. But bravery without prayer (the Gethsemane deficit) fails in critical situations. Peter is sitting “with” the guards (the more intimate “with,” *meta* ... the very same “with” requested of Peter in vain by Jesus

<sup>89</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 797.

<sup>90</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 797.

<sup>91</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 680). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>92</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1760.



in Gethsemane, vv. 38, 40). If we will not pray with Jesus, we will sit with his enemies.<sup>93</sup>

**to see the end....** It appears that Peter has now accepted the comments of Jesus that he would die. “‘To see the end’ marks an intention to see the action through to the execution of Jesus.”<sup>94</sup> Although circumstances intervene and he in fact does not stay “to see the end.”

Matthew will pick up his story of Peter again in 26:69.

**Matthew 26:59 Now the chief priests [the elders] and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,**

**the chief priests [the elders] and the whole council....** Or as one commentary puts it, the “Episcopalians, Baptists, and Presbyterians....”<sup>95</sup> This is to remind us that religious people that plotted Jesus’ death—people like us.

**the whole council....** The **whole** would suggest “representatives of all the constituent parts of the Sanhedrin....”<sup>96</sup> However, a quorum would have been found. “...a third of the membership was recognized as the quorum for a capital case (*m.Sanh.* 1:1).”<sup>97</sup> It is they who are “the whole council.”

There were 71 members of the Sanhedrin. Not every member of the council would have been located at this early hour. Some in fact would have been intentionally not notified (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea for instance) so that they would not interfere with their determined plan to “put him to death.”

From a passage in Acts 6, there is reason to believe that at this time there may have been many priests who, although not yet followers of Jesus, nevertheless, like Nicodemus and Joseph, were sympathetic to his teachings. If so, effort would have been made to avoid notifying them of this meeting.

*“And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7, ESV)*

These would later give the gospel writers details on how these proceedings progressed.

**seeking false testimony....** “The Jewish authorities had perhaps begun to gather witnesses and formulate a case against Jesus immediately after Judas’ offer to betray Jesus into their hands. However, they were not prepared for the suddenness with

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<sup>93</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 680.

<sup>94</sup> Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1124). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

<sup>95</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 681.

<sup>96</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 1022.

<sup>97</sup> France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1022). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

which the “trial” came upon them, and so they were still interviewing witnesses and trying to build their case against him. Their goal was not justice but the end of Jesus.”<sup>98</sup>

*“Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.” (Psalm 27:12, ESV)*

*“For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues. They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause.” (Psalm 109:2–3, ESV)*

***that they might put him to death....*** “They were not interested in the facts; they were interested in a condemnation. So they looked for the kind of testimony that would enable them *to put him to death.*”<sup>99</sup>

The verdict had been predetermined.

*“and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.” (Matthew 26:4, ESV)*

***Matthew 26:60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward***

“What they failed to find was not false witnesses, of which there were “many,” but two witnesses whose testimony, whether strictly true or not, could at least be admitted as valid because they agreed.”<sup>100</sup>

***At last two came forward....*** “Presumably part of the trouble at least lay in getting the agreement among the false witnesses that would stand up in a court of law (two witnesses at least were required, and it is specifically said that no one is to be executed on the testimony of one witness....”<sup>101</sup>

*“On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.” (Deuteronomy 17:6, ESV)*

***Matthew 26:61 and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’ ”***

This statement is not found in any of the gospels although something like it is found in John 2:19 and Mark 14.

*“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ ” (Mark 14:58, ESV)*

*“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you*

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<sup>98</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). Matthew 14–28 (Vol. 33B, p. 798). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>99</sup> Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 681). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>100</sup> France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1022). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>101</sup> Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 682). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

*raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”*  
(John 2:19–21, ESV)

“John 2:19 does indeed record Jesus as speaking of the restoration of “this temple” in three days with reference, John says, to his own body (John 2:21), and since that prediction is set in the context of Jesus’ demonstration against the temple régime it is not surprising that it was taken literally....”<sup>102</sup>

When this record by John is added to what Jesus had said about the coming destruction of the Temple in chapter 23 and 24, it is no wonder that they were confident that they had a solid charge against him. “Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple but not *his* destruction of it....”<sup>103</sup> It was the Romans who were to destroy it.

*“See, your house is left to you desolate.” .... “But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”*” (Matthew 23:38; 24:2, ESV)

Within a few hours the crowds will be repeating it.

*“and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”*” (Matthew 27:40, ESV)

Although inaccurately quoted, it continued to be a major charge against Jesus for years to come.

*“for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”*” (Acts 6:14, ESV)

***and to rebuild it in three days....*** “Nowhere, however, is there a reference to Jesus building the temple again in three days....”<sup>104</sup>

*“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” .... But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”* (John 2:19–21, ESV)

“The accusation thus mixes together two quite separate matters, the destruction of the temple and the resurrection of Jesus. .... No doubt the complexity of the tradition is caused by this double meaning of “temple” and Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple and of his own death and resurrection after three days.”<sup>105</sup>

“To speak of destroying the temple or even of the temple being destroyed would definitely have been regarded as an extremely serious, indeed a treasonous, offense, one deserving of capital punishment....”<sup>106</sup> However, notwithstanding their best efforts,

<sup>102</sup> France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1023). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>103</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 682.

<sup>104</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 798.

<sup>105</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 798–799.

<sup>106</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 799.

they were not able to parley these teachings by Jesus into a capital crime and had to go on to new accusations.

**A Concluding Thought:** “The destruction of the Jewish temple in AD 70, and so the end of Israel’s temple history, was proof to Matthew that Jesus’ temple prediction *did* come true. God destroyed (or allowed the destruction of) *one* temple in order, through the construction of *another*, to give the earth a universal Messiah (cf. 21:41; 22:7; 27:51–53; Senior, 94) and an international worship. Ever since Jesus there is no need for another temple...). Christians eager for a third temple in Jerusalem in order to fulfill prophecy undermine the finality of Jesus.”<sup>107</sup> This rebuilding the Temple theology embraces what Jesus is here denying suggesting that his presence is for the purpose of setting up a zealot like material kingdom. This future Temple undermines the redemption of Christ, his once for all sacrifice, for it in fact brings back animal sacrifice to this new Temple. Scofield’s response to this rebuilt Temple theology which he believes is taught in Ezekiel, and which he sees in our future is: “Doubtless these offerings will be memorial....”<sup>108</sup> But the author of Hebrews sees no memorial offerings in our future but only the “once for all” offering of Jesus.

*“for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”* (Hebrews 9:26, ESV)

In the light of this *once for all* redemption, one wonders how people can embrace this *rebuilding the Temple* theology as “Christian?” And yet, most of the Christian world does! I do not believe that these Dispensational theologians are trustworthy, skillful exegetes. This is a broad-based statement addressing one element in Dispensationalism; more complete studies on the subject can be found in these books:

John H. Gerstner, Wrongly Dividing the Word of God and A Primer on Dispensationalism; Philip Mauro, The Gospel of the Kingdom and The Hope of Israel; Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church; William E. Cox, An Examination of Dispensationalism; Clarence B. Bass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalism; Keith A. Mathison, Dispensationalism - Rightly Dividing the People of God; Vern S. Poythress, Understanding Dispensationalists; and O. Palmer Robertson, The Israel of God.

***Matthew 26:62 And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”***

***stood up....*** Caiaphas is getting nervous; at this rate Jesus is going to walk, they have nothing against him. His plans are not going well.

***Matthew 26:63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”***

***Jesus remained silent....*** “Of course, Jesus could have exposed the totally unwarranted character of the accusation. He could have shown that it was both a

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Senior D. P. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (1985)

<sup>107</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 683.

<sup>108</sup> C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York; London; Toronto; Melbourne; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1917), 890.

misinterpretation and a distortion of what he had said. But he knows very well that the purpose of this trial is not to vindicate the right, but rather to cause the wrong to triumph. So he remains silent.”<sup>109</sup>

*“But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth. I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes.”* (Psalm 38:13–14, ESV)

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7, ESV)

***I adjure you***<sup>110</sup>.... “He stands up to signal that he is taking personal control of the investigation, and demands a response under oath, not now to the temple charge alone but to an even more fundamental question about the nature of Jesus’ claim.”<sup>111</sup>

“The outcome is now inevitable. If Jesus refuses to answer, he breaks a legally imposed oath.”<sup>112</sup> From this passage and others, we can see that Jesus recognized a “legal” oath from a misuse of an oath to substantiate a statement in argument. The misuse of oaths he rejected (5:33-37) while not rejecting legal oaths.

***tell us if you are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of God....*** “When it seemed as if the trial would turn out to be a failure, Caiaphas all of a sudden leaps to the rescue by as it were waiving all secondary considerations and asking the main question, the one which had been on the minds of the leaders for a long time.”<sup>113</sup>

Notice that Jesus is not being asked if he made comments about destroying and rebuilding the Temple. Even if he did, it is not certain that this would be viewed by the Jews, let alone the Romans, as a capital crime. At worst he could be regarded as a lunatic. No, what Caiaphas wants is evidence that would allow him to put Jesus to death for blasphemy. Equating himself with God would do it.

The Jews were divided and not at all certain what or who the Messiah was to be. But here Caiaphas takes the high view that the Messiah is a divine creature—the Son of God. It is only on this basis that he can obtain a death sentence based on blasphemy. And the high view is exactly what Scripture teaches.

*“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed [Messiah], saying,”* (Psalm 2:2, ESV)

*“I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”* (Psalm 2:7, ESV)

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<sup>109</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Vol. 9, p. 931). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>110</sup> *I adjure* ἐξορκίζω you “To exact an oath, put under an oath, adjure....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

<sup>111</sup> France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1024). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>112</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 554). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>113</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Vol. 9, p. 931). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

“Jesus is called “Christ” (or “Messiah”) throughout Matthew (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 11:2; 16:16, [21]). At both the baptism and the Transfiguration (3:17; 17:5) God the Father pronounced Jesus his priceless Son; in the Temptations the devil tried to make Jesus prove that he was the Son of God (4:3, 6:13); demoniacs accosted him as Son (8:29); disciples and Peter confessed him Son (14:33; 16:16); mockers at the cross scoffed at this Son (27:40); and finally soldiers at his death affirmed that he was Son (27:54).”<sup>114</sup>

“He is the Messiah—but this was the priest’s choice of wording rather than his.... Now that there remains no need to continue the messianic secret, Jesus reveals publicly that he is God’s Son.... But Jesus must define that sonship, not allow the leaders’ cultural preconceptions to define it for him.... Thus by responding in scriptural allusions (26:64), Jesus defines his mission in terms his interrogators cannot misapprehend: he is both *Son of Man* (compare Dan 7:13–14; Mt 24:30) and Lord (Ps 110:1; Mt 22:44.... Jesus was greater than merely a messiah, a son of David (22:44).”<sup>115</sup>

**Matthew 26:64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

**You have said so....** “That is your way of putting it....”<sup>116</sup> Jesus spoke the same way to Judas.

*“Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.” (Matthew 26:25, ESV)*

And also to Pilate....

*“Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” (Matthew 27:11, ESV)*

Yet, “the expression is “affirmative in content, and reluctant or circumlocutory in formulation”....”<sup>117</sup> Affirmative, yes, and this is exactly how Caiaphas, Judas and Pilate understood it. However, there is an element of equivocation. Why? “If Jesus had answered the High Priest with an unambiguous “*I am*” ... the misunderstanding might have remained: “Christ = Warrior,” and that is the worst possible definition of Jesus.”<sup>118</sup>

“The element of reluctance ... is because what the High Priest understands by the words he has used (and particularly the political implications he can and will draw from them) is far from Jesus’ conception of his Messianic role.”<sup>119</sup> This is *the point* of his

<sup>114</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 684.

<sup>115</sup> Keener, C. S. (1997). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, Mt 26:62). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (The Bible Speaks Today; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 283.

<sup>117</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; vol. 8; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8555.

<sup>118</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 686.

<sup>119</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 1; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 385.

equivocation; “Jesus is not to be primarily considered a political Messiah....”<sup>120</sup> It is in this sense and only in this sense that he is not the Messiah and Son of God—at least, not yet. That will come, but not yet.

Jesus is not yet taking up the role of the warrior King and Messiah of Revelation 19.

*“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”* (Revelation 19:11–16, ESV)

This scene in Revelation is in Jesus’ future. It is not yet how Jesus would present himself before the crucifixion. Instead, he is here the Messiah and Son of God in this sense....

**But**<sup>121</sup>.... or “however” or “more than that” or “furthermore”. “[but], rather than being adversative in force, involves clarification of the meaning of Messiah ... hence “furthermore” ....”<sup>122</sup>

Jesus will now go beyond the allusion to deity with the phrase “I am.” He will provide more incriminating evidence to the charge.

**I tell you...** “So, while not refusing the titles offered, Jesus goes on to qualify their meaning: *But I tell you* ... And this qualification lifts the whole idea of Messiahship out of the sphere of Jewish earthly politics....”<sup>123</sup>

**from now on** or **hereafter** or **from this point...** (ἀπ’ ἄρτι<sup>124</sup>). I like the translation “from this point.” Up to this point, what follows was not evident in Jesus life. From now on or

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<sup>120</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; vol. 8; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8555.

<sup>121</sup> *but* πλήν “More than, over and above; hence, besides, except, but, however, only that.” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

<sup>122</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, p. 800). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>123</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 1; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 385.

<sup>124</sup> Matthew 23:39 For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

Matthew 26:29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Matthew 26:64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

John 1:51 And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

John 13:19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

John 14:7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

from this point on, it will be. “Jesus is now going to explain his messianic mission *in his own preferred terms*. He is not disagreeing with what the high priest has said, but is reformulating it in a way which goes far beyond it.”<sup>125</sup>

“For I tell you, you will not see me again [from now on], until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:39, ESV)

In Matthew 23:39 Jesus had used this same phrase to address a future “coming.” The context of Matthew 23:39 is important. It is at this point that he begins his Olivet Discourse which will soon include Jesus’ comment:

“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30, ESV)

Compare that with Jesus’ current statement:

“Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”” (Matthew 26:64, ESV)

That subject, the coming of the Son of Man in power and on the clouds of heaven, is now before us again. Indeed, it has only been two days since Jesus uttered Matthew 24:30.

***you will see... coming on the clouds of heaven....*** When will they see this? This phrase has caused a great deal of confusion and frustration to the commentaries. As one commentator says “...while within a few days Jesus would have risen from the dead and thus have entered into his glory, neither Caiaphas nor any of his other hearers would at that time see Jesus in glory and coming on the clouds of heaven.”<sup>126</sup>

Another says, “from now on,” it is not easy to understand how it can be applied to what they (Jesus addresses those present...) “will see.”<sup>127</sup>

Another speaks of “a coming in the *figurative* sense of the word....”<sup>128</sup>

The NT scholar John Nolland says, “It must, therefore, refer to the same event: the climax of history in the eschatological coming of the Son of Man to gather in the elect.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, at the end of time, and this in fact is the most common understanding of this verse.

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Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

<sup>125</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 1026.

<sup>126</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 684). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>127</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, p. 800). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>128</sup> Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. William Stewart; trans. Peter Christie; vol. 2; Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 234.

<sup>129</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 1131.



Ulrich Luz comes close but falls short saying, “26:64 is probably also “not only a statement of exaltation but at the same time a judgment of the accused against his accusers.””<sup>130</sup> But he also places the judgment at the end of time.

Donald Hagner does not believe it addresses the end of time so he concludes it addresses the immediate future “It can hardly be stretched, however, to mean the distant future (as the NIV seems to take it). It is thus very possible to take it as referring to the events attending the crucifixion and the resurrection and its aftermath....”<sup>131</sup>

So, the general conclusion is that it addresses the immediate resurrection and glorification of Jesus *or* it addresses the distant future when he comes on the last day.

But they all miss an important point. It has only been hours since Jesus discussed this in the Olivet Discourse, and in time, John will write about Jesus coming with clouds and about what their eyes will see. In fact, Jesus was being quite specific. Within forty years, Jesus would come again in judgment against Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. And, they that pierced him would see—and wail.

*“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth [land] will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”* (Revelation 1:7, ESV)

Jesus is prophesying his judgment-coming in A.D. 70. Some of these in the Sanhedrin would see these things for some of these men would still be alive when it happened; “it is something which “you” (the current Sanhedrin members) “will see,””<sup>132</sup> says R.T. France.

As indicated, this is not the first time that Jesus has said this. He said it two days earlier in the Olivet Discourse where he predicted the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.

*“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”* (Matthew 24:30, ESV)

This is actually a reoccurring theme in Jesus’ teaching.

*“For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”* (Matthew 16:27–28, ESV)

***the Son of Man seated at the right hand of [the] Power coming on the clouds of heaven....*** Caiaphas asked Jesus if he is ***the Christ, the Son of God***. Jesus says yes but goes beyond this and identifies himself as ***“Son of Man”*** the one who will be

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<sup>130</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 430.

NIV The New International Version (1978)

<sup>131</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 800.

<sup>132</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 1028.

**“seated at the right hand of [the] Power.”** Caiaphas cannot miss the point. The allusions come from Daniel 7 and Psalm 110.

*“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13–14, ESV)*

*“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!” (Psalm 110:1–2, ESV)*

**[the] Power....** “This was the kind of reverent periphrasis<sup>133</sup> that was often used in order to avoid pronouncing the divine name, and it would thus be readily recognized by his hearers as meaning God. Jesus is clearly claiming a relationship to God such as is shared by no other.”<sup>134</sup>

There can now be no ambiguity in all this—Jesus is claiming deity; he will die for making this claim.

**coming on the clouds....** This phrase has a specific history and meaning in Scripture. It refers to a judgment coming by God. There have been various judgment comings by God in Scripture to both Israel and the surrounding nations.

*Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;  
The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,  
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. (Isaiah 19:1, NASB95)*

*“At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A hot wind from the bare heights in the desert toward the daughter of my people, not to winnow or cleanse, a wind too full for this comes for me. Now it is I who speak in judgment upon them.”  
Behold, he comes up like clouds; his chariots like the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles— woe to us, for we are ruined!” (Jeremiah 4:11–13, ESV)*

*“For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword shall come upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Cush, when the slain fall in Egypt, and her wealth is carried away, and her foundations are torn down.” (Ezekiel 30:3–4, ESV)*

*“Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.” (Joel 2:1–2, ESV)*

<sup>133</sup> “Periphrasis originates from the Greek word *periphrazein*, which means “talking around.” It is a stylistic device that can be defined as the use of excessive and longer words to convey a meaning which could have been conveyed with a shorter expression, or in a few words. It is an indirect or roundabout way of writing about something.” <https://literarydevices.net/periphrasis/>

<sup>134</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 685). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

*“The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.” (Zephaniah 1:14–16, ESV)*

*Then the earth shook and quaked;  
And the foundations of the mountains were trembling  
And were shaken, because He was angry.  
8 Smoke went up out of His nostrils,  
And fire from His mouth devoured;  
Coals were kindled by it.  
9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down  
With thick darkness under His feet.  
10 He rode upon a cherub and flew;  
And He sped upon the wings of the wind.  
11 He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,  
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.  
12 From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,  
Hailstones and coals of fire.  
13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,  
And the Most High uttered His voice,  
Hailstones and coals of fire.  
14 He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,  
And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.  
15 Then the channels of water appeared,  
And the foundations of the world were laid bare  
At Your rebuke, O LORD,  
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. (Psalm 18:7–15, NASB95)*

*Knowing these verses, if you were a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jew and heard Jesus talking about “coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64, ESV), what would you think he was talking about?*

Jesus is making two unmistakable points here. They would see and understand that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the one seated at the right hand of Power. In addition, they would be the object of this judgment-coming by this Holy One, coming on the clouds of heaven. **The one being judged is prophesying their coming judgment.**



“...a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared [24:30]; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw [24:30] it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals [signs] [24:30]; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds [26:64], and surrounding the cities.”<sup>135</sup>

This is a 2,000-year-old quote by Josephus, *who was not a Christian*, as to what he heard from others at this time. What does it mean?

## Final Thoughts

I'd like to conclude this verse with quotes from orthodox believers from ancient times to the present who understand this passage to make this same point.<sup>136</sup>

**Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History** (4<sup>th</sup> century AD) quotes James (AD62), Jesus' half-brother, saying: "Why do ye ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sitteth in heaven at the right hand of the great Power and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven." [Quoted from Matthew 26:64]

**John Gill** (1809) says, "...and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ... "ye shall see", as is expressed by Christ, in Mt 26:64. Where the high priest, chief priests, Scribes, and elders, and the whole Sanhedrin of the Jews are spoken to: and as the same persons, namely, the Jews, are meant here as there; so the same coming of the son of man is intended; not his coming at the last day to judgment; though that will be in the clouds of heaven, and with great power and glory; but his coming to bring on, and give the finishing stroke to the destruction of that people...."

**Hank Hanegraaff** "... when He was before Caiaphas the High Priest, He said to Caiaphas, 'you will see the Son of Man coming on clouds and seated at the right hand

<sup>135</sup> Flavius Josephus, The Works of Josephus (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Wars, 6:5:3.

<sup>136</sup> [https://www.preteristarchive.com/BibleStudies/Bible\\_NT/Matthew/matthew\\_26-64.html](https://www.preteristarchive.com/BibleStudies/Bible_NT/Matthew/matthew_26-64.html)

of the Mighty One' Mt 26:64. In other words, He said to him, 'you will see my vindication and exaltation. And, indeed, the very court that condemned Him to death saw His vindication and exaltation when Jerusalem was destroyed. The utter destruction of Jerusalem takes places and vindicates what Jesus Christ has said." (Voice of Reason)

**Kenneth Gentry** "The final collapse of Jerusalem and the Temple. Through these events the Jews were to "see" the Son of Man in His judgment-coming in terrifying cloud-glory: clouds are symbols of divine majesty often entailing stormy destruction. The members of the Sanhedrin and others would experience such in their lifetimes (Matt. 26:64; Mark 9:1; cf. Rev 1:7 with Rev 1:1,3)." (*ibid.* 348)

**J. Marcellus Kik** (1971) "But of special importance for the right understanding of it is Matt. 26:64, where Jesus says to the high priest, 'But I say unto you, from henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' There the Lord comes upon the clouds to the judgment of Jerusalem, as a manifest proof that we are not to think merely of His coming at the last day...." (*An Eschatology of Victory*, 1971, p. 39)

**Milton Terry** "The mourning of all the tribes of the land is the universal wail and lamentation of Judaism over its national overthrow. In the fall of their city and Temple the priests, scribes, and elders saw "the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power" (Matt. 26:64), and thus it was made manifest to all who read the prophecy aright that "Jesus the Galilean" has conquered. .... That is, the coming of the kingdom of the Son of man is coincident with the overthrow of Judaism and its temple and follows immediately in those very days. (*Biblical Apocalypitics*, pp. 245)

As you will have noticed from earlier quotes, this explanation of Matthew 26:64 is not the universal opinion of the Church. However, it is an ancient and not uncommon one either. "For those unfamiliar with the preterist perspective, it is the ancient view that many of the eschatological passages of the New Testament were fulfilled (completely) in the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70. This view may sound novel, but in reality there have been orthodox adherents to it throughout church history (e.g., Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, John Lightfoot, John Owen, Milton Terry, Jay Adams). This interpretation does not deny the Final Coming of Christ; it merely finds that not all "coming" passages refer to that event."<sup>137</sup>

Also, "In this camp you will find Jay E. Adams, R. C. Sproul, Kenneth L. Gentry, Greg L. Bahnsen, Gary DeMar, J. Marcellus Kik, R. T. France, Morris Ashcraft, Philip Carrington, C. Vanderwall, David Chilton, David S. Clark, J. Stuart Russell, Phillip S. Desprez, Moses Stuart and Milton Terry."<sup>138</sup>

Having said all this, the fact of the matter is that Preterism, although embraced by many respected scholars, is, nevertheless, in a distinct minority in the opinion of most of the scholars of the Church.

**Matthew 26:65** *Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.*

<sup>137</sup> [https://www.preteristarchive.com/matthew\\_26-64/](https://www.preteristarchive.com/matthew_26-64/)

<sup>138</sup> Ralph E. Bass, *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation* (Greenville, SC: Living Hope Press, 2004), 13.

“But when Jesus adds to his answer the quoted material from Dan 7:13 and the allusion to Ps 110:2, **identifying himself as that triumphant figure**—and thus more than the Messiah as **a merely human agent**—as the one who is “**given dominion and glory and kingship**” whom all will serve and whose kingdom will see no end (Dan 7:13–14), the one who sits at the right hand of God (Ps 110:1), the high priest reacts to what he regards as horrifying blasphemy (cf. v. 65).<sup>139</sup> He understands perfectly what Jesus is saying.

**the high priest tore his robes....** “Here the hypocrisy of the high priest becomes very clear. He acts as if he is overwhelmed with grief, though he could have shouted for joy.”<sup>140</sup> He could not have been more delighted! He obtained from Jesus’ own mouth what he was not able to obtain from his false witnesses—proof of blasphemy.

**blasphemy**<sup>141</sup> .... ““He has blasphemed,” using the word “blasphemed” in its gravest sense: unjustly **he has claimed for himself the prerogatives that belong to God alone**. .... Not that claiming to be the Messiah would in and by itself constitute blasphemy. But **representing oneself as the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy, that is, as the One who, coming with the clouds of heaven, would receive a. authority to judge all the nations, and b. everlasting dominion** (see Dan. 7:13, 14); such a claim—and **it was indeed this claim that Jesus was making—could be made only by God!** Hence, either a. **Jesus was indeed divine, “the Son of God,” in the fullest sense of that term, or else b. he was guilty of blasphemy, punishable by death (Lev. 24:16).**”<sup>142</sup>

Giving no thought that option “a” is possible, that Jesus is the Son of God in the fullest sense, Caiaphas latches on to “b,” he is guilty of blasphemy and deserves to die.

“John’s Gospel has it right: the *real* problem with Jesus was that he in effect *did* make himself equal with God....”<sup>143</sup>

*“This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”* (John 5:18, ESV)

**What further witnesses do we need?** “With this quick turn Caiaphas gets rid of all the ineffectual testimony and inadvertently reveals the hollowness of his previous demand that Jesus make a reply to these witnesses. As far as Caiaphas was concerned, the case is settled right here and now.”<sup>144</sup>

**Matthew 26:66 What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”**

**He deserves death....** Death was the legal punishment of blasphemy.

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<sup>139</sup> Hagner, D. A. (1998). Matthew 14–28 (Vol. 33B, p. 800). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

<sup>140</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Vol. 9, p. 933). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>141</sup> *blasphemy* βλασφημέω “...to slander, hence to speak lightly or profanely of sacred things....” Thomas, R. L. (1998). New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries: updated edition. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

<sup>142</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Vol. 9, p. 933). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>143</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 691.

<sup>144</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel (p. 1068). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

“Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.” (Leviticus 24:16, ESV)

Mark adds that the vote was unanimous, there were no dissenting voices.

*“You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.”* (Mark 14:64, ESV)

“Thus was the Lord of life condemned to die, that through him there may be *no condemnation to us.*”<sup>145</sup>

**Matthew 26:67** *Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him,*

**they spit in his face....** There was “shame on his face that we might stand unashamed before him.”<sup>146</sup>

**and struck him....** “The mistreatment and mocking of Jesus reflect the hateful animosity of the Jewish leaders toward him.”<sup>147</sup>

*“I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.”* (Isaiah 50:6, ESV)

**Matthew 26:68** *saying, “Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”*

**Prophesy to us, you Christ!** What was this about? “By ridiculing his prophet status (26:68)—challenging him to fulfill a child’s game of guessing—they may imply that they have condemned him as a false prophet according to the rules of Deuteronomy 18:20.... **His very condemnation and likely imminent execution disproved for them his prophecies about the temple and his own imminent enthronement....**”<sup>148</sup>

“Jesus’ weakness in *this* scene could have finally exposed him to the Sanhedrin as indubitably false, for the true Messiah was able to overcome enemies and to possess prophetic discernment.... **“The clearer it is that [Jesus] is defenseless and weak the surer stands the rightness of their judgment over him”....**”<sup>149</sup>

*“Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.”* (Luke 22:63–65, ESV)

<sup>145</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1761.

<sup>146</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 692.

<sup>147</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 802.

<sup>148</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 652–653.

<sup>149</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 692.

“...the reader is left with the irony that the Messiah whose “prophetic” abilities they are mocking **has in fact predicted the very rejection and condemnation that he is now undergoing** (16:21; 20:19).”<sup>150</sup>

*“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”* (Matthew 16:21, ESV)

*“and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”* (Matthew 20:19, ESV)

And Isaiah had long before prophesied this very scene.

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7, ESV)

### **Peter’s Denial of Jesus (26:69–75)**

(Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27)

“No one can read this passage without being struck with the staggering honesty of the New Testament. If ever there was an incident which one might have expected to be hushed up, this was it—and yet here it is told in all its stark shame.”<sup>151</sup>

In these passages are “a contrasting pair of examples on the theme of confession and denial. Jesus’ bold confession before the highest authorities contrasts with Peter’s failure to do the same before their servants.”<sup>152</sup>

“The mockers have denied that Jesus can prophesy. Immediately after their words Matthew records the fulfilment of Jesus’ prophecy that Peter would deny him three times before cockcrow.”<sup>153</sup>

***Matthew 26:69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.”***

Going to Matthew 26:34, we find the background for the story before us.

*“Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”*” (Matthew 26:34, ESV)

In Matthew 26:58, the betrayal has begun and the setting has developed for the story to play out.

<sup>150</sup> France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1030). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>151</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew* (vol. 2; The Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 345.

<sup>152</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 1; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 387.

<sup>153</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 687.



*“And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.” (Matthew 26:58, ESV)*

“Thus Matthew places Peter’s “trial of discipleship” parallel to Jesus’ “trial of messiahship.”<sup>154</sup> A servant girl “looking closely” (Luke 72:56) at Peter who was “warming himself” (Mark 14:66) by a fire identifies him as someone who was with Jesus.

***You also were with Jesus the Galilean....*** “The charge involved the implicit threat that Peter too might be apprehended and suffer the same fate as that of Jesus (which ironically was what Peter had said he was prepared to do; cf. v. 35).<sup>155</sup>

*“Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And so said all the disciples.” (Matthew 26:35, NKJV)*

***Matthew 26:70 But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.”***

“...at the very moment Jesus’ prophetic power was being *taunted* by the Sanhedrin (26:68, “Prophecy to us ...!”), his prophecy was coming *true* in Peter (v. 34, “You will deny me tonight”)<sup>156</sup>

“But Peter was not going to be known as belonging to Jesus, not in that group of hostile Jerusalemites and in the very courtyard of the leader of Jesus’ enemies. *He denied it* and did so publicly, *before them all.*”<sup>157</sup>

*“but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:33, ESV)*

***I do not know what you mean....*** These words “represent the emphatic form standard in Jewish law “for formal, legal denial”....”<sup>158</sup>

***Matthew 26:71 And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”***

***he went out to the entrance....*** This encounter at the fire caused Peter to look for another place to wait, one further from the light. He now moves to the entrance or gateway of the court. “This was clearly the main entrance, and it would have been an elaborate affair (NRSV has “the porch”); certainly it was an area where people might still

<sup>154</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 694.

<sup>155</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 806.

<sup>156</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 694.

<sup>157</sup> Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 688). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>158</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 654.

gather and where Peter would still be able to pick up the gossip as he tried to find out what was happening to Jesus.”<sup>159</sup>

**another servant girl....** “Matthew speaks of “another woman” (*allē*), thus giving the juridically required “two witnesses” (Deut 19:15...). Speaking to the crowd around Peter, she identifies him saying “this man” and notes that he was with Jesus.

**Matthew 26:72 And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the man.”**

**oath**<sup>160</sup>.... “...In the last encounter Peter elusively says, “**I do not know what you mean.**” But now Peter responds decisively using an oath in the exact way forbidden by Jesus (Matthew 5:33-37).

“...Peter tried to secure credence for this denial. He recognized that he would have to offer something stronger than he had offered at the time of the first denial. He swears that he does not even know Jesus and acts as though he really does not know Jesus’ name.”<sup>161</sup>

**“I do not know the man.”** Peter had formerly made his great confession saying,

“Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”” (Matthew 16:16, ESV)

But now, Jesus is no longer the Master and the friend of Peter, he is now simply an anonymous “**the man.**”

**Matthew 26:73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.”**

So now a third time Peter is recognized.

“One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?”” (John 18:26, ESV)

**bystanders....** The word is now plural and masculine “and thus more seriously threatening than the accusations of the women servants.”<sup>162</sup>

**accent....** “That one of those present at Peter’s denial said that his accent proved him to be a disciple of Jesus shows how much Jesus’ ministry had been in Galilee and how relatively few of his disciples were from Judea.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 688). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>160</sup> *Oath ὄρκος* “...to affirm the truth of a statement by calling on a divine being to execute sanctions against a person if the statement in question is not true (in the case of a deity taking an oath, his divine being is regarded as validating the statement)—‘to swear, to make an oath, oath.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>161</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel (pp. 1072–1073). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

<sup>162</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 806.

<sup>163</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 558). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

“During the interval of an hour the news about Peter has been spreading. Now the palace servants and the officers, the men who are standing around the fire with Peter, begin to tell him that he is one of Christ’s disciples, and that his very brogue identifies him as a Galilean.”<sup>164</sup>

**Matthew 26:74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear [an oath], “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed.**

**invoke a curse**<sup>165</sup>.... “Denials with cursing imply not profanity but invoking a curse upon himself if he were lying....”<sup>166</sup>

**on himself**.... These words are *not* in the Greek text and “cannot be defended linguistically. It represents an attempt to soften a statement that was as unacceptable to Matthew’s first readers as to us. The object is euphemistically omitted but implicit because of the context; Peter cursed Jesus as a way of firmly disassociating himself.”<sup>167</sup>

**swear**<sup>168</sup>.... “Here, where the object is not expressed, it means that Peter is cursing someone other than himself, and the most natural sense in this context would be that he now began to curse *Jesus*....”<sup>169</sup>

**And immediately the rooster crowed....**

*“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.””* (Luke 22:61, ESV)

**Matthew 26:75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.**

**wept**<sup>170</sup> **bitterly**<sup>171</sup>.... I think the words convey a little more than “wept bitterly,” something like “wailed.”

It is not improbable that Peter would have been reminded of this Messianic Psalm.

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<sup>164</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. 9, pp. 936–937). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>165</sup> *invoke a curse καταθεματίζω* “...to invoke divine harm if what is said is not true or if one does not carry out what has been promised—‘to curse.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>166</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 655.

<sup>167</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 311.

<sup>168</sup> *swear ὀμνύω* “...to affirm the veracity of one’s statement by invoking a(n) ... invitation of punishment if one is untruthful....” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>169</sup> France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1034). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

<sup>170</sup> *wept κλαίω* “...to weep or wail, with emphasis upon the noise accompanying the weeping—‘to weep, to wail, to lament, weeping, crying.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>171</sup> *bitterly πικρῶς* “...pertaining to feeling mental agony—‘bitterly, with agony.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

*“For it is not an enemy who taunts me— then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me— then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God’s house we walked in the throng.” (Psalm 55:12–14, ESV)*

In the Gethsemane scene, we read that “Peter sleeps despite the warning, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (26:41). There it was stressed that Jesus prayed three times and that Peter slept three times. The fruit of those earlier failures to pray are now the three refusals to acknowledge his Lord.”<sup>172</sup>

“What happened to Peter after that we do not know, for the gospel story draws a kindly veil over the agony of his shame.”<sup>173</sup> Matthew does not mention him again in his gospel.

But the story is not over. Peter’s three denials are soon met with Jesus’ three restorations.

*“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:15–17, ESV)*

Notwithstanding Peter’s shame, “So far from suppressing this story, Peter made it an essential part of his gospel; and did so for the very best of reasons. Every time he told the story, he could say, “**That is the way that this Jesus can forgive. He forgave me when I failed him in his bitterest hour of need. That is what Jesus can do.**”<sup>174</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 310.

<sup>173</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew* (vol. 2; The Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 347.

<sup>174</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew* (vol. 2; The Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 345.

