

MARK

Lesson 12

Mark Chapters 14-15

We continue our study of the week leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In this lesson, we pick up Mark 14 in the middle of the week, Wednesday, and continue through Mark 15 to the death and burial of Jesus on that Friday.

I have included a picture in this lesson that was taken at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem at the Western Wall, during one of my trips to Israel. I am standing beside, and touching, one of the many stones that marveled the disciples; as they walked by the Temple wall that Herod had built, about which Jesus had said that no stone would be left unturned. They are massive for sure, and the photo brings to life the area where Jesus would have walked during that last week in Jerusalem just before his betrayal.



Let's read Mark Chapters 14 and 15 and consider the following:

WEDNESDAY

During the day on Wednesday, the Bible is silent regarding Jesus and his activities during the day. It would appear from Mark that Jesus chose to stay in Bethany on Wednesday. Clearly, by the time his teaching ended Tuesday, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law wanted him dead. We know from reading Chapter 14, that they had decided it would not be wise to kill Jesus during the Passover Festival. And yet, ironically, that is exactly what they do.

1. Why do you suppose that they decided to kill Jesus this during Passover, even though this was not their original plan? (see Mark 14:1-2 and also Mark 14:10-11)
2. Jesus, as we noted earlier, apparently remained in Bethany for the day and that evening. Note that instead of dining at the home of Lazarus and his wife Martha, Jesus is dining at Simon's house. What does verse 3 tell us about Simon?

While dining a woman comes to Jesus and opens a very expensive bottle of perfume. In fact, the text tells us that it was worth a year's wages! Referred to as Nard or Spikenard, it was indeed extremely expensive. Nard comes from a flower that only grows between 10,000 and 16,000 feet about sea level, and only in the Himalayan Mountains. The process of collecting, making, and transporting that type of perfume would certainly have caused it to be extremely expensive. In our lesson, we find a woman who felt that Jesus was worth it, and she was obviously a woman who could afford it.

3. In response, the disciples who still do not fully understand who Jesus is react negatively. They think it could have been sold to feed the poor, and so on. How does Jesus react? What is the lesson in this story that applies to us today? Read Mark 14:3-9 to gain insight for your answer.

THURSDAY

On Thursday, Jesus gives his disciples very specific instructions about where they will eat the Passover meal. Mark 14:12-26 presents the well-known story of Jesus and his disciples during what we today refer to as "The Last Supper."

4. Following the supper, Judas has already left to hook up with chief priests and betray Jesus. Jesus and his disciples do not return to Bethany. Where does Jesus take them instead? (see Mark 14:26)
5. Between the time that Jesus takes them up the Mount of Olives and the time he leads them to the Garden of Gethsemane, what major event in the life of Peter occurs? (see Mark 14:27-31)
6. In Gethsemane, the disciples sleep as Jesus prays. After the third time of trying to get them to stay awake and urging them to pray with him, he shouts something at them that must have gotten their attention. What did he shout at them in Mark 14:42?
7. Jesus is then arrested (see Mark 14:43-52), and the text tells us that "everyone deserted him and fled." Taken in the middle of the night to stand before an illegal gathering of the Jewish leaders comprising the Sanhedrin, (see Mark 14:53-65), Jesus is asked, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Does Jesus tell them that he indeed is the Messiah? (see Mark 14:61-62)

FRIDAY

As Jesus' cross-examination continues late into the night and on into early Friday morning, outside the courtyard, one of Jesus' prophecies is being fulfilled. Peter is confronted on three different occasions and denies he knows Jesus. See Mark 14:66-72. The rooster crows, and Peter weeps, knowing that he has done exactly what he told Jesus that he would not do, i.e., deny him three times.

8. In addition to hearing the rooster crow, what else reminded Peter of Jesus' prophecy? (see Luke 22:66-71)
9. It is dawn on Friday, between 5 am and 6 am, when the Sanhedrin finalize their verdict, a plan that would ensure that Jesus was guilty. (see Mark 15:1) Over the course of the next several hours, Jesus will face three trials. Read Mark 15:2-20, and list each trial.
10. In Jesus' third trial, again standing before Pilate, this time with the crowd watching; Pilate did the politically-expedient thing. When the crowd shouted that they wanted the zealot, Barabbas, released instead of Jesus; Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. Did Pilate actually think that Jesus was innocent, or guilty? (see Mark 15:14-15 and John 19:4-6)

It is now about 9 a.m. on Friday—four hours from when the Sanhedrin plotted Jesus' death. He has been handed over to the Roman guards for flogging and crucifixion. Mark 15:25 mentions "the third hour," while John 19:14 mentions "the sixth hour." These appear to conflict, but in reality it appears Mark was counting time with the Jewish method, which counts the hours from sunrise. John instead was using the Roman method, for which hours were counted after midnight. Thus, during the time period from 6 a.m. in John 19:14, until 9 a.m. in Mark 15:25, Jesus was mocked by the soldiers, Pilate's verdict was issued on the two robbers, and preparations for the crucifixion were made.

11. Jesus was beaten and flogged so badly that he could not carry the beam for his cross. The Roman soldiers grabbed an onlooker to carry it for him. Who did they grab and where was he from? What does Paul tell us about Simon's son Rufus? (Mark 15:21) (Acts 2:10) (Romans 16:13)
12. In Mark 15:23-24, Mark writes simply "they crucified Him." In these same verses we also see more prophecy fulfilled; what was it? (see Psalm 22:18)
13. During the time that Jesus hung on the cross, it was the Roman custom to hang the name of the person being crucified, along with the charge against them on their cross. What sign, with what name, did Pilate have placed about Jesus' head while he was being crucified? (see Mark 15:25-28)
14. Another prophecy is fulfilled by Jesus' placement between the two robbers. What was it? (Isaiah 53:12)
15. Mark recorded five things that accompanied Jesus' death. Read Mark 15:33-39 and list them.

The Centurion's confession is noteworthy for several reasons, since he was, after all, the commander of the squad charged with crucifying Jesus. As the Centurion in charge, he was directly responsible to Pilate. His confession tells us

that he was an eyewitness to the crucifixion; and through what he witnessed, he came to recognize Jesus as the true Son of God. This testimony would have carried great weight later with the Roman readers of Mark's Gospel. We will get an additional brief glimpse of him later in this chapter, as he confirms the death of Jesus to Pilate.

16. Mark now turns our attention to three women who were always in the background. We hardly notice them, and yet they played important roles in the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus. Who were these three women? (Read Mark 15:40-41, Luke 8:2, Matthew 20:20, Matthew 27:56 and Mark 16:1-7.)
17. What role did these three women play in Jesus' Galilean ministry?
18. Upon Jesus' death, a Jew named Joseph of Arimathea steps forward to claim Jesus' body. It was 4 p.m., and knowing that the Passover will begin in an hour or so, he boldly approaches Pilate to request the body of Jesus for burial. Who was Joseph of Arimathea and why is his boldness so remarkable? (see Mark 15:42-43, Matthew 27:57, Luke 23:51, Mark 16:1 and John 19:38)

A question is often raised, "How do we know that Jesus actually died on the cross? He could have simply passed out from all the pain, and then came to, once he was laid in the cave." The four Gospel accounts give us plenty of evidence that Jesus was indeed dead. One of the most compelling is the role that the Romans played in every crucifixion. Specialized squads of Roman soldiers, lead by a Centurion, were well-trained in killing through crucifixion. Crucifixion was meant to be a slow tortuous death, with the final blow being the breaking of the condemned person's legs. In Jesus' case, that was not necessary, as he died early in the process. It was not unusual for a crucifixion to last several days, for example. Like today's modern prison executions, the executioners are trained specifically for making sure that the prisoner dies as a result of the execution. The Romans were skilled at crucifixion, they knew how to make sure that the person actually died on the cross and certified that the person was dead before they were removed from the cross. The Centurion was the leader responsible to ensure that death occurred.

19. Read Mark 15:46-47. What does Pilate do when Joseph of Arimathea approaches him to request Jesus' body (note that it has been approximately four hours since the crucifixion of Jesus began), i.e., what is Pilate's reaction, and what action does he take?

Mark then tells us that Pilate gave the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph had a tomb already dug out of rock; and within it, he had a shelf where he laid the body of Jesus which he had wrapped in linen. He then rolled a large stone across the opening of the cave, sealing the tomb just as Passover was to begin. From 5 a.m. with the Sanhedrin's evil plan to have Jesus killed, to his death burial a brief twelve hours later, the Jews must have been very happy. After all of Jesus' teachings, healings, and other miracles over a nearly three-year period; his enemies plot and actually have him killed and buried in less than twelve hours—at least that's what they think.

20. Read the following verses: Mark 15:46-47 and John 19:39-40. Who actually helped Joseph of Arimathea bury the body, and who witnessed where Joseph buried Jesus?

As I reflect on this lesson—a lengthy one for sure—I am struck by the various individuals mentioned in this chapter. Jesus meant different things to different people, and he evoked certain reactions from each. The same is true today. Politicians may try to downplay him (or discount him altogether), detractors will tell lies, and those of weak faith may fade into the shadows. Political expediency will rule today, just as it did then. But the true followers of Christ—whether they be the lowly women who quietly served Jesus faithfully in the background, or the wealthy and bold like Joseph of Arimathea—allowed their public acts, their works, to demonstrate their faith in Jesus, regardless of the consequences. Can we say the same about ourselves today? When Jesus returns, will he find us as faithful as the two Mary's, Salome, and Joseph of Arimathea?

Have a great week everyone, and thanks again for studying with us!

In His Name, **Wes**