

**Mark 14:32-72**  
**June 16, 2024**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: What if a Christian leader whom you respected looked you in the eye and predicted that you were going to fail in some way. How do you think you would respond? [Let people engage]

**Transition:**

It's so difficult to wrap our minds around the idea that we would ever betray a Christian leader that we deeply respect, yet today's passage is a sober reminder that when the heat is on, it can surely happen! It's hard enough to watch the strongest person in your life suddenly become weak. Or when children find their parents sick, or when teammates find top players hurt, or when the disciples observing the crucifixion of Jesus.

After sharing a Passover meal, Jesus takes the disciples for a walk. They travel to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was pressed to pray. At this point, Jesus is betrayed by a disciple and abandoned by the rest. He is unfairly arrested and taken to an unjust courtroom. Jesus is beaten and mocked for crimes He never committed. Let's read the text.

**BOOK:**

**Gethsemane**

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

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

<sup>37</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

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

<sup>41</sup> 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 betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

*Jesus Arrested*

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.

<sup>46</sup> The men seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

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

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

### *Before the Sanhedrin*

<sup>53</sup> They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. <sup>54</sup> 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.

<sup>55</sup> 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. <sup>56</sup> Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

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

<sup>60</sup> 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?” <sup>61</sup> But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

<sup>62</sup> “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.”

<sup>63</sup> The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. <sup>64</sup> “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

They all condemned him as worthy of death. <sup>65</sup> 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.

### *Peter Disowns Jesus*

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

“You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.

<sup>68</sup> But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway (and the rooster crowed).

<sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” <sup>70</sup> 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.”

<sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”

<sup>72</sup> 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.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

Jesus, by His example, teaches us that it is legitimate to pray that God would provide us with an “alternative route” and would allow us to avoid the encounter with trial, if it is possible. But, having made that request, we must go on to say with our Lord, “not my will, but your will be done.” In other words, we must accept God’s will, submit to it, and trust in His grace to bring us through the trial.

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 161-163). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

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!

### **In the High Priest’s Palace—Rejected (Mark 14:53–72)**

Both the Jewish trial and the Roman trial were in three stages. The Jewish trial was opened by Annas, the former high priest (John 18:13–24). It then moved to the full council to hear

witnesses (Mark 14:53–65), and then to an early morning session for the final vote of condemnation (Mark 15:1). Jesus was then sent to Pilate (Mark 15:1–5; John 18:28–38), who sent Him to Herod (Luke 23:6–12), who returned Him to Pilate (Mark 15:6–15; John 18:39–19:6). Pilate yielded to the cry of the mob and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

By the time the soldiers arrived at the palace of the high priest, Peter and John, heedless of the Lord's repeated warnings, followed the mob and even went into the courtyard. Jesus that night had sweat "as it were great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), but Peter was cold and sat by the enemy fire! The two disciples could not witness the actual trial, but at least they were near enough to see the outcome (Matt. 26:58; John 18:15).

After questioning and insulting Jesus, Annas sent Jesus bound to his son-in-law Caiaphas, the high priest. The Sanhedrin was assembled and the witnesses were ready. It was necessary to have at least two witnesses before the accused could be declared guilty and worthy of death (Deut. 17:6). Many witnesses testified against Jesus, but since they did not agree, their testimony was invalid. How tragic that a group of religious leaders would encourage people to lie, and during a special holy season!

Throughout this time of false accusation, our Lord said nothing (Isa. 53:7; 1 Peter 2:23). But when the high priest put Him under oath, Jesus had to reply, and He testified clearly that he was indeed the Son of God. The title "Son of man" is messianic (Dan. 7:13), and the members of the council knew exactly what Jesus was saying: He was claiming to be God come in human flesh! This claim, of course, was blasphemy to the Jews, and they declared Him guilty and worthy of death. Since it was irregular for the Sanhedrin to vote on capital cases at night, the council met again early the next morning and gave the official sentence (Mark 15:1).

While the Lord was being mocked and abused, Peter was in the courtyard below, trying to escape detection. Had he heeded the Lord's warnings, he would have avoided walking into temptation and denying his Master three times. He is a warning to all of us, for, after all, if an apostle who walked with Christ denied his Lord, what might we do in similar circumstances? The Roman believers who read Mark's Gospel no doubt learned from this account, for they would soon be entering the furnace of persecution themselves.

First, one of the high priest's servant girls spoke to Peter, and he denied knowing anything about Jesus. Then the cock crowed. Another servant girl pointed Peter out to some of the bystanders, and again Peter denied knowing Jesus. Finally, a man accused him of being one of the disciples, and some of the bystanders joined in; but Peter vehemently denied knowing Jesus, and even put himself under a curse. Then the cock crowed for the second time and the Lord's prediction was fulfilled (see Mark 14:30).

However, it was not the crowing of the cock that convicted Peter; it was the remembering of Christ's words. It is always the Word that penetrates the heart and brings about true repentance. Peter pondered what Jesus had said and what he himself had done; and then Jesus, on His way to Pilate's hall, turned and looked at Peter. It was a look of love, to be sure, but *injured* love (Luke 22:61). His heart broken, Peter went out quickly and wept bitterly.

Before we judge Peter too severely, we need to examine our own lives. How many times have we denied the Lord and lost opportunities to share the Gospel with others? Do we, like Peter, talk when we should listen, argue when we should obey, sleep when we should pray, and fight when we should submit? Peter at least was sorry for his sins and wept over them, and the Lord did forgive him. After His resurrection, Jesus had a private meeting with Peter (Luke 24:34); then Jesus helped Peter make a public confession when He met the disciples in Galilee (John 21).

**Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 179-185) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

b. *Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (14:32–42) (Matt. 26:36–47; Luke 22:39–46)*

This is the third time Mark portrayed Jesus in prayer (cf. Mark 1:35; 6:46). In each case Jesus reaffirmed His commitment to God's will. Though Satan is not mentioned directly, he was no doubt present, giving the event the character of a temptation scene (cf. 1:12–13). The Synoptics give five renderings of Jesus' prayer, all similar but with minor variations. Jesus probably repeated the same request in different ways (cf. 14:37, 39).

14:32–34. Jesus and the 11 disciples came to **Gethsemane** (lit., “press of oils,” i.e., a press for crushing oil out of olives). It was a gardenlike enclosure in an olive orchard near the foot of the Mount of Olives (cf. v. 26; John 18:1). This secluded spot known also to Judas was one of their favorite meeting places (cf. Luke 22:39; John 18:2).

**Jesus told His disciples**—perhaps as He often had done—to **sit** down near the entrance and wait, literally, “until I have prayed.” Then **He** selected **Peter, James, and John** (cf. Mark 5:37; 9:2) to go **along with Him**.

As the four walked into the “garden” Jesus became noticeably **distressed** (from *ekthambeō*, “to be alarmed”; cf. 9:15; 16:5–6) **and troubled** (from *adēmoneō*, “to be in extreme anguish”; cf. Phil. 2:26). He told the three that His **soul** (*psychē*, inner self-conscious life) was **overwhelmed with such sorrow** (*perilypos*, “deeply grieved”; cf. Mark 6:26) that it threatened to extinguish His life. This prompted Him to tell them to remain where they were **and keep watch** (*grēgoreite*; cf. 14:38), be alert. The full impact of His death and its *spiritual* consequences struck Jesus and He staggered under its weight. The prospect of alienation from His Father horrified Him.

14:35–36. Moving forward a short distance from the three and gradually prostrating Himself on **the ground** (cf. Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:41) Jesus **prayed** (*prosēucheto*, “was praying”) aloud with great emotion (Heb. 5:7). His prayer lasted at least an hour (cf. Mark 14:37) but Mark recorded only a brief summary of it, first in narrative form (v. 35b), then in a direct quotation (v. 36).

In essence Jesus requested that **if possible the hour might pass from Him**. The words “if possible” (first-class condition in Gr.) do not express doubt but a concrete supposition on which He based His request. He made His request on the assumption that the Father was able to grant it. The issue remained whether it was God's will to do so (cf. Luke 22:42).

The metaphor “the hour” denoted God's appointed time when Jesus would suffer and die (cf. Mark 14:41b; John 12:23, 27). The corresponding metaphor, **this cup**, referred to the same event. The “cup” means either human suffering and death or more likely, God's wrath against sin, which when poured out includes not only physical but also spiritual suffering and death (cf. Mark 10:38–39; 14:33b–34). In bearing God's judgment the sinless Jesus endured the agony of being “made sin” (cf. 15:34; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The double title **Abba** (Aramaic, “My Father”) **Father** (Gr., *patēr*) occurs only two other times (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). “Abba” was a common way young Jewish children addressed their fathers. It conveyed a sense of familial intimacy and familiarity. The Jews, however, did not use it as a personal address to God since such a familiar term was considered inappropriate in prayer. Thus Jesus' use of *Abba* in addressing God was new and unique. He probably used it often in His

prayers to express His intimate relationship with God as His Father. *Abba* here suggests that Jesus' primary concern in drinking the cup of God's judgment on sin necessarily disrupted this relationship (cf. Jesus' words of address, Mark 15:34).

What did Jesus mean by requesting that the hour "might pass" and that the Father **take** the cup **from** Him? The traditional answer is that Jesus asked to avoid "the hour" hoping, if possible, that it would bypass Him and that the cup would be removed *before* He must drink it. According to this view Jesus prayed a prayer of submission to God's will as He went to the cross. Some interpreters, however, contend that Jesus asked to be restored following "the hour," hoping, if possible, that it would pass on by *after* it came and that the cup would be removed *after* He had drained it (cf. Isa. 51:17–23). In this view, Jesus prayed a prayer of faith that the Father would not abandon Him forever to death under divine wrath but would remove it and resurrect Him.

Though not problem-free (e.g., John 12:27), the traditional view is preferred in light of the contextual factors just discussed, other passages (Matt. 26:39, 42; Luke 22:41–42; Heb. 5:7–8), and the final qualifying statement in Mark 14:36: **Yet** (lit., "but") the final answer, is **not what I** (emphatic) **will but what You** (emphatic) **will**. Jesus' human will was distinct from but never in opposition to the Father's will (cf. John 5:30; 6:38). So He acknowledged that the answer to His request was not governed by what He desired but by what the Father willed. God's will entailed His sacrificial death (cf. Mark 8:31) so He resolutely submitted Himself to it. His deep distress passed from Him but "the hour" did not (cf. 14:41b).

14:37–41a. The emphasis in Mark's narrative now shifts from Jesus' prayer to the three disciples' failure to stay awake (cf. vv. 33–34). Thrice Jesus interrupted His praying and **returned to** where they were only to find **them sleeping**. The first time He addressed **Peter** as **Simon**, his old name (cf. 3:16), and chided him for his failure to **watch for** even **one hour**. Then Jesus exhorted all three, **Watch**, be alert to spiritual dangers, **and pray**, acknowledge dependence on God, **so that you will not fall** (lit., "come") **into temptation**. This anticipated the testings they would face at His arrest and trial (cf. 14:50, 66–72). On the one hand (Gr., *men*) **the spirit** (one's inner desires and best intentions) **is willing** or eager (e.g., Peter, vv. 29, 31), **but** on the other hand (Gr., *de*) **the body** (lit., "flesh"; a person in his humanness and inadequacies) **is weak**, easily overwhelmed in action (e.g., Peter, v. 37).

After going back and praying **the same** petition (cf. v. 36) Jesus returned and **again found them sleeping**. To His words of rebuke they had nothing appropriate **to say** (cf. 9:6).

Following **a third** prayer session, Jesus returned and again found them sleeping. His words (**Are you still sleeping and resting?**) could be a convicting question (NIV), an ironic but compassionate command (KJV), or an exclamation of surprised rebuke. In light of verses 37, 40, the first option seems preferable. Three times Peter failed to watch and pray; three times he would fall into temptation and disown Jesus. This warning applies to all believers, for all are susceptible to spiritual failure (cf. 13:37).

14:41b–42. Probably a short time occurred between verse 41a and 41b. Jesus' word **Enough!** (i.e., of sleeping) aroused the disciples. Then He announced, **The hour** (cf. v. 35) **has come**. **The Son of Man** (cf. 8:31) was about to be **betrayed** (cf. 9:31) **into the hands** (control) **of sinners**, specifically, hostile Sanhedrin members. His **betrayed**, Judas, had arrived. Instead of fleeing, Jesus and the three disciples (no doubt now joined by the other eight) advanced to meet Judas. The issue that prompted Jesus' prayer had been settled (cf. 14:35–36).

c. *Jesus' betrayal and arrest and the disciples' desertion (14:43–52) (Matt. 26:47–56; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:2–12).*

14:43. Immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10), while Jesus **was** still **speaking** to His disciples, **Judas** came **with ... a crowd** of Roman soldiers (cf. John 18:12) **armed with** short hand **swords and** the temple police armed with **clubs** (cf. Luke 22:52). Judas had guided them to Gethsemane (cf. John 18:2) and to Jesus (cf. Acts 1:16) at night so He could be arrested without commotion (cf. Mark 14:1–2). The Sanhedrin (cf. comments on 8:31) issued the warrant for His arrest. The high priest likely secured the aid of the Roman troops.

14:44–47. Judas had given the armed band **a signal** (a **kiss**) that would identify the One they were to **arrest**. They were to **lead Him away under guard** to prevent His escape. When **Judas** entered the “garden,” he **at once** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) went **to Jesus**, greeted Him as **Rabbi** (cf. 4:38; 9:5) **and kissed Him** fervently (intensive compound verb). A kiss on the cheek (or hand) was a common gesture of affection and reverence given to a Rabbi by his disciples. But Judas used it as a token of betrayal.

Since **Jesus** offered no resistance He was easily **seized** and **arrested**. No charges are stated in Mark’s account; nevertheless the legality of His arrest according to Jewish criminal law was assumed since the Sanhedrin authorized it. His apparent defenselessness continued to veil His true identity publicly.

Mark recorded a single-handed attempt at armed resistance by an unnamed bystander (Peter; cf. John 18:10). The Greek wording implies Mark knew who it was. As one of two disciples with a **sword** (cf. Luke 22:38), Peter **drew it and struck** Malchus, **the servant of the high priest**, Caiaphas. But Peter managed to cut **off** only **his right ear** (cf. John 18:10, 13). Only Luke recorded that Jesus restored it (cf. Luke 22:51). Peter’s attempted defense of Jesus was a wrong deed in a wrong place.

14:48–50. Though He offered no resistance **Jesus** did protest to the religious authorities for the excessive display of armed force marshaled against Him as if He had been **leading a rebellion** (lit., “as though they came out against an armed robber”). He was not a revolutionary who acted in stealth but a recognized religious Teacher. **Every day** that week He appeared openly among them in Jerusalem **teaching** (cf. 11:17) **in the temple courts** (*hierō*; cf. 11:11) but they **did not arrest** Him (cf. 12:12; 14:1–2). Their arresting Him like a criminal at night in a secluded place showed their cowardice. But this happened so that **the Scriptures would be fulfilled** (cf. Isa. 53:3, 7–9, 12).

When Jesus’ response made it clear that He would not resist His arrest, the disciples’ loyalty and their confidence in Him as the Messiah collapsed. **Everyone** (“all,” emphatic by position) **deserted Him and fled** (cf. Mark 14:27). No one remained with Jesus to share His suffering—not even Peter (cf. v. 29).

14:51–52. This unusual episode, unique to Mark, supplements verse 50 emphasizing the fact that all fled, leaving Jesus completely forsaken. Most interpreters believe that this **young man** (*neaniskos*, a person in the prime of life, between 24 and 40 years of age) was Mark himself. If so, and if he was the son of the house owner (vv. 14–15; cf. Acts 12:12) that night’s events may have occurred as follows. After Jesus and His disciples left Mark’s father’s house after the Passover, Mark removed his outer cloak (cf. Mark 13:16) and went to bed wrapped in **a linen sleeping garment** (lit., “cloth”). Shortly afterward a servant may have aroused him with the news about Judas’ treachery since Judas and the arresting force had come there looking for Jesus. Without stopping to dress Mark rushed to Gethsemane perhaps to warn Jesus, who had already been arrested when Mark arrived. After all the disciples fled, Mark **was following Jesus** and His captors into the city **when** some of them **seized** Mark, perhaps as a potential witness, but **he fled**



from them **naked, leaving his** linen sleeping **garment** in someone's hands. So no one remained with Jesus—not even a courageous young man who intended to follow Him.

*B. Jesus' trials, crucifixion, and burial (14:53–15:47)*

This division also consists of three cycles of events: Jesus' trials (14:53–15:20), crucifixion (15:21–41), and burial (15:42–47).

1. JESUS' TRIALS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN AND PILATE (14:53–15:20)

Jesus was tried first by the religious authorities and then by the political authorities. This was necessary because the Sanhedrin did not have the power to exercise capital punishment (John 18:31). Each of the two trials had three hearings. (See the chart, "Jesus' Six Trials," at Matt. 26:57–58.)

*a. Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin and Peter's threefold denial (14:53–15:1a)*

Jesus' trial before the Jewish religious authorities included a preliminary hearing by Annas (John 18:12–14, 19–24), an arraignment before Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Sanhedrin at night (Matt. 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65), and a final verdict by the Sanhedrin just after dawn (cf. Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66–71).

(1) Jesus in the high priest's residence and Peter in the courtyard (14:53–54; Matt. 26:57–58; Luke 22:54; John 18:15–16, 18, 24). 14:53. Jesus' captors led Him under guard from Gethsemane back into Jerusalem **to the** residence of the **high priest**, Joseph Caiaphas (cf. Matt. 26:57), who held this office from A.D. 18 to 36 (see the chart on Annas' family at Acts 4:5–6).

The 71-member Sanhedrin (cf. comments on Mark 8:31), including the presiding high priest, was hastily assembled in an upstairs room (cf. 14:66) for a plenary night session. This was an "informal" trial that required a "formal" ratification after dawn (cf. 15:1) to satisfy strict Jewish legal procedure allowing trials only in the daytime. A quorum consisted of 23 members (Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 1. 6) but on this occasion the majority were probably there even though it was around 3 A.M. on Nisan 15 (Friday), a feast day.

This hasty night meeting was deemed necessary because: (1) In Jewish criminal law it was customary to hold a trial immediately after arrest. (2) Roman legal trials were usually held shortly after sunrise (cf. 15:1) so the Sanhedrin needed a binding verdict by daybreak in order to get the case to Pilate early. (3) With Jesus finally in custody they did not want to delay proceedings, thereby arousing opposition to His arrest. Actually they had already determined to kill Him (cf. 14:1–2); their only problem was getting evidence that would justify it (cf. v. 55). Perhaps also they wished to have the Romans crucify Jesus to avoid the people's blaming the Sanhedrin for His death.

Some have questioned the legality of a capital trial on a feast day in light of certain Rabbinic legal ordinances. However, the Rabbis justified the trial and execution of serious offenders on a major feast day. That way, they argued, "all the people will hear and be afraid" (Deut. 17:13; cf. Deut. 21:21). Normally in capital cases a conviction verdict could not be legally determined until the following day.

14:54. **Peter** (cf. vv. 29, 31, 50) regained enough courage to follow Jesus **at a distance, right** inside **the courtyard of the high priest**. This was a central quadrangle with the high priest's residence built around it (cf. John 18:15–18). Peter **sat** there **with the guards**, the temple police, and **warmed himself at** a charcoal **fire** (lit., "facing the light" of the fire, so his face was

illuminated; cf. Mark 14:67) because of the cold night air. He wanted to know what would happen to Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:58).

(2) Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin (14:55–65; Matt. 26:59–68). The material in this section probably rests on the report of one or more Sanhedrin members who were secretly sympathetic to Jesus or who were against Him originally but later came to believe in Him (cf. Acts 6:7).

14:55–56. The **Sanhedrin** began their deliberations by seeking **evidence** (lit., “testimony”) **against Jesus** in order to justify a **death** sentence **but they** found none (lit., “were **not** finding **any**”). They did not lack witnesses because **many** were testifying **falsely against Him, but their** testimony was invalid because their **statements** (lit., “testimonies”) **did not agree** (lit., “were not equal”). Various unverified charges were made and numerous discrepancies arose in testimony on the same charge. Perhaps these witnesses were already on call prior to Jesus' arrest but did not coordinate their stories. In Jewish trials the witnesses served as the prosecution, giving their testimonies separately. Convicting a person for a crime, the Mosaic Law required precise agreement in the testimony of at least two witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

14:57–59. In due time **some** witnesses (“two”; cf. Matt. 26:60) declared they had heard Jesus say: **I** (*egō*, emphatic) **will destroy this man-made temple** (*naon*, “the sanctuary”; cf. Mark 11:11), **and in three days will build another** (*allon*, “another” of a different kind), **not made by man. Yet even** in this **testimony** there were unspecified discrepancies, so Mark labeled it **false**.

Jesus had made a cryptic statement similar to this (John 2:19) but He was referring to the “temple” of His body (cf. John 2:20–22). These witnesses, like those present at the time, misinterpreted His words as a reference to the Jerusalem temple. Destruction of a worship place was a capital offense in the ancient world (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 10. 6. 2). Though their testimony was invalid, it opened the way for questions about Jesus' identity (Mark 14:61) and led to the taunt recorded in 15:29.

14:60–61a. **The high priest** Caiaphas **asked Jesus** two questions to get information that could be used against Him. In Greek the first question expects a positive answer: “**You are going to answer** Your accusers, aren't You?” The second question expected an explanation from Him: “**What is** the meaning of the charges **these witnesses are** making **against You?**” **But Jesus remained silent and gave no** defense (cf. Isa. 53:7). His silence frustrated the court and brought its proceedings to a standstill.

14:61b–62. **The high priest** changed tactics and **asked** (lit., “kept asking”) Jesus pointedly, **Are You** (emphatic) **the Christ** (the Messiah; cf. 1:1; 8:29), **the Son of the Blessed One?** The title “Blessed One,” found in this sense only here in the New Testament, is a Jewish substitute for “God” (cf. Mishnah *Berachoth* 7. 3). These two titles of Jesus both refer to His claim to be the Messiah.

**Jesus** unequivocally answered, **I am**, that is, “I am the Messiah, the Son of God.” This is the first time in Mark's Gospel that He openly declared He is the Messiah (cf. comments on 1:43–44; 8:29–30; 9:9; 11:28–33; 12:12). In proof of this—something the Jews expected the true Messiah to provide—Jesus made a startling prediction. Applying words from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 to Himself, He stated, **And you** (His human judges) **will see the Son of Man** (cf. Mark 8:31, 38) **sitting at the right hand**, exalted to the place of highest honor and authority (cf. 12:36), **of the Mighty One** (lit., “the Power”), a Jewish substitute title for “God” (cf. 14:61), **and coming on** (lit., “with”) **the clouds of heaven** to judge (cf. 8:38; 13:26). The fact that they “will see” this did not mean Jesus would return in their lifetimes. Rather it referred indirectly to bodily resurrection in judgment before the exalted Son of Man who will one day judge those who were judging Him. Then it will be unmistakably clear that He is God's Anointed One, the Messiah.

14:63–64. By tearing **his clothes**, probably his inner garments rather than his official robes, **the high priest** showed that he regarded Jesus' bold declaration as **blasphemy**. To him, Jesus' words dishonored God by claiming rights and powers belonging exclusively to God (cf. 2:7). This symbolic expression of horror and indignation was required of the high priest whenever he heard blasphemy. His reaction also expressed relief since Jesus' self-incriminating answer removed the **need for more witnesses**.

The Mosaic Law prescribed death by stoning for blasphemy (Lev. 24:15–16). Without further investigation the high priest called for a verdict from the Sanhedrin. Since there were no objections **they all condemned Him** (cf. Mark 10:33) **as worthy** (*enochon*, “guilty, liable”; cf. 3:29) **of death**.

14:65. **Some** Sanhedrin members showed their contempt through mockery and physical abuse. To **spit** in someone's face was an act of total repudiation and gross personal insult (cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9; Job 30:10; Isa. 50:6). On account of His messianic claims **they blindfolded Him, struck Him with their fists and** demanded that He **prophesy** who hit Him. This reflects a traditional test of messianic status based on a Rabbinic interpretation of Isaiah 11:2–4. The true Messiah could judge such matters without the benefit of sight (cf. Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 93b). But Jesus refused to submit to their test and remained silent (cf. Isa. 53:7; 1 Peter 2:23). When He was returned to the temple **guards** (cf. Mark 14:54), they followed their superiors' example and continued beating **Him** with open-handed slaps on the face (cf. Luke 22:63–65).

(3) Peter's threefold denial of Jesus (14:66–72; Matt. 26:69–75; Luke 22:55–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27). All four Gospels record this episode with variations, but without contradicting each other. Mark's vivid account probably came from Peter. It resumes Mark 14:54, showing that Peter's ordeal coincided with Jesus' interrogation before the Sanhedrin. After this denial account Mark resumed his report of the Sanhedrin's action (cf. 15:1a).

14:66–68. **One of the** high priest's **servant girls**, presumably the inner courtyard's doorkeeper (cf. John 18:16) approached **Peter** while he warmed himself by the fire **in the courtyard** (cf. Mark 14:54; 15:16) which apparently **was below** the upstairs room where Jesus' trial was taking place. After **she looked closely** (from *emlepeō*; cf. 10:21) **at him**, she blurted out contemptuously, **You** (emphatic singular pronoun) **also** (John was there too; cf. John 18:15) **were with** (cf. Mark 3:14) **that Nazarene** (cf. 1:24; 10:47), **Jesus**.

Her charge correctly identified Peter as a disciple **but he denied** (*ērnēsato*; cf. 8:34; 14:30) **it**, refusing to acknowledge his relationship to Jesus out of fear for his safety. His denial was a common Jewish legal expression, literally, “**I** neither **know** nor **understand what** you (emphatic) are saying.” To avoid further exposure he **went out into the entryway**, the covered passageway leading to the street.

Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts and early versions include the words “and the rooster crowed” (NIV; KJV) at the end of verse 68. This evidence plus the strongly attested words “the second time” in verse 72 favor inclusion of these words. Since only one rooster-crowing is mentioned in the parallel passages (cf. Matt. 26:74; Luke 22:60; John 18:27) these words were probably omitted from Mark very early by some scribes to conform to the parallels. But Mark was simply more specific than the other Gospels, probably because of Peter's vivid recollection. Apparently this first rooster-crowing held no significance for Peter since it happened every morning (cf. Mark 13:35b; 14:72).

14:69–71. **The same servant girl** along with others (cf. Matt. 26:71; Luke 22:58) **saw** Peter in the entryway and **again** identified him **to** the bystanders as **one of Jesus’ disciples**. **Again he denied** (lit., “kept denying,”) **it**.

About an hour later (cf. Luke 22:59) the bystanders (again, in Gr.) confronted **Peter** with the charge, **Surely** (lit., “truly,” despite his denials) **you are one of them** (the disciples), **for** (“because”) **you are** (“also,” in Gr.) **a Galilean**. Galileans spoke an Aramaic dialect with noticeable differences in pronunciation (cf. Matt. 26:73). So they concluded he was a follower of that heretic Galilean, Jesus.

The fact that Peter **began to call down curses on himself and that he swore to them** does not mean he used profanity. Rather he placed himself under God’s curse if he were lying to them and put himself under oath, as in a courtroom, to confirm the veracity of his denial. Carefully avoiding the use of Jesus’ name Peter emphatically denied any knowledge of **this Man** they were **talking about**.

14:72. Peter’s third denial in less than two hours was **immediately** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) punctuated by the rooster’s **second** crowing (cf. 14:68, NIV) This time he suddenly **remembered** Jesus’ prediction of his denial made earlier that night (vv. 29–31). Peter also saw **Jesus** looking down at him (Luke 22:61). Overwhelmed, **he broke down and wept**.

In contrast with Judas (Matt. 27:3–5) Peter’s remorse opened the way for true repentance and a reaffirmation of his loyalty to Jesus as the risen Lord (cf. Mark 16:7; John 21:15–19). Peter had a faith in Jesus that could be renewed, but Judas did not.

(4) The Sanhedrin’s verdict at dawn (15:1a; Matt. 27:1; Luke 22:66–71). 15:1a. Immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) after daybreak—between 5 and 6 A.M., probably on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33—**the whole Sanhedrin** (cf. 14:53) led by **the chief priests** formalized their condemnation of Jesus and **reached a decision**, a plan of action for getting a guilty verdict from the Roman governor.

Though the Sanhedrin could pronounce a death sentence it could not exercise capital punishment. So a condemned prisoner had to be turned over to the Roman authorities for a death sentence to be carried out (cf. John 18:31). The Roman governor could either ratify or rescind the Sanhedrin’s death sentence (cf. John 19:10). If rescinded, a new trial had to be conducted before a Roman court in which the Sanhedrin had to prove that the defendant had committed a capital crime under Roman law. Since the charge of blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:64) was not punishable by Roman law it was not mentioned in the following trial. In its place the Sanhedrin substituted a charge of treason, turning Jesus’ acknowledgment that He was the Messiah into a traitorous political claim that He is “the King of the Jews” (cf. 15:2; Luke 23:2). The Roman court surely could not ignore that charge.

**Church, C.L. (1998). *Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 442-443). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

### **PRAYER IN CRISIS (14:32–53)**

At Gethsemane Jesus responded to crisis with prayer. Gethsemane called into question Jesus’ foundational beliefs. Jesus addressed God as “Abba,” His “Papa,” who loved Him (1:11; see 9:7). Gethsemane threatened faith in such a Father. Jesus taught that everything was possible for one who believed and prayed (9:23; 11:23–24). Gethsemane raised the awful possibility that something was not possible for God—the passing of Jesus’ hour of suffering and death. Mark shows a frankly human Jesus, “deeply distressed and troubled,” repeatedly falling on the ground in anguished prayer. Despite the test of faith, Jesus emerged reaffirming faith in God’s

possibilities and recommitting Himself to God's will. The disciples' repeated failure warns contemporary believers to be alert and pray in time of temptation.

Judas, one of the Twelve, betrayed Jesus. His betrayal cautions that it is not enough to be near Jesus, to have been called to discipleship, to have received Jesus' love. Discipleship entails commitment of life to this suffering Christ. Another disciple responded to the arresting mob with violent resistance. The response is inappropriate: Jesus had already accepted the necessity of His suffering and death (8:31; 9:31; 10:32, 45). In a real sense the betrayer and arresting mob were unnecessary; Jesus did not run from His fate. He would die to satisfy Scripture rather than human plans. Though the disciples were called to be with Jesus (3:14) and had promised to die with Him, they all abandoned Him.

### **WITNESS UNTO DEATH (14:54–72)**

The picture of Peter following “at a distance” and warming himself at the fire contrasts sharply with that of Jesus on trial for His life. The shadow of the cross was heavy when Jesus revealed the mystery of His identity to the high priest. Yes, He was the Son of God (“the Blessed One,”) and the Son of man, to whom God had entrusted judgment (Dan. 7:13). Jesus' faithful witness under pain of death contrasts with Peter's denial of discipleship. The servant girl's charge, “You also were with ... Jesus” echoes Jesus' commission that the disciples “might be with him” (3:14). Peter's concern for comfort and safety led him in the end to brokenness and weeping.

***Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 630-632). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

Jesus' agonizing moments in Gethsemane's shadows are described in 14:32–42. This small enclosure, filled with olive trees, was a favorite place of repose for Jesus. He asked the same apostles who had seen his glory on the mount of transfiguration to come and witness his agony. The victory came through prayer (v. 41), and even at that triumphant moment he knew the presence of his enemies who had come to take him.

Mark's rapidly moving drama now records the betrayal kiss and arrest of Jesus (vv. 43–52). Among the shadows of the ancient olive trees, and in the dim light of the torches, it was hard to tell one person from another. Judas had obviously agreed in advance to signal which one Jesus was. The signal would be the greeting of a traditional kiss, customary from a disciple to his master. The kiss on the forehead was all the soldiers needed.

John revealed that Peter took the sword and tried to kill a soldier. It could have been the bad light or poor aim, but he only got an ear! Luke reminds us that Jesus healed the ear.

There are a number of interesting possibilities regarding 14:51–52. This is the only Gospel which records this incident and it is entirely likely that this person was the author, Mark himself. Most New Testament scholars believe that the Passover meal was eaten in the home of Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). If this be the case, it is entirely possible that the young man, John Mark, was in bed when the soldiers came to his home. The curious lad may have wrapped a bed sheet about himself and gone out to see what would take place. When all the apostles started running (v. 50), Mark probably ran with them. In their attempt to capture this fleet young man, the soldiers came out with a sheet, or a linen cloth, and nothing more!

### **V. THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL (MARK 14:53–14:72)**

## **The Trial of Jesus (Mark 14:53–14:72)**

*The passage*—The full details of the trial of Jesus must be pieced together from all four Gospels. There are two sections to the trial, before the Jews and before the Romans. Each of these two consists of three phases.

The Sanhedrin's illegal trial (14:53–65) was held in violation of their own rules. It was decreed that they could not meet at night nor during any of the great feasts. Their law also required that if a death verdict were given, a night must elapse before it was carried out in order to have time for reconsideration. Their animosity had reached the point that they were not interested in administering justice, they were interested in killing Jesus.

During the testimony, Jesus did not speak. Finally Caiaphas asked Jesus if he were the Messiah. This could be construed as insurrection against Rome and would be grounds for death. Jesus responded positively in language which incited the wrath of the Sadducees. Pandemonium broke loose, and their great hour arrived. They used the occasion to spit on Jesus, to strike him, and call upon him to show them his ability to prophecy.

The denials of Peter are fast moving and decisive (14:66–72). The redeeming feature of this is that Peter knew he was wrong and wept bitter tears of remorse. As inexcusable as his conduct was, we can be grateful it was not unforgiveable.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 14:32-72. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**