

LESSON ELEVEN

TITLE The Betrayal and Trial of the Servant

SCRIPTURE Mark 14:1-15:20

MEMORY VERSE

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

MAIN IDEA OF TEXT

Jesus came as a king unlike any other. He gave up his power as God's Son in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

TEACHER TIP

Start your lesson by telling a story that relates to the main idea of the lesson to grab the attention of your participants. In this section, we have provided you with two options, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: "THAT'S MY KING" BY S.M. LOCKRIDGE

S.M. Lockridge was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, a prominent black church in San Diego, from 1953 to 1993. Lockridge and his congregation were instrumental figures in the Civil Rights Movement and hosted several of its leaders at the church, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lockridge is probably best remembered for his powerful and impassioned message "That's My King!" which describes Jesus Christ as a king like no other.

Let's watch a video of Lockridge's timeless and encouraging message about the kind of king Jesus is.

(Play clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCuRKE707MM>)

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe Jesus as king in your own words?
2. Jesus is associated with many images (e.g., Lamb of God, Servant, Wonderful Counselor, Lord, etc.). One powerful image is that of a king. How does seeing Jesus as king affect the way you relate to him?
3. If Jesus is the King of kings that means that there is no place in your life outside of his domain and rule. Think of a difficulty, hardship, or challenge you are currently facing. How might the truth of King Jesus's power and authority give you comfort and hope in what you are facing?

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: Lockridge's message still resonates with listeners today, because it points us to the unmatched majesty and beauty of Jesus, our King. Jesus is alive today and he continues to reign in glory over God's kingdom as the King of kings and Lord of lords. However, before King Jesus reigned in glory, he suffered humiliation and gave his life in order to save us.

This week we are going to look at the events leading up to and related to Jesus's betrayal and trial which show us that he is a king unlike any other.

OPTION 2: GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM BY THE BIBLE PROJECT

The terms 'the gospel' and 'kingdom of God' are foundational to our faith. Translated from Greek 'the gospel' means "good news" and was used by the writers of the New Testament to summarize the life, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus launched his ministry, he proclaimed a gospel message of good news about God's kingdom with himself as king

over that kingdom. What was that good news really about? How did it relate to God's kingdom? How did Jesus become a king? Let us watch a video from the Bible Project that explores these questions and how they relate to both the story of Israel and the story of Jesus.

(Play clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmFPSOf-kzs&t=286s> - fade out at 4:42)

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Share about the last time you received really good news.*
2. *How does believing that Jesus is king and has authority and rule over your life affect the way you make choices and decisions in life?*
3. *The good news of the gospel and God's kingdom and its king is ours to deliver to others. What are some practical ways you can share this good news with others?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: The Jews in Jesus's day were expecting God's kingdom and its king, the God-sent Messiah, to be like other kingdoms and kings. However, instead of a kingdom built on military strength and power, Jesus taught that God's kingdom is about love, forgiveness, peace, and serving others. Jesus defied the expectations of the Jews and was often confrontational with the Jewish leaders who felt so threatened by him—he was proclaiming that God's kingdom had arrived with him, and he was king over it. So they decided to have him killed.

This week we are going to look at the events leading up to and related to Jesus's betrayal and trial which show us that he is a king unlike any other.

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find the historical, cultural, and literary context you need to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

1. Jesus Anointed at Bethany (14:1-11)
 - a. The Jewish leaders plot to kill Jesus (vv. 1-2)
 - b. A woman anoints Jesus with perfume (v. 3)
 - c. Those present think the woman was being wasteful but Jesus praises her (vv. 4-9)
 - d. Judas goes to the chief priests to betray Jesus (vv. 10-11)
2. The Last Supper (14:12-26)
 - a. Jesus instructs two of his disciples on where they will observe Passover (vv. 12-16)
 - b. Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him (vv. 17-21)
Jesus uses bread and wine to symbolize his coming sacrificial death (vv. 22-25)
 - c. 22-25)
 - d. Jesus and the disciples depart for the Mount of Olives (v. 26)
3. Jesus Foretells what is to Come (14:27-31)
 - a. Jesus predicts that all his disciples will desert him and that he will be resurrected (vv. 27-28)
 - b. Jesus predicts Peter's denial (vv. 29-31)
4. Jesus Prays in Gethsemane (14:32-42)
 - a. Jesus prays and accepts that he must suffer and die (vv. 32-36)
 - b. Jesus rebukes his disciples for falling asleep (vv. 37-38)
 - c. Jesus prays a second time and returns to find the disciples asleep again (vv. 39-40)
 - d. Jesus prays a third time and returns to find the disciples asleep again (v. 41)
 - e. Jesus and his disciples depart (v. 42)
5. Jesus Betrayed and Arrested (14:43-52)
 - a. Judas appears with a crowd of armed men (v. 43)
 - b. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss (vv. 44-45)
 - c. Jesus is arrested (vv. 46-49)
 - d. The disciples desert and flee Jesus (vv. 50-52)
6. Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65)
 - a. Jesus is taken to stand before the Jewish leaders while Peter follows them from a distance (vv. 53-54)
 - b. The Jewish leaders interrogate Jesus and false testimony about him is given (vv. 55-59)
 - c. The high priest questions Jesus whether he is the Messiah (vv. 60-61)
 - d. Jesus proclaims that he is the Messiah and is accused of blasphemy (vv. 62-64a)
 - e. The Jewish leaders deem Jesus worthy of death, mock him, and have him beaten (vv. 64b-65)
7. Peter Denies Jesus (14:66-72)
 - a. Peter denies Jesus the first time (vv. 66-68)

- b. Peter denies Jesus a second time (vv. 69–70a)
 - c. Peter denies Jesus a third time (vv. 70b–71)
 - d. A rooster crows, confirming Jesus's prediction of Peter's denial (v. 72)
8. Jesus Before Pilate (15:1–15)
- a. The Jewish leaders continue making plans and bring Jesus before Pilate (v. 1)
 - b. Pilate questions Jesus (vv. 2–5)
 - c. The crowd calls for Jesus to be crucified (vv. 6–14)
 - d. Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified (v. 15)
9. The Soldiers Mock Jesus (15:16–20)
- a. Jesus dressed in a purple robe and crown of thorns (vv. 16–17)
 - b. The soldiers mock and beat Jesus and lead him to be crucified (vv. 18–20)

CONTEXT

Jesus has just given a discourse to his disciples at the Mount of Olives on the signs of the end times. He has told them that they will endure suffering and hardship and must be ready and alert for his return.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We want kings like the ones of the world to rule over us.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus is unlike any king of this world. He gave up his power and his life to save us.

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your class through the process of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the teacher, work through all the exercises below to ensure you gain a good understanding of the text.

The pace is quickening in Mark's gospel and you can almost sense that Mark is eager to get us to the climactic event of Jesus's life and ministry—the cross. This section of Mark's gospel begins with Jesus being anointed at Bethany by a woman whose name we do not know. Jesus is anointed as king and it will somehow be connected to his death and burial.

She helps prepare Jesus's body for burial and one can imagine an ominous feeling in the air among Jesus's disciples who know what he has already told them on multiple occasions—that he must suffer and die as a ransom for sin.

As they celebrate the Passover together, Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him. He gives bread and wine to his disciples as symbols of his sacrificial death. Later Jesus tells his disciples that soon they will all desert him. Peter, refusing to believe Jesus, tells him he would never desert him to which Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times before the rooster crows twice.

The weight of what is to come is taking its toll on Jesus who is troubled and distressed. He prays three times in Gethsemane for another way to accomplish God's will but there is not one. He accepts that this is what must be done for him to become king and for God's kingdom to be built. He must suffer as God's Servant and pay the once-and-for-all penalty for sin by his death.

Not long after he prays, Judas and a crowd of armed men arrive. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and Jesus is arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin. His guilt has already been decided by the Jewish leaders who have plotted to have him killed. A show trial with false accusations and false testimony takes place in the darkness and secrecy of night. Before the high priest, Jesus declares that he is the Messiah, and that is enough for the Jewish leaders to demand the death penalty.

Peter has been following Jesus at a distance; and while outside in the courtyard, he denies knowing him three times. When he hears the rooster crow a second time, he remembers Jesus's prediction and weeps with sorrow over what he has done.

Early in the morning, the Jewish leaders bring Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea who can either free or condemn Jesus. According to custom, Pilate gives the crowd the choice to release one prisoner, Jesus or the insurrectionist and murderer Barabbas. The bloodlust of the crowd is deafening as shouts of "Crucify him!" are given for Jesus.

Pilate, believing he has no choice but to honor the crowd's choice, releases Barabbas and hands Jesus over to be put to death by crucifixion.

Jesus, the king of the Jews, is given a purple robe and a crown of thorns before being beaten and mocked by the Roman soldiers who lead him out to be crucified.

14 Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 2 "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

12 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25 "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered."

28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I

will, but what you will.”

37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” 45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. 46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

48 “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” 50 Then everyone deserted him and fled.

51 A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52 he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56 Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

57 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: 58 “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” 59 Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." 70 Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

71 He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

6 Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

13 "Crucify him!" they shouted.

14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

16 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: IDENTIFY REPEATED WORDS AND PHRASES

Read slowly through Mark 15:1–20 three times. On the third time, underline

repeated words and phrases.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: ASKING QUESTIONS OF THE TEXT

Ask and write down important questions from the text:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- How?
-

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: CROSS-REFERENCING SCRIPTURE

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and note the similarities you find between this passage and Mark 14:1–15:20.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: REPETITIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Based on your reading, how do the repeated words and phrases show Jesus's action or lack of action? Why does Jesus seem passive?

How did the mocking actually reveal who Jesus is?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: ANSWERING QUESTIONS OF THE TEXT

In the previous section, you made a list of the questions you had concerning this text. Take some time to find the answers to your questions and answer the big 'Why?' question. Why is everything happening? What might be God's purposes behind the events that unfold in this passage? Consult a commentary or the commentary notes at the end of this lesson.

When you answer the questions, reflect on your answers and what they have to say about Jesus as God's Suffering Servant (see Isaiah 52:13–53:12).

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: CROSS-REFERENCING SCRIPTURE

In what ways do both Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and Mark 14:1–15:20 show you that Jesus is a king unlike any other?

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God is calling them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Jesus not only endured being beaten, mocked, and sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit, but he was also betrayed by one of the people closest to him and deserted by all of his disciples. What would it look like for you to forgive a person as Jesus did? What makes it difficult to forgive that person? How might Jesus help you overcome the difficulty?

QUESTION 2: If Jesus is the suffering and saving king, how might that change your allegiances, expectations, values, priorities, and mission?

QUESTION 3: Jesus accepted God's will for his life and was obedient in his suffering and death for our sake. Where in your life is God calling you to accept his will, even if it means having to suffer, experience loss, or die to something?

QUESTION 4: What are some ways that we can mock Jesus with our lives and words today? How does the church help us to continue to marvel at our king instead of mocking him?

QUESTION 5: We live out our faith in community. In what practical ways could you invest in your community to be more kingdom-oriented?

4

CHALLENGE

TEACHER TIP

End your time of study with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

Jesus began his earthly ministry with good news that the kingdom of God had arrived with him and he was its king (Mark 1:14-15). He called people to repent and believe his gospel and taught his disciples about the nature of God's kingdom and what life in it looked like. It is an upside-down kingdom that operates on a completely different set of values than the kingdoms of this world.

The world's motto is "might makes right" but this is not the way of God's kingdom and its king, Jesus. He would become king, not by exercising power, but by giving it up. Instead of making his defense, he remained silent before his accusers. The Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus by giving him a robe and crown of thorns did not know that they were actually preparing Jesus for his coronation as king. Jesus was lifted up but it was on a cross, not a throne. Instead of being honored as king by his people, he was humiliated before them and died the death of a criminal. Instead of taking vengeance on his enemies, he died for them. Jesus is truly a king unlike any other.

In light of what King Jesus has done for us, how are we to live? The words of Paul to his disciple in 1 Timothy 6:12-16 give us some encouragement:

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Jesus reigns as king over God's kingdom and that should give us tremendous confidence and unshakable hope in whatever we are facing. We do not fight the good fight of faith alone. We fight it with Jesus and for Jesus as we live by the kingdom values he taught and share the good news of his gospel with others. We seek to honor Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords by living under his lordship and letting him rule our hearts and command our lives for his kingdom purposes.

LET'S PRAY

COMMENTARY

MARK 14:3-9

James A. Brooks, in his commentary in *The New American Commentary*, sees great significance in Jesus's anointing at Bethany which acknowledges Jesus's kingship as the Messiah and its relation to his death and burial.

Each of the Gospels has an anointing story (also Matt 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8). Despite differences in detail, it is reasonably certain that the ones in Matthew, Mark, and John reflect the same event. It is much less certain that the one in Luke does, not merely because he placed it much earlier in Jesus' ministry but because of his description of the woman as a prostitute. The Markan account takes the form of a pronouncement story.

14:3 Mark previously implied that Jesus spent his nights at Bethany (11:11-12; see comments on 11:1 for the location of Bethany). "Reclining" rather than "sat" (KJV, NKJV) is the correct translation because the Jews reclined rather than sat at formal meals. "Simon the Leper" is not otherwise known. He possibly was a leper whom Jesus had healed.

The presence of the unnamed woman was most unusual; Jewish women did not ordinarily attend banquets with men except in the capacity of servants. The "alabaster jar" was a flask with a long neck and no handles, and it was sealed to preserve the ointment. The fact that the woman broke the flask implies that she poured all of its contents on Jesus. "Nard" was an aromatic oil extracted from a root found primarily in India—thus its costliness. The word translated "pure" may be related to a word meaning faithful or genuine, as the NIV seems to indicate. It could also be derived from a Greek word meaning liquid or an Aramaic one meaning pistachio nut. The oil of this nut was used as a base for perfumes.

Whether the woman anointed Jesus in gratitude for some favor (e.g., a healing) or whether she recognized him as the Messiah, Mark did not say; but he likely expected his readers/hearers to see messianic significance in the action. In the Old Testament kings (e.g., 1 Sam 10:1; 16:12-13; 1 Kgs 1:38-39; 2 Kgs 9:1-6), priests (e.g., Exod 28:41), and prophets (1 Kgs 19:16) were anointed. The very word Messiah/Christ means the anointed one. It is also true of course that sometimes anointing had no political or religious significance (cf. Ps 23:5).

14:4 The "some" were evidently the disciples because vv. 6-9 appear to be addressed to them, and here Mark provided another example of their lack of understanding. In fact, some textual witnesses of medium value explicitly state that it was the disciples, as does also Matt 26:8 (John 12:4, however, says that it was Judas). The objection was not to the act as such but to its extravagance.

14:5 As the NIV footnote indicates, the Greek text has "three hundred denarii." A denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer; therefore the NIV is correct in its approximation "a year's wages." Concern for the poor is understandable because making a gift to them at Passover time was a custom.

14:6 The word translated "beautiful" (*kalos*) can mean just that or morally or ethically good. The

woman's action was both of these.

14:7 The idea here is not unlike that of 2:19–20, where Jesus said that one does not fast while the bridegroom is still present. Jesus was not condoning poverty. Indeed, the statement may be an allusion to Deut 15:11, which commands generosity to the poor. Other passages show Jesus' concern for them (Matt 6:2–4; 19:21; cf. Mark 10:21; Luke 16:19–31; 21:1–4; John 13:29). The point is simply that the disciples would have many opportunities to help the poor but no more to minister directly to Jesus.

14:8 The Greek text has "She did what she had." That could be rendered as in the NIV or "She gave what she had" or "She gave all that she had."

Whether the woman intended to anoint Jesus' body prior to his death and burial is uncertain. The last part of the verse sets forth Jesus' interpretation and application of what she did. It also suggests the importance of the passion to Mark's understanding of messiahship: Jesus was anointed as king in connection with his death and burial.

14:9 This prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled when Mark and Matthew (26:13) recorded the statement and their Gospels began to be read widely. The story was told orally before that time. The authenticity of the statement has been denied, however, because of the allusion to the later world mission. If, however, Jesus preached a new message that constituted good news, why could he not have believed that it would continue to be preached after his death? The use of the word amen ("I tell you the truth"), which was characteristic of Jesus' teaching, but not that of the early church, favors authenticity. The absence of the woman's name does as well. If Jesus spoke the words, he envisioned a period of time between his death and return during which the gospel would be preached. Some early Christians failed to realize this and looked for an early return.

MARK 14:12-30

Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, in their commentary in the Expositor's Bible Commentary, give the reader historical context and cultural details regarding the Jewish Passover celebration and how Jesus transformed the event from being about God's liberation of the Jews out of slavery in Egypt to him liberating us out of slavery to sin.

Mark's narrative of the Last Supper is comprised of three parts: (1) the preparation of the meal (vv. 12–16), (2) the announcement of the betrayal (vv. 17–21), and (3) the institution of the Lord's Supper (vv. 22–26). Jesus takes the traditional Jewish Passover celebration and transforms its significance for all time. What was formerly a celebration of Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt will become a remembrance and celebration of Jesus' new-exodus deliverance of his people from the power of sin and Satan. Jesus' own blood sacrifice—symbolized by the Passover cup of wine—will replace the blood of the lamb placed over the doorpost to protect the firstborn sons of Israel. The covenant sealed with blood, which God made through Moses and Mount Sinai (Ex 24:8), will become the new covenant predicted in Jeremiah 31 and inaugurated by Jesus' death on the cross.

12 Ordinarily "the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread" would mean 15 Nisan (Lev 23:6; Nu 28:17), the day following Passover. But the added description of the day—"when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb"—makes it clear that 14 Nisan is meant, because Passover lambs were killed on 14 Nisan. The entire eight-day celebration, including Passover, was sometimes referred to as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Josephus, Ant. 2.15.1 §317); and there is some evidence that 14

Nisan was loosely referred to as the “first day of Unleavened Bread” (cf. m. Pesah. 1:1–3; Josephus, J.W. 5.3.1 §99).

The day of the week was Thursday. Jesus and his disciples were probably in Bethany. It is clear from v. 13 that they were outside the city of Jerusalem. Since the Passover had to be eaten within the walls of the city (m. Pesah. 7:9), the disciples asked Jesus where in Jerusalem they were to go to make preparation. There was no time to lose, for the Passover meal had to be eaten between sundown and midnight, the first hours of 15 Nisan.

13–16 Jesus gave explicit instructions to two of his disciples. Luke identifies the two as Peter and John (Lk 22:8). The “man carrying a jar of water” would easily be identified because customarily women, not men, carried water jars. The man was to lead them to the house where the owner had a guest room (v. 14). Mark seems to indicate that Jesus had made previous arrangements with the owner of the house (“Where is my guest room ...?” v. 14), but it is not altogether clear from Mark’s narrative whether this case was so, or whether Jesus identified the man with the water jar through divine foreknowledge. The upstairs room is described as “furnished and ready” (v. 15), i.e., with what was necessary for the celebration: table, couches, cushions, etc. The disciples would have to get the food and prepare it. The meal would include unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs, sauce, and the lamb. The two disciples went into the city as instructed by Jesus, found everything as he had said, and made the necessary preparations (v. 16).

17 Jesus and his disciples had probably spent the day in Bethany. In the evening they returned to the city. Mark says Jesus “arrived with the Twelve,” thus suggesting that the two disciples, after making preparations, returned to Bethany, a distance of only a couple of miles, and then accompanied Jesus when he went into the city in the evening. The other possibility is that “the Twelve” was a designation for the close followers of Jesus, whether all twelve were present or not. Since the Jewish day began at sundown, it was now Thursday night, 15 Nisan.

18 The Passover meal was originally eaten while standing: “This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover” (Ex 12:11). But in Jesus’ time it had become customary to eat it in a reclining position. While Jews normally sat for meals, reclining was the posture for a more formal banquet or celebratory meal. Jesus uses the solemn formula “I tell you the truth” (cf. v. 9 and comments at 3:28) to disclose the fact that one of them would betray him.

Jesus further identified the betrayer as “one who is eating with me.” Meals were rituals of social status in the Mediterranean world, and to share table fellowship with someone indicated friendship and social acceptance. To betray a friend after eating with him was, and still is, regarded as the worst kind of treachery in the Middle East. Jesus may have had in mind Psalm 41:9: “Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”

19 The response of the disciples to Jesus’ startling disclosure was one of sadness and dismay. One by one they ask Jesus, “Surely not I?” (The Greek construction expects a negative answer [see Gundry, 836].) In Matthew’s gospel even Judas asks the question (Mt 26:25). It was an honest question coming from the rest of the disciples and was prompted by fear and lack of confidence in their own spiritual and moral strength. With Judas it was hypocritical and an attempt to cover his intent; for him not to have asked the question with the other disciples would have made him liable to suspicion.

20 Jesus says the betrayer is one of the Twelve, i.e., one who is eating with him at that moment.

The “one who dips bread in the bowl” refers to dipping a piece of unleavened bread in the sauce (harôset) that was part of the Passover meal. Jesus’ statement is not meant to specify the betrayer further (as though only one of the disciples would dip bread in the dish), but rather dramatically reinforces the point of v. 18, namely, that the betrayer is one in closest relationship with Jesus. In John, Jesus specifically identifies Judas as the betrayer by dipping the bread in the dish and giving it to him (13:16–17). In Matthew, Jesus responds to Judas’s question, “Is it I, Master?” with the ambiguous yet affirmative “you have said it” (26:25).

21 Behind Judas’s action a divine purpose is being carried out. What happens to the Son of Man does not just happen. In this betrayal the Scriptures are being fulfilled (cf. 9:12). The reference to fulfillment could be a general statement that all Jesus is doing is in accordance with God’s plan. Or Jesus may be thinking of a specific scriptural passage. If the latter, the betraying friend of Psalm 41 (alluded to in v. 18) may be in view, or perhaps in view is Isaiah 53:12 LXX in which the servant “bore the sins of many and was delivered up [paradidomi] because of their iniquities.” The woe pronounced on the betrayer emphasizes the personal responsibility of Judas. As Cranfield, 424, puts it, “The fact that God turns the wrath of man to his praise does not excuse the wrath of man.”

The NT records four accounts of the Lord’s Supper (Mt 26:26–30; Mk 14:22–26; Lk 22:19–20; 1 Co 11:23–25). Matthew’s account closely follows Mark’s, while those of Luke and Paul have certain agreements. All four include the taking of the bread, the thanksgiving or blessing, the breaking of the bread, the saying “This is my body,” and the taking of the cup. Only Paul (and Luke if the longer reading [22:19b–20] is adopted) identifies Jesus’ body as “[given] for you.” Paul alone records Jesus’ command to continue to celebrate the Supper: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

22 The bread Jesus took was presumably the unleavened bread of the Passover meal. He first gave thanks. Two different Greek verbs (eulogeo and euchariste) are translated “give thanks” in vv. 22–23. Both are equivalent to the Hebrew verb barak, to “bless” or “praise” God. At Passover the blessing for the bread that immediately preceded the meal itself went thus: “Praised be Thou, O Lord, Sovereign of the World, who causes bread to come forth from the earth.” After the blessing Jesus divided the bread and gave it to his disciples with the words, “This is my body.” Since this saying of Jesus was separated from the cup saying by the eating of the main part of the meal, it is best to understand it as separate from that saying. The significant action of Jesus was the distribution of the bread, not its breaking. The bread represented his body, i.e., his abiding presence, promised to the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion; and the words become a pledge of the real presence of Jesus wherever and whenever his followers celebrate the Supper. Sacrificial ideas, though crucially important in the cup saying, are not of primary importance here.

That Jesus did not mean that the bread became his body is clear. There is no indication that the bread was changed—it remained ordinary bread. Furthermore, Jesus often used symbolic language to speak of himself. He spoke of himself as the true vine, the way, the door, etc., by which he meant that certain aspects of his person or work were symbolized by these objects. In the same way the bread symbolized his body, i.e., his abiding presence, and the wine symbolized his blood about to be shed.

23–24 The cup Jesus referred to is probably the third cup of the Passover meal, which was drunk after the meal was eaten. Again Jesus gave thanks. The verb is euchariste, from which “Eucharist” is derived. The meaning of the cup, unlike that of the bread, is clearly placed in a sacrificial context. The phrase “my blood of the covenant” (v. 24) echoes Exodus 24:8 LXX (“Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you”) and Zechariah 9:11 (“As for you, because of the blood

of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit"). The word *diatheke* (GK 1347) means "testament" or "will" in classical Greek, but here it translates the Hebrew *berit* ("covenant"). It indicates the relationship of lordship and obedience God establishes between himself and human beings, and the "blood of the covenant" is the sign of its existence and the means by which it is effected (Taylor, 546). Although the reading "new" found in some MSS before the word "covenant" may be an assimilation to 1 Corinthians 11:25, it expresses an important truth: Jesus' death inaugurated a new era. Jeremiah had prophesied of just such a new day (31:31-33). The blood that establishes the covenant will be "poured out" (a clear reference to Jesus' death). Brooks, 230, comments, "Just as the blood of a sacrificial animal sealed the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai, so the blood of Jesus sealed the new covenant God made with his new people, the church, at the cross." Jesus' blood will be poured out "for many." The word "many" here does not mean "some but not all," but rather "the one in place of the many." The language echoes Isaiah 53:12, where the Servant (the one) "poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

25 Jesus solemnly declared that this would be his last festal meal with his disciples till the dawn of the messianic kingdom. "The fruit of the vine" is a liturgical formula for wine used at the feast. The drinking of the cup at the Supper anticipates the perfected fellowship of the messianic age. In the OT and Judaism, God's ultimate salvation is sometimes portrayed as a great feast—the "messianic banquet" (Isa 25:6-8; 65:13-14; 1 En. 72:14; cf. Lk 13:29; 22:29-30; Mt 8:11; see TDNT 4:1103). The vow of Jesus consecrated him for his sacrificial death, but it also held out the promise of victory and salvation. He will drink the festal cup anew, i.e., with a new redeemed community in the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 14:15; Rev 3:20-21; 19:6-9).

26 Assuming the meal to have been a Passover meal, it ended with the singing of the second part of the Hallel (Pss 115-118). It is significant that Jesus went to Gethsemane and its agony with such promises as follows:

The Lord is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.
Shouts of joy and victory
resound in the tents of the righteous:
"The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!
The Lord's right hand is lifted high;
the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"
I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the Lord has done.
Psalm 118:14-17

27-28 The predictions recorded here were probably spoken by Jesus as he walked with his disciples from the upper room to the Mount of Olives. The verb *skandalizo* (GK 4997, NIV, "fall away") is difficult (cf. 4:17; 9:42-47). Notice the many renderings: NLT, "desert"; CEV, "reject"; CSB, "run away"; NAB, "have your faith shaken"; NKJV, "be made to stumble." Here it seems to be defined by the words from Zechariah that immediately follow. Thus it means not that the disciples will lose their faith in Jesus but rather that their courage will fail and they will forsake him. When the Shepherd (Jesus) is struck, the sheep (the disciples) will be scattered. The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7 and clearly indicates that the death of Jesus is the result of the action of God ("I will strike the shepherd") and that it results in the scattering of the sheep. The prediction was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with fear to be identified with Jesus in his trial and death, and that fear caused them to forsake him. This

forsaking was especially true of Peter, whose actions are often representative of the disciples’.

After the death of the Shepherd, however, there will be a glorious resurrection and a reunion of Shepherd and sheep in Galilee (v. 28). Marxsen (Mark the Evangelist, 86–87) sees in this verse and in the statement in Mark 16:7 a reference to the parousia. But the obvious reference is to a postresurrection appearance. The phrase “I will go ahead of you” does not necessarily mean that he will arrive before them, but rather that he will continue to be their leader and guide, as a shepherd goes before the sheep to lead and protect them (cf. Jn 10:3–4). This statement is a promise of restoration.

29–31 Jesus’ prediction of failure on the part of the disciples was too much for Peter to accept. For the other disciples it may come true, but certainly not for him. Peter’s words contain more than a hint of pride; and Jesus’ reply emphasizes the absolute certainty of Peter’s denial (v. 30). Not only does Jesus use the amen (“I tell you the truth”) formula, but he also uses the emphatic “today—yes, tonight.” The denial is not only certain—it is imminent. It was also to be a repeated denial (three times), and that in spite of the twice-repeated warning by the crowing of the rooster. The reference to a second crowing is found only in Mark and may have come from Peter’s eyewitness testimony.

Cranfield, 429, correctly points out that the prediction is unlikely to be a vaticinium ex eventu (post-event “prophecy”): “The early Church would hardly have created a prediction which aggravated the baseness of Peter’s denial, even for the sake of showing that Jesus was not surprised.”

Jesus’ explicit description of Peter’s forthcoming denial was not convincing to him. He insisted on his willingness even to die with Jesus rather than deny him (v. 31). But Peter did not know how weak he really was—nor did the rest of the disciples know their weakness, for they quickly chimed in with him to declare their allegiance (cf. vv. 50, 71–72).

MARK 14:32-52

In his commentary for *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Warren W. Wiersbe explores the inner suffering of Jesus that led him to pray and the coming physical and spiritual suffering that awaited him after his arrest.

When about to experience great suffering, most people want to have someone with them, to help share the burden. Often in my pastoral ministry, I have sat with people at the hospital, waiting for the surgeon to come with a report. Being perfectly human, Jesus wanted companionship as He faced the cross, and He selected Peter, James, and John, the same men who had accompanied Him to the home of Jairus (Mark 5:37) and to the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2). These three experiences parallel Philippians 3:10: “That I may know Him [Mount of Transfiguration], and the power of His resurrection [home of Jairus], and the fellowship of His sufferings [Garden of Gethsemane].”

Our Lord’s struggle in the Garden can be understood only in the light of what would happen to Him on the cross: He would be made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and bear the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). It was not the physical suffering that almost overwhelmed Him with “anguish and sorrow,” but the contemplation of being forsaken by His Father (Mark 15:34). This was “the cup” that He would drink (John 18:11). According to Hebrews 5:7–9, He asked to be saved, not “from death” but out of death; that is, raised from the dead; and the Father granted His request.

Abba is an Aramaic word that means “papa” or “daddy.” It reveals the intimate relationship between our Lord and His Father. While believers today would probably not use that term in public, it does belong to us because we belong to Him (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Note that Jesus did not tell the Father what to do; He had perfect confidence in God’s will. Three times He prayed about the matter, and each time He yielded to the Father’s will in loving surrender.

What were the three disciples doing? Sleeping! And Peter had vowed that he would die with his Lord—yet he could not even watch with Him! How gently Jesus rebuked the disciples and warned them. “Watch and pray” is an admonition that is often repeated in Scripture (Neh. 4:9; Mark 13:33; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2). It means, “Be alert as you pray! Keep your spiritual eyes open, for the enemy is near!”

The third time our Lord returned to the sleeping men, He said, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come” (Mark 14:41, NASB). It was the hour of His sacrifice, when He would die for the sins of the world. At that moment, Judas and the temple guards arrived to arrest Jesus, and Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly as the sign that He was the one to arrest. What hypocrisy!

The fact that Judas brought such a large group of armed men is evidence that neither he nor the religious leaders really understood Jesus. They thought that Jesus would try to escape, or that His followers would put up a fight, or that perhaps He might do a miracle. Our Lord’s words in Mark 14:49 were proof that He was in control, for they could have arrested Him many times earlier, except that His hour had not yet come.

Peter did a foolish thing by attacking Malchus (John 18:10), for we do not fight spiritual battles with physical weapons (2 Cor. 10:3–5). He used the wrong weapon, at the wrong time, for the wrong purpose, with the wrong motive. Had Jesus not healed Malchus, Peter would have been arrested as well; and there might have been four crosses on Calvary.

At this point, the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, and so did an unknown young man who came into the Garden and witnessed the arrest. Was this John Mark? We do not know, but since the Gospel of Mark is the only one of the four Gospels that records this event, the author could well have been writing about himself. If the Upper Room was in the home of John Mark, then perhaps Judas led the soldiers there first. John Mark may have hastily put on an outer garment and followed the mob to the Garden. The soldiers may have even tried to arrest him, so he fled.

The disciples were scattered and the Servant was now alone, “and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32). Soon, even the Father would forsake Him!

MARK 14:53-72

In commentary notes for the NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible, D.A. Carson gives the reader an understanding of the terrible show of injustice Jesus’s trial actually was and how Jesus’s response to the high priest is a Christological highpoint in Mark’s gospel.

14:53–72 Jesus in the Hands of the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law: God’s Son and Israel’s Lord. The final confrontation between Jesus and the hostile Jewish religious authorities (see notes on 1:22; 12:18) reflects two of Mark’s central themes: (1) In terms of cross-bearing and discipleship, Jesus, who steadfastly goes to his death in hope of the resurrection (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), starkly contrasts with Peter, who in saving his life in this world betrays his covenant with Jesus (14:20–24) and risks losing

his soul (8:34–38). (2) In terms of the long-standing question of Jesus' identity and authority, Jesus himself answers the question in final, dramatic fashion.

14:53–65 Jesus Before the Sanhedrin. Having previously challenged Jesus on his home ground (3:22; 7:1) and only recently on theirs (11:27–28, 32; 12:13–17), the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders now have Jesus in a setting they fully control (cf. 11:32; 12:12). Even so Jesus displays an unruffled composure that transcends the increasingly violent agitation that surrounds him.

14:53 Having embraced God's self-giving character (see notes on vv. 36, 41), Jesus, perhaps in fulfillment of Isa 53:7, allows himself to be taken (see note on 8:31).

14:55 Sanhedrin. The highest Jewish court in the land. It was comprised of the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law (see note on 12:18). The high priest presided over it, looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. This is less a trial than a hearing in search of a viable capital charge; only the Romans could impose the death penalty (cf. 15:1–15). In spite of the agenda, the gathering honored Scriptural guidelines in disallowing false testimony in capital cases (cf. v. 59; Deut 17:6).

14:57–58 Mark nowhere records any such statement by Jesus.

14:57 false testimony. Suggests they presented Jesus' temple denunciation (11:17; cf. John 2:19–20) as a plan to incite a rebellion (cf. vv. 43, 48) and, in keeping with Jer 7:11, physically destroy this temple that is "made with human hands" (v. 58; i.e., idolatrous). Jesus would then replace it with a divinely instituted one that would presumably fulfill Isa 56:7.

14:58 in three days. Appears to be a garbled report of Jesus' declarations of his coming death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33). But Mark's readers would likely see here a veiled truth: the resurrected Jesus and his followers themselves would become the new temple in whom God's presence will dwell and where all nations could worship (see note on 12:10).

14:61 remained silent. Given the influence of Isa 53 on his mission (see notes on 8:31; 10:33), Jesus' silence likely reflects the servant's silence when he too was treated unjustly (Isa 53:7). To break the impasse, the high priest intervenes with his limited version of Mark's fundamental question (see notes on 1:14–8:21; 4:41). Son of the Blessed One. A respectful substitute for "Son of God" (cf. "heaven" in 11:30 [see note]), which, reflecting God's words to David (Ps 2:7), was another title for the human Messiah, Israel's king (15:32). But "Son" in this title means a special relationship, not deity (cf. Exod 4:22; see note on 1:13).

14:62 A Christological high point of Mark's Gospel. Fittingly before the high priest, Israel's official representative before God, Jesus, for the first time in Mark, publicly declares his identity (see notes on 1:34; 8:30). I am. A simple and direct affirmation. However, Jesus' substitution of "Son of Man" again transforms his Messianic affirmation (cf. 8:31)—for Mark's readers, if not for the high priest—by recalling his divine authority as Israel's coming Lord (2:10, 28; see note on 1:2–3). sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One. From Ps 110:1. This picks up on Jesus' final questions in the temple (see 12:35–37). "Mighty One" is a pious expression for God, coming on the clouds of heaven. From Dan 7:13 (see notes on 8:38; 13:26). Jesus is David's Lord, whose enemies God will destroy, and the divinely authoritative Son of Man to whom God will give glory and everlasting dominion over all nations. In responding so directly, Jesus turns the tables on Israel's religious authorities by implicitly putting them on trial. Their response, even if predictable, will determine their fate.

14:63 tore his clothes. The formal response to blasphemy (cf. 2 Kgs 18:37; 19:1).

14:64 blasphemy. This charge readily arises from (1) Jesus' outrageous presumption, as a mere human, to such a close relationship with God; (2) the assertion that he will sit in judgment over the Sanhedrin in their generation ("you [plural] will see" [v. 62; cf. note on 13:30]); and (3) the implication (if the larger contexts of the two passages are in view) that Jesus' opponents are God's enemies (Ps 110) and, even worse, aligned with Daniel's defiling and murderous fourth beast and its blasphemous little horn (Dan 7:7-14, 19-27; cf. note on 13:14). This latter point amounts to cursing a leader of God's people, itself equivalent to blasphemy (cf. Exod 22:28). all condemned him. The Sanhedrin as a body (with the exception of at least one individual, Joseph of Arimathea, who did not consent to the decision [Luke 23:50-51; cf. 15:43]) achieves the first stage of their agenda (cf. v. 55; 11:18).

14:65 spit at ... blindfolded ... struck ... beat. Conventional acts of social repudiation (cf. Deut 25:9), the violence of which reflects the intensity of the offense. It closely resembles the abuse of Isaiah's servant (Isa 50:6; see note on 10:34). The blindfolding might be related to the demand that he "prophesy"—i.e., identify who struck him (cf. Matt 26:68; Luke 22:64)—itself perhaps reflecting the popular conception that Jesus was a prophet (cf. 6:15). This is ironic because, as Mark's readers know, Jesus has three times predicted this very moment (cf. note on 8:31-10:45).

14:66-72 Peter Disowns Jesus. Whereas Jesus, even in the face of death, calmly confirms his true identity, Peter, fearing for his life, denies any association with Jesus.

14:68 denied. As Jesus earlier predicted (vv. 30-31; cf. 8:34). I don't know or understand. Peter begins to sound like the Jewish religious leaders in their evasion of Jesus' question concerning John (see note on 11:33).

14:70 Peter's Galilean accent was readily identifiable.

14:71 call down curses. Normally people curse something or someone, but neither is specifically mentioned here. Since it is unlikely that Peter is cursing himself, Mark, perhaps to avoid unnecessary affront or embarrassment, has omitted what the context would naturally suggest. In a final, desperate attempt to avoid association with Jesus, Peter possibly begins to curse Jesus.

14:72 As with Judas's betrayal (see note on v. 45), this is Peter's last appearance in Mark. But unlike Judas, Peter's shattered response shows that his betrayal was a matter of weakness (cf. v. 38). There is hope of redemption (cf. 16:7).

MARK 15:1-15

Geoffrey Grogan, in his commentary for the Focus on the Bible Commentary, explains how Pilate sealed Jesus's fate, despite having doubts regarding his guilt.

Mark refers only briefly to the official trial before the Sanhedrin (15:1). The one recorded in 14:53-65 was evidently a preliminary examination conducted before members of the Sanhedrin who had been contacted hastily during the night. This would have been to make certain that all was in order before the official trial, so that this was really a kind of dress rehearsal in which the hypocritical use of false witnesses was acted out to see how their testimony stood up.

Now comes the trial before Pilate. This would particularly interest Mark's Roman readers, as Pilate was a Roman official. Much as they would dislike doing so, the Jews had no alternative but to hand Jesus over to Pilate, for it was he who had the necessary legal function of confirming the sentence of death.

Jesus had been silent before the high priest until asked a direct question about his Person. The same was true of his trial before Pilate, except that this time an answer preceded his silence instead of vice versa. We can easily see why this was. Was he King of the Jews (v. 2)? Yes, he could affirm this, although of course he was not king in any sense that would make him a threat to established authority, either that of Herod or of the Roman emperor, whose local representative Pilate was. How ironic that the one released, Barabbas, was truly guilty of insurrection! We wonder if Mark, who had recorded the words of Jesus, 'to give his life as a ransom for many' (10:45), with their substitutionary implications, had seen this substitution of Jesus for Barabbas as an illustration of the gospel.

Mark does not tell us what accusations the Jews brought against Jesus before Pilate, but he does say that there were many (vv. 3, 4). His silence was not really in response to Pilate but rather to the accusations made by the chief priests. Luke tells us that they said, 'We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king' (Luke 23:2).

It was apparently the chief priests, those who formed the inner core of the priestly group, who were leading the accusations against Jesus. Several of them had in fact been high priest, for the Romans rang the changes on this office, which they had made partly political, not wishing any man to hold its power too long. Probably the familiarity of this inner circle of priests with the Roman officials would make them seem the best people to front the accusations. It is more than likely that the leading Pharisees would not be as well known to the Romans.

It is significant that Pilate asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews. The Jews had translated the messianic claim into political and military terms, which a Roman like Pilate might be expected not only to understand but to take very seriously. This meant then that, on the face of it, Jesus and Barabbas and the other insurrectionists were all on trial for the same sort of offence, rebellion against the rule of the Romans over their country.

The custom of prisoner release by popular request is known from recorded information about what happened in other parts of the empire. Pilate was shrewd enough to see through the vehemence of the chief priests. He discerned that they were envious of the great popularity of Jesus with the people. Only a powerful motive such as envy could lead the members of a subject race, particularly those who had official leadership positions, to hand over a royal pretender to their hated overlords.

There is little doubt that Barabbas would be representative of a good number of insurrectionists at that time. In the first century AD the Romans had a lot of trouble with the Zealots, whose general theological outlook was similar to that of the Pharisees, but who advocated and practised rebellion and guerrilla tactics, and Barabbas may well have been one of these. Mark's language does not make it completely clear that Barabbas had personally committed murder, as 'who had committed murder' is in the plural. Luke 23:19, however, puts this beyond doubt.

We can only guess at the method the chief priests used to stir up the people. Their malign motivation was, of course, extremely strong. If it is true that love can always find a way, so too can hatred. In another touch of irony, they called out for the death of their rightful King when they were

themselves under foreign dominion! In fact they addressed this request to their oppressors! Sin leads people into all kinds of illogical positions. The Passion story is in fact full of such ironies.

Verse 15b is very brief but how much suffering it suggests! A Roman flogging was a dreadful experience which left the body grievously torn. In fact it often happened that a man who was flogged never reached his execution at all, for he either died under the flogging itself or on the way from it to the place of crucifixion. Pilate committed a most grievous crime and sin in sending Jesus to flogging and to death when he apparently saw clearly that no charge against him had been proved. This shows how wrong it is to so accuse the Jews of the sin of crucifying Jesus as to give the impression it was a Jewish act only. Pilate the Roman was deeply involved in the sin too.

It has been suggested that the verb 'handed over' is used deliberately here because of its place in the Septuagint (the standard Greek version) of Isaiah 53:12, which we might translate, 'he will divide the spoil with the strong, because his life was delivered up to death: and he was numbered among the transgressors; and he carried the sins of many and was delivered up because of their iniquities.' We cannot however be sure that Mark does this with deliberate allusive intention.

MARK 15:16-20

In his commentary in the Holman New Testament Commentary, Rodney L. Cooper explains the level of cruelty and abuse Jesus experienced at the hands of the Roman soldiers who mocked him mercilessly.

15:16. Since the events in the previous section were public, the soldiers now took Jesus into the palace or the Praetorium. The word Praetorium is a Latin word in Greek, designating the Roman governor's official residence in Jerusalem. Pilate had brought these troops with him to Jerusalem from Caesarea. They were not Jewish, and they came from all over the Roman Empire. Mark points out that the whole company took part in what happened to Christ.

15:17-18. Did you ever see a cat play with a mouse? The cat will let the mouse go and then catch it again or toss it into the air just for fun before having it for lunch. The mouse is helpless. The troops "played" with Jesus. They mocked him for claiming to be a king. They took a purple robe, a symbol of authority, and threw it across his bleeding back. They took thorns and wove them into a crown. They pressed the crown upon his scalp, puncturing his head and causing more bleeding. Then they mocked him by saying, Hail, king of the Jews!

15:19. The soldiers then beat Jesus by using a staff, an object like a broom handle. They struck Jesus on the head, driving the crown of thorns even further into his scalp. The soldiers spit on him and then fell on their knees in mocking fashion and paid homage to Jesus by saying, Hail, king of the Jews! Although this is merely speculation, is it possible that the soldiers showed such incredible cruelty to Jesus because he was a Jew? These men had nothing to gain by treating Jesus like this. Racism causes people to do some terrible things to other people. The Jews were certainly despised and hated by the Romans. This outpouring of anger and ridicule could possibly be because they were venting their bigotry and hatred of all Jewish people upon Jesus.

15:20. Finally, finishing their sadistic acts on Jesus, they took off the purple robe. Imagine how this would have felt to Jesus. Like removing a bandage by ripping it off tender skin, so removing the robe from the blood-clotted back of Jesus must have caused excruciating pain when they ripped it off of Jesus' back. Then they put his own clothes on him. In John's Gospel account, Pilate made one last appeal to the crowd by bringing Jesus before them one more time (John 19:4-5, 12-16). Once again,

this mob showed no compassion. Then they led him out to crucify him.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Hans F. Bayer, *Mark*, The ESV Study Bible.

James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary.

D.A. Carson, *Mark*, The NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible.

Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, Holman New Testament Commentary.

John D. Grassmick, *Mark*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary.

Geoffrey Grogan, *Mark: Good News from Jerusalem*, Focus on the Bible Commentary.

Leland Ryken, Introduction to *Mark: Literary Features*, The ESV Study Bible.

R.C. Sproul, *Mark*, The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version.

Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Mark*, The Bible Exposition Commentary.