

MARK

Lesson 12 w/Answers

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)
 - a. ANSWER: Clearly, the answer is that it was fulfillment of prophecy—the Lamb of God being sacrificed on Passover. However, as a practical matter, I believe that it happened because Judas' betrayal provided them a window of opportunity. Prior to verse 10, the chief priests and teachers of the Law did not have a "person on the inside," who would help them betray Jesus. However, I think that Judas showing up at their door gave them an unexpected opportunity, I think that Judas gave them a reason to go after Jesus right away.
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?
 - a. ANSWER: This verse tells us that Simon was a leper, someone who the Jews would have considered very unclean; and yet here, the evening before he will be betrayed, Jesus is dining at a leper's home.

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.
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus' reaction should serve as a reminder to all of us that our faith is to be spirit-filled, and not works driven. They did not see the significance of the woman's great act of kindness toward Jesus, and how this act reflected her great faith and compassion. She was doing all that she could to do for Jesus; her heart and her actions were all in the right place. The disciples were being too pragmatic, too centered on their own thoughts and their own world view, that they still did not understand that Jesus was about to die on the cross. However, this woman did; she understood completely. The lesson for us is the same: we need to be led by the spirit to do good works, and not be led down the path of doing good works for works' sake. We need to keep our eye on the cross. "Seek first the kingdom of God," Jesus commands us. We are to be in this world, but not of this world. And that is our lesson from this story: we need to strive to be like the widow who gave all that she had; and we are to also be like this woman, willing to wash the feet of Jesus with the most expensive thing she had, knowing that it was what was needed in the moment to serve Jesus.

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)
 - a. ANSWER: They travel up to the Mount of Olives. From here, you can see all of Jerusalem, including the Temple. It is also at the foot of the Mount of Olives where the Garden of Gethsemane is located. The area is full of olive trees, and the garden itself gets its name from the Hebrew word for oil press. We might call it the Garden of the Oil Press, although it was simply a garden of olive trees, very serene and peaceful in the evenings for sure. It was no doubt a great place to rest and reflect. For Jesus, it would be his place of prayer.
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)
 - a. ANSWER: It is on the Mount of Olives that Jesus tells his disciples that they "will all fall away." He then tells them that after he is risen, he will go ahead of them into Galilee— which he did. However, in a bold move, Peter firmly declares, "Even if all fall away, I will not." Jesus then goes on to tell him that, not only will he indeed fall away, but Jesus also specifically tells him *when* he will fall away. And we know from Mark 14:66-72 that, exactly as Christ had predicted, Peter did indeed deny Jesus, falling away exactly as Jesus had told him.
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?
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus shouts, "Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
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)
 - a. ANSWER: Yes Jesus clearly told them that he was the Messiah, and further, that they would "see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." He gave them a direct and affirmative answer to their question, which should have brought the entire Sanhedrin to its knees, as they stood before the Messiah. However, we know that it did not; they rejected Jesus as the true Messiah and set about to have him crucified.

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)
 - a. ANSWER: Peter looked eye-to-eye with Jesus for a brief moment, knowing that he had just fallen short and had denied Jesus three times; he immediately began to weep.

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.
- a. ANSWER: Jesus was (1) first tried in front of Pilate, who (2) then sent Jesus to Herod Antipas for trial, who (3) in-turn sent him back to Pilate for re-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)
- a. ANSWER: Clearly Pilate could not find any fault in Jesus and thought he was innocent of any Roman crime. But, in order to appease the crowd, the Sanhedrin, and Herod Antipas; he turned a vicious criminal free and handed an innocent man, Jesus, over to be flogged and crucified.

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)
- a. ANSWER: His name was Simon; he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was from Cyrene— a coastal village in Libya, located in North Africa. He and his sons who were Jewish, and had come for the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. Paul would later write in Romans that Rufus was a disciple. It is also possible that Simon's other son, Alexander, was also a follower of Christ.
12. In Mark 15:23-24, Mark writes simply "they crucified Him." In these same verses we also see more prophesy fulfilled; what was it? (see Psalm 22:18)
- a. ANSWER: "They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."
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)
- a. ANSWER: Pilate had them post a sign that read "THE KING OF THE JEWS."
14. Another prophecy is fulfilled by Jesus' placement between the two robbers. What was it? (Isaiah 53:12)
- a. ANSWER: "...and was numbered with the transgressors."
15. Mark recorded five things that accompanied Jesus' death. Read Mark 15:33-39 and list them.
- a. ANSWER 1: Darkness
 - b. ANSWER 2: Psalm 22:1 - "My God"
 - c. ANSWER 3: Jesus' loud cry
 - d. ANSWER 4: The Temple curtain is torn from top to bottom
 - e. ANSWER 5: The Centurion's confession - "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

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 3:27.)
- a. ANSWER: These three women were: Mary Magdalene from the seaside village of Magdala at the north end of the Sea of Galilee; Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph; and Salome the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John, who Jesus referred to as the "Sons of Thunder."

17. What role did these three women play in Jesus' Galilean ministry?

- a. ANSWER 1: Mark 15:41 tells us that they "cared for his needs." They are a true testament to faith and works going hand-in-hand; and they are a true testament to using whatever gifts God gives you to support the spreading of the Gospel. Not all of us have the gift of evangelism, or teaching, or preaching; but even the gift of serving can mean so much, and these three ladies were faithful in serving Jesus during his ministry, his death and burial, and his resurrection—as we will soon see.
- b. ANSWER 2: Note as well that, unlike the disciples who abandoned Jesus, these three women remained faithful and without fear, keeping their eyes on Jesus throughout his ordeal with the Sanhedrin.

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 1:15 and John 19:38)

- a. ANSWER: Joseph was a rich man and a member of the Sanhedrin, the very group that had sent Jesus to be crucified; however, he had been one of those who was opposed to the plan, and he was a believer who "was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God." He had been a secret disciple of Jesus but now, by taking a public stand with Pilate in requesting the body of Jesus for burial, he was making his faith in Christ known. He would no longer be a secret follower.

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, led 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?

- a. ANSWER 1: Pilate is surprised that Jesus is dead so quickly. We can tell from his response that Pilate was well-acquainted with crucifixions and how long it normally took. Could Jesus have died that quickly, or was this an attempt by one of his followers to get the body down while it was still alive?
- b. ANSWER 2: Pilate knew that the one sure way to know that Jesus was dead was to ask the person in charge, the Centurion; and he confirmed that Jesus had died.

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?

- a. ANSWER 1: Joseph was helped by Nicodemus, also a wealthy man and a member of the Jewish ruling council; he was also a follower of Jesus. Nicodemus brought about 75 pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and he helped Joseph wrap the body of Jesus with those spices and strips of linen.
- b. ANSWER 2: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw 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