

It seems, as they are leaving the upper room, that this would be a good time to talk about all that the streets of Jerusalem have seen. It would be a great opportunity to wax eloquent concerning “what the streets would say if they could talk.” However, that would not be helpful to understanding Matthew’s intent with the text. Seriously, we could go right over to John’s gospel and we could talk about how they passed where the blind man was healed (John 9) or where the woman taken in adultery (John 8) or...you get the idea. We will refrain here so we can be true to the text. There is much here of which we can and should glean.

## 26:31

**Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.** This is a quotation from Zechariah and we are not surprised at this:

1. Matthew 9:36-37 quotes Zechariah 10:2
2. Matthew 19:26 alludes to Zechariah 8:6
3. Matthew 21:4-5 quotes Zechariah 9:9
4. Matthew 21:1-22 alludes to Zech 4:1-7 & 14:1-5
5. Matthew 24:16-20 refers to Zechariah 14:4-5
6. Matthew 24:30 refers to Zechariah 12:10
7. Matthew 24:31 refers to Zechariah 2:6
8. Matthew 25:31 refers to Zechariah 14:5
9. Matthew 26:30-31 refers to Zechariah 13:7

The shocker here is not that he quotes Zechariah, but that He knew that the Father was doing the smiting. This seems so counter-intuitive because it was Jesus Who was “moved with compassion because He found sheep who had no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). It must be that these are sheep in a different sense as these 11 remaining disciples are not “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5). It seems illogical, therefore, to change the usage of “sheep” in relation to the “shepherd” unless we have contextual reason to do so...such as a quotation from the Old Testament. Let’s take a look at that passage:

*Zechariah 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. 2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. 3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. 4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. 6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. 7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, **saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.** 8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, **saith the LORD**, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

Now then, the underlined portions above show that this is a glance of a day (or a time) when there is forgiveness (verse 1), purgation (verses 2-3), repentance (verse 4-5), and refinement (verses 8-9). What we haven’t talked about is verses 6-7. It is so hard to understand what is going on here. The repenting false prophet of verses 3-5 is somehow saying that He has been wounded in his friend’s home. Furthermore, we don’t know if this is the cause of his repentance, or the result of the repentance, or unrelated to his repentance.

Then...God speaks in verse 7 and continues through verse 9. We don't know if, once again, He speaks in reaction to the repentance and forgiveness taking place in this day or if his actions of verses 7-9 are related to this "great day" at all—particularly since "the day" is not mentioned after verse 4.

Thirdly, there is a long-standing habit of seeing Jesus speaking in verse 6 as a forecast of being crucified because of the actions of the friend, but then what do we do about His denying to be a prophet (verse 5) or his involvement in the corrupt ministry of the prophet (verse 4)?

What if, however, in the big picture, Christ is identified with the repentant prophet—becoming one with a sinful nation of Israel—epitomizing the sinful nation of Israel as one of its leaders, a prophet?<sup>1</sup> What if, this identifying with a sinful nation who loves its false prophets is what allows for this forgiveness of sins found in verse 1? Then, we have a probable prophecy of His betrayal and forsaking of friends surrounding the time when His hands were wounded in crucifixion authorizing such a fountain to be opened in Jerusalem; and, we have probable cause for judging those who are not a part of the redeemed in verses 8-9 (Acts 17:31).

There is no question that this is involved and there is much I am missing in the writer's intent of this passage—particularly since we have not exegeted the book of the prophecy of Zechariah. One thing is sure: forgiveness of sins is a gushing reality where there was once a wounding of hands, and this reality is the scheming of the One Who said He would wound His shepherd. One thing is equally as sure, the Shepherds wounding is related to the forgiveness of verse 1. Sadly, and surely though, sheep do not understand the confusing methods of their shepherd by the hand—the Roman hand, the Jewish hand, the Herodian hand, the Imperial hand, the Satanic hand, the Iscariot hand—of the Jehovah Who speaks in this passage. This is Scandalous or Marvelous; Horrible or adorable; frightening or delighting. Song writer Wes King said it thus:

*A tool of torture becomes a sign of hope  
The measure for the love of God  
The intersection of eternity and time  
Did ever such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns composed so rich a crown*

*The hand that held the hammer  
Was the hand of God  
The hand that took the nails  
Was His only Son  
The doors of heaven opened  
As He opened up His hands  
And it rained down mercy*

The truth is, when we read Psalm 23 and we find sheep who are comforted with their shepherd's rod, we find the Shepherd as Jesus and we as the sheep and we find comfort in that he protects us with the rod—from our wandering selves by breaking our legs; from our wounding foes by breaking their necks. Yet, somehow, we find that the Shepherd was the first recipient of the Rod, and therefore, His bearing the rod in Zechariah is from the wrath-distributing hand of the Thrice-Holy Judge. We, meanwhile (after Calvary), behold the tender, protective rod of a Father-facing brother Who ever lives to intercede for us.

How would you do it? Would you have a Father Who merely allowed His Son to be victimized? Would you desire a scheme where the scheme was temporarily out of the control of the Father? Isaiah 53:5,10; Acts 2:22-24; Romans 8:32; 1 Peter 1:20 attest to this profound truth that, somehow, mysteriously, this was the act of God.

Nay, without the Father smiting the Son, there is no fountain opened in Jerusalem for forgiveness.

**26:32-33**

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<sup>1</sup> It's not foreign. You may remember that in Matthew 3, Jesus is involved with a "baptism for repentance"—having no sin of which to repent. One of the possibilities is that He is identifying with a sinful nation.

**But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.** It's hard to imagine not being willing, once again, to accept news of the Gospel—which is not really a Gospel to Peter. The smiting of the shepherd? That is not such good news. What about the resurrection, though? It's not even noticed—not any more than chapter 16 where Peter, again, insists that Jesus' resurrection—whatever it means—is a moot point because He will not be allowed to die.

#### **26:34-35**

**Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35 Peter said unto him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.** So here on this walk from the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane we have two very difficult topics: God's involvement in killing His Messiah, and Peter's overwhelming confidence in Himself. I suppose this is why so many of us are careful to tell what "we would do" in a situation if we were the ones under pressure.

Really, though, can you imagine arguing with Jesus? Why wouldn't Peter have learned from this? The last time He argued with Jesus, Jesus called him "Satan." Doesn't make Peter sit back and think..."maybe I should ask, 'Lord can I avoid this?' Isn't there a way to posture myself so that I don't run away from the Lord? Isn't there a way I can keep from being a coward, Lord?" But we see nothing but an ill-mannered, unfriendly, misguided disagreement that majors on will power and speaks almost nothing of God's power. Since Peter doesn't understand about his failure in the big moments with the big things, I guess it's time for him to learn from his failures in the small things...

#### **26:36-39**

**Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.** This must mean that Matthew got the report from one of these four people in the garden. In view of the record of Jesus' prayer during the napping of the disciples, the likely source is Jesus Himself. **38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:** It is at this point that we see that sorrow itself, maybe even depression, is not necessarily sinful. **tarry ye here, and watch with me.** What does this say when Jesus required (requested?) corporate prayer? Jesus did! The Son of God desired more prayers on His behalf? Then, I guess I need your prayers more than I thought I did. **39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, A very sober reality that not all possible things would please God. let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** This is doubtless what Jesus was talking about with the mother of James and John in Matthew 20. One would wonder how those two mere men could simply drink the same cup. How is that even possible? Particularly since James was beheaded early and John died of old age. Perhaps this is a conversation to have later.

#### **26:40**

**And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?** See, here is Jesus posing a question that finds its power in the minimizing of that which Peter is unable to accomplish! Praying an hour; staying awake one hour! Add to that a comment to Peter about his "willing spirit", his "willing attitude and fortitude" and his "weak flesh" appears to hearken back to the previous discourse on the way to the Mount of Olives—the garden of Gethsemane: "Peter, how in the world can you be so sure you'll be strong enough to withstand stumbling, to avoid stumbling, when you can't even stay awake one lousy hour to talk to the Father for me? Think about my 'sorrowful, death-filled soul.'"

This is a lesson to all of us honestly. We wish to stay awake for prayer vigils, but what of our praying for minutes? Instead we fret and call family or update our social media. And we act as though we can stand against the difficulty of a coming calamity.

We pray to endure the heartbreak of hearing of our terminal sickness when we have not found strength in the prior resignation of red lights at the "wrong time" to the One Who holds our times in His hands (Psalm 31:15).

We are so sure we will stand in the workplace when tempted to stay quiet about iniquity and a sinful society when we are already too timid to even speak in our own Sunday School classes.

#### Illustration of Chaplain/phone

These are those who are sure they will not kill somebody in a fit of road rage when they are instantly livid at a spilled glass of milk.

These are those who insist they will never commit adultery when they are, even now, wondering if there is anybody out there that would really care for their emotional needs.

These are those who view themselves as community nurturers, even master's of psychology and pastoral caregivers when their own children crave for 30 minutes of their time during evenings at home.

Here we fantasize of mission trips one day when we have never missioned our neighbors.

Perhaps it would sound like us saying "I want to study my Bible and thin about the Lord and pray for hours" when the Lord says "could you not look at your Facebook for one hour?"

"If I ever get my chance, Lord, at something big—another job or house or spouse—when the Lord says "could you not live contentedly for one week? Could we not make our way for one week? Could we not establish the will of God in our cubicle for one year?"

Apparently, the surprised tone of Jesus' question drives us to the appalling reality that one hour of prayer is almost nothing in God's economy.

#### **26:41**

**Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.** One might consider this an excuse for flippant humanity or so-called carnal Christianity, but on the heels of this unpleasant rebuke to Peter it is very clear that this is a desperate reminder of how badly sons of Adam need the power of prayer and a lack of faith in their own, innate ruggedness.