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# LIFE BIBLE STUDY

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**SESSION OBJECTIVE: MATTHEW 26:31-75**

To understand the significance of Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest, and Peter's denial of Him.

## When It Doesn't Pan Out

In 1969, one of the best westerns hit the theaters starring John Wayne, Kim Darby, and Glen Campbell. True Grit became an instant classic, winning John Wayne the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Rooster Cogburn. In 2010, a remake starring Jeff Bridges was made, which also received critical success.



There is a scene in the movie where the Pepper gang arrives and confronts the Texas Ranger named LaBoeuf (portrayed by Matt Damon). During the confrontation, Rooster is hiding on the hillside and fires on two of the gang members, but also accidentally hits Laboeuf (who is traveling with him). The whole plan of attack goes sideways and the main bad guy gets away. As he stands up, Rooster looks out over the disaster that has just unfolded and casually remarks, "Well, that didn't pan out."

In Matthew 26, we see Peter deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows, just as Jesus predicted, despite the fact that Peter said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You" (Matt. 26:35). His plan was to stay loyal to Jesus even through intense persecution. It didn't pan out.

## Predictions Galore

The passage opens with Jesus predicting that the disciples will fall away from Him. The word used here to describe the, "falling away" is a word that means literally, "to cause to sin." The idea here is that the disciples

will abandon Jesus in a serious and unrighteous manner. There is, however, a Divine reason behind the abandonment. He is not only aware that the disciples will abandon Him, but that He will die. He quotes Zechariah 13:7, which says, “‘Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; beyond that, He is aware that He will conquer the grave.’” Jesus understands that the Father’s will is to strike Him down. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the suffering servant who is, “smitten by God, and afflicted,” “pierced for our transgressions,” and, “crushed for our iniquities” (Is. 53:4b-5). Jesus is aware of the reality that the One responsible for the cross is ultimately the Father, which is why He will pray in Gethsemane, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39). He has no doubt that death is His destiny. This is why disciples will abandon Him; *to fulfill Scripture*.

Next, He tells the disciples plainly, “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee” (Matt. 26:32). There is a confident expectancy in Jesus that He will rise again. John gives us an aspect of Jesus’ understanding that none of the other Gospels give. Jesus says in John 10:17-18, “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” It is *Jesus* that will raise Himself. The Father will strike Him down, but He has also commanded Jesus to willfully lay His life down. The two work together in unison. The Father is carrying out His will, and the Son is willfully submitting Himself to the will of the Father. The disciples’ quick rebuttal to such a harsh prediction highlights their ignorance not only of the severity of what Jesus will face, but the Sovereign foreknowledge He possesses as the Son of God.

## The Oil Press

One of the more intimate moments between Jesus and the inner-three (Peter, James, John) occurs in Gethsemane. Jesus is hours away from being betrayed by Judas. In fact, by the time the disciples make it to Gethsemane, Judas had already embarked on his wicked journey. Gethsemane is referred to as a garden in John’s Gospel, but given the name it was likely not a typical garden but more of an olive grove (Gethsemane means, “oil press”). The disciples would have passed through the Kidron Valley and onto the western side of the mountain and into the orchard, likely owned by a wealthy individual. It was not their first trip there either. John 18:2 says, “Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.” While there, Jesus tells Peter, James, and John, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death.” His words are reminiscent of the suffering servant of the Psalms. Psalm 42:6 says, “O my God, my soul is in despair within me.” The same message is conveyed in Psalm 42:11 and Psalm 43:5 as well. Once again, Matthew’s command of the Old Testament shines here, as he includes aspects of Jesus’ life and ministry that demonstrate a fulfillment of Scripture.

After inviting the disciples to join him in prayer, Jesus retreats off by Himself to be alone with the Father. During this time of prayer, Jesus prays, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” There is significance in the “cup” terminology. It represents the wrath and judgment that God pours out on the wicked and sinful in several places in the Old Testament. Below is a brief overview of three of the major passages that include the “cup” terminology.

### **THE CUP IN THE PSALMS**

The first passage to examine is Psalm 75. The Psalmist writes in verse 7 that, “God is the judge.” He is the one that has the right to judge the wicked and uphold the righteous. Verse 8 continues, “For a cup is in the

hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; it is well mixed, and He pours out of this. Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs.” The cup here represents the judgment that will befall the sinful and unrepentant.

#### **THE CUP IN ISAIAH**

Isaiah prophesied against the wickedness of Jerusalem throughout his ministry, and in Isaiah 51:17 he cries, “Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the LORD’S hand the cup of His anger; the chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.” Here, the cup specifically represents the anger of God against rebellion and sin.

#### **THE CUP IN JEREMIAH**

Jeremiah uses the cup imagery as well, only in a slightly more creative way. He writes in Jeremiah 51:7, “Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; Therefore the nations are going mad.” Babylon was a wicked nation that God used to bring judgment to Israel and Judah. In this passage, Babylon is called, “a golden cup in the hand of the LORD.” In other words, Babylon was an instrument of judgment against sin.

The cup is a symbol of judgment, anger, wrath, and destruction against the unrighteous. This is the cup that Jesus drank, metaphorically, on the cross. He took onto Himself the wrath and judgment against sin. John calls Him a, “propitiation” for sin in 1 John 2:2. A propitiation is, “an instrument of appeasing.” Jesus, taking on God’s wrath, is a sacrifice that appeases God’s anger against sin. Jesus prays again a second time after rebuking the disciples for falling asleep, and this time changes the prayer from a positive (“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”) to a negative: “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” This change indicates that Jesus had resigned Himself to the certainty of the Father’s will.

## **A Judas Kiss**

Judas arrives in verse 47 with not only the chief priests and elders, but a mob of people with clubs and swords. He instructs them that the man he kisses and greets is Jesus, the one they are there to arrest. Verse 50 is subtle but powerful. Jesus, knowing what Judas was there to do (remember, Jesus predicted Judas would betray Him at the Passover meal), calls Judas, “friend” (Matt. 26:50). Despite Judas’ betrayal, Jesus had poured into him and experienced life with him for several years now. Judas, as misguided and wicked as he was, should not be seen as someone who never connected with Jesus. They likely shared many, “life moments,” both good and bad. Judas, therefore, cautions us to constantly be working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), ever constantly submitting ourselves to Him.

## **Study Questions**

### **Day One**

1. Read Matthew 26:31-35. What does Jesus say to the disciples? What verse does Jesus quote? What is Peter and the disciples’ response? What does Jesus say will happen before the rooster crows?
2. Read Matthew 26:36-46. In your own words, summarize this passage. What does the cup represent? What does Jesus rebuke Peter, James, and John for?

### **Day Two**

1. Read Matthew 26:47-50. Who does Judas arrive with? What is Judas’ plan? What does Jesus say to him in response to seeing him?

2. Read Matthew 26:51-54. Who drew a sword and struck one of the guards (Hint: Read John 18:10 and compare with this passage)? What does Jesus say in response? Why did this happen?

### Day Three

1. Read Matthew 26:55-56. What rebuke does Jesus give to the people? Why? What do the disciples do?
2. Read Matthew 26:57-64. Who is Jesus brought to? What is his occupation? Who followed Jesus there and why? What questions did they ask Jesus? What was Jesus response, and what is significant about His response (Hint: Read Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14)?

### Day Four

1. Read Matthew 26:65-68. Do you think the high priest understood Jesus' connection to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7? Why or why not? What was the response of those who heard him answer? Do their actions have any Old Testament significance (Hint: Read Isaiah 50:6)?
2. Read Matthew 26:69-75. Who is Peter questioned by? Summarize the passage in your own words. What is Peter's response upon remembering Jesus' words?

## Week 30 Discussion: The Proper Response

Matthew 26 highlights Jesus' response to the false accusations and physical punishment given by the chief priests and elders of the people. As He is accused, He speaks truth but doesn't get worked up. He is punched, spit on, and mocked, and yet remains silent. Facing this type of scrutiny is difficult and the human tendency is to want to react rather than respond. Talk as a group about how we can live out this model Jesus gives us in the face of disagreement, scrutiny, and even persecution.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever been scrutinized unfairly or falsely accused of something? How did you respond?
2. Read Matthew 5:39. How does Jesus tell us to respond to physical altercation? Does He carry this out in practice in Matthew 26?
3. How does this idea of, "turning the other cheek" apply on social media? Have you ever been unfairly criticized on social media? How did you respond?
4. What topics work you up the most? Why? What topics don't work you up that normally work others up? Why do you think that is?
5. How does your response to unfair criticism work as a witness to non-believers?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus was grieved over the cup He was to drink, and spent time alone in prayer as a result of it.
2. Jesus was not surprised by Judas' betrayal because it was to fulfill what Scripture said would happen.

### *PRAYER REQUESTS:*