

MARK 14

Mark 14:1–11. Plot to Execute Jesus; Jesus Anointed

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 703–726.

Counting inclusively, the mention of “two days” here places this event on the day before Passover. Since the Jerusalem authorities are afraid to arrest Jesus publicly due to His popularity with the masses, they resolve to capture Him using some sort of trap (Greek *dolos*). This plot, however, does not come to fruition until verses 10–11 and is interrupted by a different story—another example of Mark’s tendency to sandwich narratives for emphasis. The good deed of the woman in verse 3 is contrasted with the sinister actions of Judas and the chief priests.

Nothing else is known about Simon the leper, although if he was present at the meal, it is almost certain that he had been healed from his condition. The woman does not seem to have been a dinner guest since she enters while the meal is in progress. Though Jesus calls for her to be remembered, Mark surprisingly chooses not to identify her. Her anonymity, then, allows her to serve as a paradigm of devoted discipleship. The act of anointing can point in several directions—hospitality, coronation, ordination, or embalming. In an interesting twist, all of these are probably intended. Jesus is the royal (and priestly) Messiah, yet He must also die (Jesus draws attention particularly to the act as a foreshadowing of His death). There is some irony here: Jesus has repeatedly warned the Twelve of His coming death, and yet they fail to understand this point while an unnamed, seemingly unimportant woman understands what is to come. Her act was not a waste, as some present claim, but a remarkable act that recognizes who Jesus really is.

Against this reverent backdrop, Judas takes his own action, meeting secretly with the authorities to arrange Jesus’s arrest. Judas is able to provide them the information they are seeking—a time and place

where Jesus may be found in private, away from the crowds who would protest His arrest. Given the narrative placement of the anointing, we may suspect that this episode, with its confusing messianic overtones, may have been the impetus that led Judas to betray his master. Judas's repeated failure to understand has led to his apostasy.

Mark 14:12–16. Preparations for Passover

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 726–730.

Since Jesus and His disciples have been staying outside the city in Bethany, they must make new arrangements for Passover. The instructions that Jesus gives demonstrate His foreknowledge of events, as the arrangements do not seem to have been made previously.

If Jesus Himself was present for the slaughtering of the lamb, we could imagine the poignant scene as He contemplated His own coming sacrifice while watching the animal die.

Mark 14:17–21. Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 730–733.

The reader, having been forewarned, should not be shocked at Jesus's declaration in verse 18; rather, we are to examine the reaction of the Twelve. The structure of the question "Is it I?" in Greek indicates that the disciples anticipate a negative response. None of them suspects Judas either. Jesus's remarks in verse 21 indicate that the divine plan, which required the death of Jesus, would have progressed with or without the intervention of Judas, but due to his involvement, heavy consequences awaited him. God's plans move forward despite human intentions, but our eternal fate depends upon how we choose to involve ourselves with them.

Mark 14:22–25. Jesus Institutes the Sacrament

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 733–739.

In these verses, Jesus takes the emblems of the Passover ritual, which commemorate the suffering and deliverance of Israel, and adapts them to point forward to His own suffering and the deliverance of the

human family. As the same word for “body” (Greek *sōma*) is used in Mark 15:43, the word here points clearly toward Jesus’s death. The word “cup” (Greek *potērion*) has been associated with suffering in Mark 10:38 and 14:36, suggesting that by partaking of this emblem, we agree to share in Jesus’s suffering. The phrasing of 14:24 recalls Isaiah 53:11 (the suffering servant will “justify many” with his death) and Exodus 24:8, which speaks of the “blood of the covenant” (a better translation of “testament” [Greek *diathēkē*]). The statement in Mark 14:25 both emphasizes the nearness of Jesus’s death and anticipates the messianic banquet (Isaiah 25:6–8) that Jesus will provide for His followers at His Second Coming. When contemplating the meaning of the sacrament, then, we should not just look mournfully back to the past but also look forward with hope for Jesus’s return.

Mark 14:26–31. Jesus Warns the Twelve

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 739–744.

The hymn mentioned is probably Psalms 115–118, which were customarily sung after Passover. “Offended” (Greek *skandalizō*) indicates that something is going to happen that will cause the Twelve to stumble in their discipleship. Fortunately, verse 28 holds out some hope for redemption; after the Resurrection, the disciples will have a chance to move on from their failures and again follow Jesus.

Peter, in typically myopic fashion, has not even heard what Jesus has said about the Resurrection because he is too bothered by Jesus’s claim that he will become offended. Somehow thinking that he can predict the future better than Jesus, he refuses to believe that he will fail. Ironically, in this he has already become offended because of Jesus. Surely with pain in His voice, Jesus reiterates what He knows will happen—Peter will soon betray Him. Still surrounded by His disciples, Jesus is already alone: they all refuse to believe what is happening.

Mark 14:32–42. Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 744–756.

Mark emphasizes the name Gethsemane (which means “oil press” in Hebrew) because it carries symbolic value for this site of consecration. As He did with the holy events at Jairus’s house (Mark 5:37) and on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:2), Jesus takes only Peter, James, and John with Him into the heart of the garden. Jesus’s words in verse 34 echo Psalm 42, in which the psalmist expresses his great sorrow but also his hope that God will vindicate him. Beyond a certain point, even the inner circle of Peter, James, and

John are forbidden to follow. In a final failure of discipleship, they are unable to follow the commanded to simply keep watch.

Falling on the ground is not a normal posture for prayer, and it probably indicates the stress and grief that Jesus is feeling. As before, the cup represents the suffering to come; the cup of God's wrath is a fairly common image in the Old Testament, demonstrating that Jesus is facing the consequences for all humanity's sins. It is important to note here that Jesus's will and God's will are *not* the same, and in that sense, what Jesus is doing is even more noble. Acquiescing to God's will does not require a sacrifice when ours happens to align with it; it is true sacrifice to recognize that our own desires are different but still show deference to the divine plan.

Returning to find the disciples asleep, Jesus chides Peter—note that He refers to him as Simon, not Peter, suggesting that he is not acting like the rock (Greek *petros*) that he is supposed to be. This process is repeated three times, and each time the disciples prove unable to remain awake with Jesus. It is virtually certain that they do not recognize the significance of what is happening.

Mark 14:43–52. Jesus Is Arrested; the Disciples Flee

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 756–762.

Jesus's words are fulfilled immediately when the arresting party arrives. Judas is concerned that Jesus be taken away securely (King James Version "safely"; Greek *asphalōs*) and not escape; he clearly does not understand that Jesus has no intention of escaping. Jesus has long known this would happen and has had ample opportunity to escape since Gethsemane lies on the road leading away from Jerusalem, but He has instead chosen to remain.

Jesus's question in verse 48 gets at the heart of this misunderstanding. The King James Version's use of "thief" softens the impact of the Greek *lēstēs*, which means something more like "robber, insurgent, or revolutionary." Somehow, despite everything Jesus has said and done, everyone still seems to see Him as a political messiah, bent on overthrowing Roman rule. Nothing in Jesus's teaching (verse 49) has indicated that He is anything of the sort, but people continue to misunderstand Him. Even so, the authorities are afraid to confront Him publicly, so they have sent the arresting party in the dark of night.

The confrontation proves to be too much for the disciples, who flee. Despite their strong affirmations just a few verses earlier (14:31), they have not understood what it means to follow Jesus to the end. Verses 51–52 are some of the most puzzling in the Gospel. Early interpreters often read this as a cameo by the Gospel's author, although this theory has little to recommend it. Perhaps the reference to the cloth demonstrates the totality of his abandonment of Jesus—he is even willing to leave his clothes behind to flee the scene. There may also be a connection to the young man of Mark 16:5, who is described using similar, unique words.

Mark 14:53–65. The Trial of Jesus

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 762–769.

The outcome of Jesus’s trial seems to be prearranged (verse 55); the council is only looking for an excuse to execute Him. Even the false witnesses cannot align their stories, and a conviction required two corroborating witnesses. Nowhere in Mark has Jesus said anything like the accusation in verse 58—again, this is a false testimony. (John 2:19 records a saying that may be at the root of this accusation, but even this saying has major differences.) Since the witness testimony is flawed, the high priest questions Jesus directly.

Jesus initially refuses to respond to the false accusations, but He answers the high priest’s charged question in verse 61. “Blessed” is a euphemism used to avoid saying the name of God. The high priest is asking if Jesus is the Son of God, and in a moment of deep irony, he is so concerned with blasphemy that he will not say God’s name while at the same time abusing the God of Israel incarnate. Jesus answers strongly and affirmatively; “I am” recalls the name of God from Exodus 3:14 and the following statement, taken from Daniel 7:13, confirms that Jesus is the Messiah.

These claims would not constitute blasphemy if they were true, but the council does not even entertain that possibility. Instead, an immediate death sentence is pronounced. Their mocking requests for prophecy are ironic; they do not realize that Jesus has predicted this very moment (Mark 10:34).

Mark 14:66–72. Peter Denies Knowing Jesus

The following is adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 769–774.

Meanwhile, another of Jesus’s prophecies is being fulfilled. Peter’s sometimes rash bravery has led him to follow Jesus to the high priest’s courtyard, but this courage has reached an end. When Peter is confronted, his confidence falters and he denies knowing Jesus. In a sad, ironic sense, his words are true: he has not really understood who Jesus is. Confronted a final time in verse 71, he will go out of his way to even avoid saying Jesus’s name. This account, along with that of the disciples’ abandonment in verses 50–52, bookends the trial of Jesus, demonstrating that even while all of His disciples fail him, Jesus remains true.

We should not judge Peter too harshly. It is difficult to know how any of us would have reacted in a similar situation, and we have the benefit of added revelation and historical hindsight. The devastated Peter has just had his messianic hopes dashed—perhaps he does not even know what to believe anymore. Certainly, his faith in the divine plan was so damaged that it did not hold up in the face of immense pressure.

Fortunately, the Resurrection morning and with it a renewed chance for discipleship will come. This promise of renewed fellowship with God, even after devastating failure, is extended to us all.

Credits

Authors: Jackson Abhau, John Thompson

New Testament Insights Series Editor: John W. Welch

General Editor: Taylor Halverson

Associate Editor: Morgan Tanner

Senior Editor: Sarah Whitney Johnson

Assistant Editors: Sam Lofgran, Verlanne Johnson

Content Manager: Jasmin Gimenez Rappleye

Source: *New Testament Insights: Mark*, by Jackson Abhau and John Thompson