

Text: Matthew 26:31-35

Title: The Disciples Stumble

Truth: Despite the disciples failure, the Lord carries on with His mission.

Date/Location: November 9, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Bad news keeps coming for the disciples. Someone was about to betray Jesus. He will not share the fruit of the vine with them again until the Kingdom. Now, Jesus makes another difficult announcement.

I. Explanation of the Narrative

A. Jesus prophesies the disciples will respond poorly to His upcoming suffering. They will *stumble* which means they will sin. What they are about to do is displeasing to God.

It happens—necessarily so—“because it is written.” It is in accordance with Scripture, which must be fulfilled. This is part of the Christian doctrine of Scripture, that it is infallible. It cannot fail to accomplish what it is sent forth to do, nor what it says will occur, nor the promises that it makes. What it was given to accomplish refers to its purpose, and its purpose is multi-dimensional.

Thus, Jesus knows it will happen. He knew it better than any human could know it. But if you knew that the Shepherd was a reference to Messiah, then you would know that this was going to occur. The Messiah had not been stricken up to this point in his life in any serious way, but He was not about to be so, and his sheep, even his closest followers, would be scattered.

The Scripture that Jesus refers to is Zechariah 13:7. This verse sits in between other verses that deal with conditions in the millennial kingdom (13:1-5), then about the Shepherd being stricken, and then some text that refers to the Tribulation prior to the kingdom (13:8-9). It seems that the prophecy bounces a little bit back and forth from one time period to another, but prophecies sometimes do that. But we can make sense of at least this much: the Shepherd is stricken, and at a later point the nation of those associated with

Him will be stricken in Tribulation. They will experience something like what He experienced. The disciples were only the first sheep to be scattered as a result of their association with Messiah. The nation too, though rejecting Jesus then through to the Tribulation, has an insoluble connection with the Messiah. The world will persecute them as it did Him.

You might wonder how we can be sure from Zechariah that the Shepherd is Messiah. First, Matthew 26:31 indicates so. Second, a sword awakes against this One, and He is the one who is pierced (Zech. 10:10). The text says that this One is close to the LORD of hosts.

B. Jesus prophesies that He will be raised from the dead and see them in Galilee.

Does Jesus preach the gospel which includes His death, burial, and resurrection? He may not have proclaimed it as openly among the crowds or religious leaders, I think because they largely rejected Him, so He did not privilege them to hear more gospel revelation. Remember, if you reject what God has given you, He is not obligated to give you more. You are without excuse if you reject the knowledge of God that you have been given, (like that which came from nature, Romans 1).

But in fact He did tell us that He would die, be buried, and rise again. Refer to the following repeated announcements:

Matthew 12:40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (implying his death and especially his burial)

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Matthew 17:12 "But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."

Matthew 17:23 "and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Matthew 26:32 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (implying His death).

Matthew 20:18-19 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

Matthew 27:63 "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'"

John 3:14, 8:28, and 12:32-33 Each of these verses speaks of Jesus being "lifted up" which refers to His crucifixion and death.

- C. Peter vows never to stumble, even if it means his own death (v. 33, 35). All the disciples agreed with their spokesman, Peter. His and their desire and zeal are somewhat commendable. His self-confidence is *not* commendable. He needed to temper His zeal with humility, because he is a fallen person, with certain moral weaknesses that are very difficult to overcome.
- D. Jesus reiterates that Peter *will* stumble, despite his energetic claims to the contrary. In fact, He says something more: Peter will not only be made to stumble, but He will *deny* Jesus *three* times. We know how this worked out, so we know that *deny* means something like "disavow any connection with Jesus." How awful.
- E. Peter asserted not only that he would not stumble, or be scattered, but that he would *die* for Jesus. That is bold.

II. Application of the Narrative

- A. We too can stumble, and often do. James 3:2 says we all stumble in many ways, not the least of which is regarding our speech.
 - 1. We stumble when there is **difficulty**. This is the case with Peter. The night has been and will be long; Peter is tired; the news has been bad; a dear friend is then taken into custody; persecution

seems imminent; it is easier on the mind and flesh to cave in and try to distance oneself from Jesus.

2. We stumble after great **spiritual victory**. We can become overzealous and lose sight of humility. In terms of righteous and sinful behavior, we fall as quickly as we rise.
 3. We face great difficulty in our land because so many people are favorable to wicked things, like abortion. The vote that ended yesterday (11/8/2022) reiterates that we have a lot of work to do. It is easy to become upset and angry and blame stupid people for voting, or not enough good people for voting, etc.
 4. But that is stumbling. We must not stumble because there is far more to the situation than just the end result. There are people who have been taught wrongly. There are people who know nothing of God's righteousness. There are people who know but reject it. There is spiritual blindness, hardness of heart, and impending judgment. There are people who voted to extend the reign of terror in the womb, and they will stand before God and give account for their sinful vote.
- B. Thinking about Peter, we can appreciate his desire to serve Christ faithfully. We should want to do that also. But each one of us needs to temper our thinking with humility. We are finite; limited; morally compromised; overly confident of our intellect; too often arrogant; sometimes even thinking we have things better figured out than God does. But we are relatively nothing compared to God.
- C. How we need a shepherd! Do not "scatter" from this shepherd, dear ones. He will guide you, keep you, protect you, nourish you, teach you, and comfort you. But if you stray away, you move yourself out of the fold of his grace and mercy. What ultimate good will you find out there in the wilderness for you?
- D. Back to Peter again, would you even be able to say—overconfidently or not—that you are willing to *die* for Jesus? Would you ever say that? Have you ever thought that?

Thankfully most of us will not have to go to that extent. But if not, then to what extent are we realistically willing to go for our Lord?

Will you scatter when He is blasphemed? Or will you stand up for Jesus when the time comes?

E. Have you ever denied the Lord? Could you do so again? Will you pray that God will protect you from yourself so that you will not deny Him?

Conclusion

The Lord did not stop His mission just because His close friends failed Him. He kept going and completed the work. I am thankful.

MAP

Thoughts Relative to the Election, which is on Everyone's

Mind

Elections are not our hope. Christ is our hope.

We continue to patiently wait for our turn to govern the nations of the world. That turn will come in the Kingdom. We know that it will not come in the present age. We should not be overly distressed about the nations raging against God, nor think by voting or social action that we can change things now to become "Christian." That is a pipe dream because most of our population—may I say the "vast majority"—is not Christian. A good portion of it is plainly pagan.

Christians have another job to do. What is that job? Part of our job as individual citizens is to make the world a more tolerable place to live in by our local acts of benevolence. But the real job we have individually as together as a church is to be ambassadors, witnesses for Christ.