

## Small Group Leader Notes

### Matthew 26:57-75

#### Context

*The plot against Jesus* (26:1-5) - The religious leaders have been planning to arrest and kill Jesus but they don't want it to happen during the passover festival. It looks like they are in control of events but really it's Jesus who is in control (see 16:21, 26:1, 26:20-25) and things will happen when he wants.

*Peter's Denial of Jesus* - Jesus has not only prophesied his death (26:1-2) and his betrayal by Judas (26:20-25) he has also prophesied Peter's denial (26:31-35) which is tragically fulfilled in our passage. The picture that is building therefore is that events are unfolding just as Jesus said they would.

*The Old Testament witness to Jesus* - Arguably the key verse in the passage is v64 when Jesus says, "... from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." This brings together Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 to make a powerful statement about Jesus. From Psalm 110 we see that he is God's Son, the cosmic King who will come to judge and destroy his enemies. Similarly from Daniel 7 we see that Jesus is the Son of Man who has been given all power, glory and authority to reign over his everlasting kingdom. Again we're told that he will come in judgment on his enemies and to bring his people eternal salvation and rest in his kingdom.

#### Big Idea

Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, the cosmic King who will come again to bring judgment on his enemies and salvation for his people!

It's really important that our groups see this because the identity of Jesus is central to this passage. It's what the leaders needed to know - they were killing God's Son, the eternal king and judge. It was also what Peter lost sight of in the courtyard. When the pressure was on and people were crowding around, Peter was more concerned about what these people thought of him rather than Jesus, his eternal King and judge.

#### Application

This passage invites us to see ourselves in Peter. At one time or another every Christian will have been in a situation where they were ashamed to be a Christian or didn't speak when they should have. Alongside recognising our failures we also need to see afresh who Jesus is because when we remember that he's God's King and judge and that one day we will see him it encourages us to stand up boldly for Jesus.

## Questions

**Starter - Peter had been very confident that he'd not deny Jesus but when the pressure was on he crumbled. Have there been times when you have been embarrassed to be a Christian? Can you think of times when you stayed silent when you should have spoken up?**

*This is perhaps quite a personal question to start with so if you use this question then you need to have an example from your own life that you can share to help the group to open up and be honest.*

### **1. Look at v57-68. What accusations are made against Jesus?**

*Jesus is accused of planning to destroy God's temple (see John 2:19-21 for the background.) When the high priest realises that their efforts are getting them nowhere he confronts Jesus directly under oath to say once and for all whether he is 'the Messiah the Son of the living God?'*

### **2. How does Jesus respond to these accusations?**

*Jesus is at first silent and only chooses to respond when directly challenged as to his divine identity.*

#### **- Why do you think he remains silent in v63 but answers in v64?**

*If Jesus is going to be killed then he wants them to kill him for being the Messiah. He wants them to know exactly who it is that they are condemning to death. Jesus is orchestrating everything so that he will go to the cross at just the right time and for just the 'right' reason.*

### **3. What does Jesus want them to know about him?**

*Jesus wants them to know that he is the Messiah (God's Anointed King) and God's Son who will come again in judgment. You might find it useful to get your group to look at Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 to dig into these passages to flesh out what Jesus meant in v64. Perhaps you could divide the group into two smaller groups then each group could study and report back on one of the passages each.*

#### **- What's the warning to those who aren't Christians?**

*The religious leaders think that this is the last that they are going to see of Jesus. Jesus is warning them that they will see him again and then the tables will be turned. Now they sit in judgment of him but when they meet again he will be the judge and they will be the judged. This is a warning to all of us - we will see Jesus and when we see him it will be as our judge!*

#### **- How does this reassure Christians?**

*Whilst it's a warning that we will see Jesus as our judge it is also a reassurance to Christians. When you look at Daniel 7 it is striking that when Christ returns it will be to bring salvation for his people so that they will live with him in his kingdom. Now we can face persecution, opposition and hostility. We can be mistreated because of Jesus but we need to lose heart, Jesus will come again as judge and every wrong will be put right.*

**4. Look at v69-75. How do you think Peter was feeling as he followed Jesus into the courtyard?**

**- How do you think he was feeling as the people questioned him?**

There aren't really right or wrong answers to these questions. They are just designed to help us resonate with Peter and get into the story. I'm sure many of us know what it's like for feelings of bravery to give way to fear.

**5. How will Jesus' words in v64 help you next time you feel embarrassed or are tempted to stay silent?**

*In many ways this is similar to the last part of Q3 but this time we want to really apply what Jesus has said about himself to those times when we are embarrassed about being Christians. This provides us with a chance to talk **and pray** about particular situations where we find it hard to stand up for Jesus. Again you will need to be prepared to set an example of being honest and open.*