

Three Times You Will Deny That You Know Me

Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31;

Luke 22:31-38; John 13:31-38

After the Third Cup of Redemption

Friday evening the fifteenth of Nisan

DIG: Why did Yeshua wait until Judas had gone to share what He does here? What emotions and motives accompany Messiah's next prediction? Peter's vow? The Lord's reply? Peter's follow-up vow? How does Peter see himself in relation to the other apostles? How might the others feel about that? Why do you think Jesus warned the talmidim (especially Peter) of their upcoming denial?

REFLECT: When have you felt betrayed? How did you deal with it? When, if ever, have you felt like you betrayed Jesus? How did you and Christ resolve that issue? How do you feel, realizing that Messiah knows your weaknesses and also your failures? How would you compare your spiritual "good intentions" to Peter's?

Christ had just revealed that one of the Twelve would betray Him; now He predicted that the Eleven would deny Him. The Lord viewed this denial as a fulfillment of Zechariah 13:7, where the prophet stated: **Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.**

When Judas was gone, the process of glorification had begun. Yeshua had predicted His own death many times and had promised to rise from the dead many times (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Mark 8:31, 9:9, 10:34, 14:28; Luke 9:22, 24:7; John 2:19-22). His closest followers failed to connect the dots. In a few hours, Judas' betrayal and Messiah's death represented the end of all their messianic hopes. Consequently, the Lord reassured them in simpler, more direct terms. He wanted them to know that God's plan had not been thwarted and His impending crucifixion was a necessary part of it.¹⁴¹¹ He said: **Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify Him at once.** It was a matter of hours now until His death and that would be followed soon by His ascension. And as the apostles continued to eat the paschal lamb, which must be totally consumed, the Good Shepherd talked to them in fatherly tones about the hours ahead. **My children, He said softly, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come** (Yochanan 13:33b).

Yeshua continually spoke of a coming **hour** in which **the Son of God** would be **glorified**. He announced the arrival of **His hour** using a form of the Greek term *doxa* no less than five in **verses 31-32**. *Doxa* comes from the verb *dokeo*, which means *to believe* or *to think*. To be **glorified** is to be thought good of and vindicated in the eyes of all witnesses. Jews in the first-century chose *doxa* to translate the Hebrew term *kabod*, or the term for the radiant splendor of **ADONAI's** character, which **He** often displayed as light, or the Shechinah **glory** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**). With the departure of **Judas** to betray **Him**, that process of **glorification** had begun.¹⁴¹²

As the men sat in bewildered silence, He said: **So now I'm giving you a new commandment (John 13:34a)**. Why is this **a new commandment**? Doesn't **Leviticus 19:18** already say: **Love your neighbor as yourself**? The difference is this . . . **Leviticus** says: **as yourself**, whereas **Yeshua** says: **As I have loved you**, which assumes that **God's** way of loving can be ours. Humanly this is impossible. But **Jesus** gives us a new name, and a new **Spirit**, in fulfillment of the promises in the TaNaKh (**Ezekiel 36:26, 37:14; Jeremiah 31:31-33**).¹⁴¹³

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34b). When we accept **Messiah** as our **Lord** and **Savior**, the **Ruach HaKodesh** comes to live inside of us. Rabbi Sha'ul said it this way: **When you believed in Christ, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)**. Caring for others - with **God's** supernatural assistance - shows the world that we are **His** disciples. **By this all mankind will know that you are my talmidim, if you love one another (John 13:35)**. This was hardly a new commandment, except that it was explicit. **Jesus** had often preached **love** and the **apostles** could doubtless remember every date. "**Love God** as **God loves** you; **love** your neighbor as he must **love** you." The only thing new about it was that it now had a note of finality - and a new tone, which said: **As I have loved you**.

The world struggles to understand **love**. Most people think mainly of romantic **love**, that mysterious sickness that overtakes someone like a delightful case of the flu - can't eat, can't sleep, can't concentrate on anything except one's lover. But that kind of **love** comes and goes as it pleases and trumps all logic and no one knows the cause. So when the **Lord** says: **Love (agape) one another as I have loved (agape) you**, what kind of **love** was **He** talking about?

The Greek word *agape* is rarely found outside the Bible. The Greek language celebrated *eros*, an intoxicating, impulsive physical love between men and women, and honored *philia*, the warm, noble affection of deep friendship. The human authors of the B'rit Chadashah needed a Greek word to express the kind of **love** taught by **Christ** and commanded in the Upper Room, but the most common Greek terms wouldn't do. Fortunately, *agape*, was relatively unknown and largely undefined, so it suited their purposes perfectly.¹⁴¹⁴

Agape love is a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional **love**. **Jesus** lived out **agape love** by sacrificing **Himself** on the cross for our sins. As a result, as **Christ** is the embodiment of **the Father's love**, so now we should embody **Messiah's love**.

Simon Peter, quick to speak, picked up on what **Jesus** had said about going away: **Where I am going, you cannot come** (John 13:31-33). He asked, "Lord, where are you going?" **Kefa's love** was such that he wanted to be with his Lord and could not conceive of any situation that would make **Yeshua's** words necessary. But **Christ** answered: **Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later**. For a moment, **Peter** digested this reply. He was certain that his **love** and courage were up to any challenge, including **death**. But not *totally* understanding what **Yeshua** meant, he pressed one more question. **And why, Lord, can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you** (Yochanan 13:36-37).¹⁴¹⁵

Jesus addressed the impulsive **Peter** and calling him by his old name, said: **Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you [apostles] as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back** (see **Mn - Jesus Reinstates Peter**), **strengthen your brothers** (be the leader of the **talmidim**). Because **this very night you will all fall away on account of Me, for it is written** in TaNaKh itself: **I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered** (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27; Luke 22:31-32; Zechariah 13:7). The prophet, who has much to say about the appearance of the **Meshiach** in **Zechariah Chapters 12-14**, predicted a most unusual occurrence in the life of the coming **Messiah**. In the original Hebrew, **Zechariah** says it is **ADONAI -Tzva'ot Himself** who calls for **the strike** against the man who is close to **Me**, a fitting description of the close relationship to the **Father**. In the typology of the **Suffering Servant** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Jb - Yet We Considered Him Punished, Stricken and Afflicted by God**), **Ha'Shem** Himself will **strike His** own **Son**.

This reminds us that the tragic events leading up the **Christ's** crucifixion and death were not events dictated by men, but, rather, were all part of **God's** plan of redemption. Yet in the process of striking **the Shepherd, the flock will be scattered**. **Jesus** prayed that after they **denied** Him, that their **denial** would not destroy them. He prayed that their **denial** would not cause their **faith** to **fail**. He also prayed for their restoration. The **Chief Shepherd** anticipated that after their **denial** they would be restored to fellowship with Him, and they would strengthen their **brothers** and **sisters** in the **faith**. Having failed themselves, they would be able to have compassion on others who failed.

As they sat around the U shaped table at the Seder, it must have seemed inconceivable that any or all of **them** would desert **their Rabbi**. Nevertheless, this would happen, but according to **the Good Shepherd**, it is actually part of **God's** larger prophetic plan. **Judas** had already arranged to betray **Him** and **the other talmidim** would accordingly deny **their** association with **Him** in just a few hours. Yes, **the sheep** would **be scattered** temporarily, but we should not overlook the bigger picture.

The entire **flock** of Isra'el would **be scattered** in 70 AD, just one generation after these events transpired. So if these were the last words from **Yeshua**, that would be a sad commentary on events of **Pesach** and the nation of Isar'el - **but** there is more.

The Anointed One added: **But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee** (Matthew 26:32; Mark 16:7). His death was both unavoidable and necessary, but the ultimate victory will come when **He** conquered death through the Resurrection. This was the first command **to go to Galilee** after **His** death. At that time **they** will have a hard time with this because of **their** unbelief. But now, **the apostles** were captivated with what **He** said.

Like a self-willed child, **Peter** seemed to hear only what **he** wanted to hear and believe only what **he** wanted to believe. Therefore, **he** boasted: **Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will**. And a few moments later adding: **I am ready to go to prison and to death** (Matthew 26:33; Mark 14:29; Luke 22:33). **Kefa** would later back up those words with action when **he drew a large knife and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear** (Mattityahu 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50). The word translated sword in some translations is the Greek word *machairan*, and is used in the Septuagint to refer to the *large single-edged knife* that Abraham used for sacrificial purposes (**Genesis 22:6 and 10**). The former fisherman may have used this knife in the preparations for **Pesach** (Matthew 26:17) and still may have had it with him.¹⁴¹⁶

Simon Peter, however, did not know his own weakness. **Jesus** shook **His** head saying: **Will you really lay down your life for Me?** As sincere and commendable as **Kefa's** comments were, **Yeshua** revealed that his **denial** would take place within hours: **I tell you the truth: Jesus answered, this very night, before the rooster crows today, three times you will deny that you know Me** (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; Yochanan 13:38). The rabbis debated about the reality of the spirit world, both good and evil. The power of **the rooster** was just one animal regarded by some as representative of the power of darkness as it **crows** in the dark (Tractate Sanhedrin 63b).¹⁴¹⁷

But in response to Yeshua's statements, Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You." This is in the imperfect tense, meaning *he kept on and on insisting emphatically*. And all the other apostles said the same (Mattityahu 26:35; Mark 14:31). But the Great Rabbi knew better.

When Christ had previously sent them away to minister (see Gv - **Jesus Sends Out the Seventy**), He told them that they were to walk in constant dependence on Him: **When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?** Nothing, they answered. He had been faithful to them. Now He was to be absent from them after His death; so the Lord commanded them to make provisions for their needs, saying to them: **But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a large knife** (Greek: machairan), **sell your cloak and buy one** (Luke 22:35-36). What is Jesus seeking to teach by this saying of **buying a sword**? If the context is noted, it can be seen that in the preceding verse Yeshua reminds His talmidim that earlier in His ministry when He sent them out to preach they had no need for **purse or bag or sandals**. They were completely taken care of by the cordial reception of their audience. But this took place during the height of Messiah's popularity and they experienced great hospitality from the people.

But now the situation had changed. Jesus will soon be crucified. Instead of hospitality, the apostles can expect hostility and persecution. They needed to prepare for this new situation by providing themselves with **a purse and a bag**. The need for **a sword** can be understood as a metaphorical way of describing the hardship and struggle of the "war" they were to fight for the cause of Christ. We interpret the Scriptures literally unless it is impossible to do so. Here, rather than interpret this saying about **the sword** literally, which is impossible in the light of Jesus' life and teachings elsewhere, it is best to interpret it as a metaphor describing the "war" His talmidim were involved in. This "war" at times will involve persecution and perhaps martyrdom. At times the struggle will involve a "war" against sin and temptation. Hence, Messiah's use of **the sword** metaphor is to prepare them to enter this battle with their eyes wide open, dedicated and armed with the **full armor of God**.¹⁴¹⁸

It is written, **"And He was numbered with the transgressors"** (Isaiah 53:12), and I tell you this must be fulfilled in Me. He shrugged ever so slightly. **Yes, what is written about Me is reaching its fulfillment**. Later, apparently not understanding Yeshua's figurative language, the apostles took Jesus literally and produced two knives as evidence that they were ready. **See, Lord, here are two large knives** (Greek: machairai). He quickly dismissed the thought, saying: **That is enough** (Luke 22:37-38). Perhaps the best interpretation of this is to see these words as an idiomatic way of stopping a conversation that is on the wrong track by saying: **That is enough [of such foolish talk]**. An example of this can be found in Deuteronomy 3:26 where ADONAI puts a stop to His conversation with

Moshe by saying: **That is enough. Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter.**¹⁴¹⁸

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

I am an Occasional and Unsuccessful Gardner. But I raise Hollyhocks. And when they are once planted they continue without much help from me. For the old plants die the Second Winter, but the young ones bear in the Second Summer. And I like to remember how the Crusaders when they went to the Holy Land brought back this Glorious Blossoming Staff to the Gardens of Europe and to my garden and that of Keturah.

But Keturah is more industrious than I. She plants all kinds of Flowers.

And it came to pass that she set out Flowers, and Rude Boys came by in the night and pulled them up. And Keturah suspected who they were. Now it came to pass on a day that Keturah saw that Tough Bunch coming. And she took a Basket of Apples that she had ready, and she went out to the Porch. And she saluted them as they walked by, and they answered her Gruffly, and edged away, for they feared that she would Bawl them Out or threaten them with the Police.

But Keturah said them, What tall, manly fellows you are. How strong you are, and brave. And by that she kept them Guessing. And she said, I need help from you, and I am sure that you will give it. I plant flowers, and boys pull them up. They are not bad boys, but thoughtless. I want you to help me protect my Flowers.

And they said nothing.

And she said, I have boys, and they are also strong and tall. And they have grown up and gone out into the world. I am as old as the mothers of you boys, and it is hard work to set out Flowers and have them plucked up. And I know that if you boys, who are so strong and brave, will protect my Flowers, and speak to the other boys about them, then my Flowers will Grow and Blossom.

And when she had said this, she produced her Apples.

Now it has been this way ever since the Wind and the Sun argued over which one could compel a man to take off his Coat. And the stronger the Wind blew, the more he tightened it, but the warmth of the Sun quickly accomplished what the harsh treatment could not do.

And if you will pass the Garden of Keturah, you will find her Flowers unharmed. For they are guarded by the best policemen in town, even by the boys.

There are those whose word of progress is, Treat them Rough; but Keturah can show that **love** is a More Excellent Way.¹⁴¹⁹