

Lesson Twelve

(Mark 14:32-15:15)

The Cup of Suffering

(Mark 14:32-42)

32 They came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 Then he took Peter, James, and John with him. Distress and anguish came over him, 34 and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and watch."

35 He went a little farther on, threw himself on the ground, and prayed that, if possible, he might not have to go through the hour of suffering. 36 "Father!" he prayed, "my Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But not what I want, but what you want."

37 Then he returned and found the three disciples asleep, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Weren't you able to stay awake for one hour?" 38 And he said to them, "Keep watch, and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

39 He went away once more and prayed, saying the same words. 40 Then he came back to the disciples and found them asleep; they could not keep their eyes open. And they did not know what to say to him.

41 When he came back the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come! Look, the Son of Man is now handed over to the power of sinful men. 42 Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!"

The overriding theme of the Old Testament portion of the Bible is the living God, the strict Judge, punishing the sinner, loving the penitent and guiltless and evoking fear and awe, utterly ethical and moral, the righteous One leaping out of those pages and demanding our obedient response. If God is truly righteous, and if we are truly to let God be God and his righteousness be revealed in a world of tragedy and suffering and moral failure, there is only one way in which this can happen. There is only one way in which a fully personal and truly just God can realize his purpose in such a world as this. That is, by himself bearing the suffering of the world and the consequences of our transgression. How can he be the just God of the Bible unless he suffers more than any man in total innocence? This is the only way in which his justice can be realized, and his compassion and his righteousness meet perfectly. The *wounded Man* in the heavens (the crucified Christ) becomes the fulfillment of the inner logic of the Bible. God becomes *God-in-history*. Compare Rom. 8:1-4; Acts 13:26-39.

Gethsemane was an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Jesus came here with the intention of praying. The time of his death was drawing close, and he experienced the same agony that we would feel in similar circumstances (compare Heb. 4:15). *This was no make-believe!!!* Jesus said: *"The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me."* Compare Heb. 5:7-10 (note verses seven and eight are being spoken about Jesus). As the *temptation* of these last hours came to Jesus, he had to resist

it with all the strength he had! He speaks to his Father in the tender, confident language of a child: *“Father, my Father!”* All things are possible with God, yet the cup of suffering had to be drunk to the fullest. He was not exempt from suffering just because he was God’s Son. He learned first-hand how difficult it is for men to obey God. He learned this by experience, and he also learned what kind of help humans need to help them *stand in the whirlwind*. But more than just suffering was involved. Christ drank the cup of God’s wrath as our *proxy* (*“but for our sake God make him share our sin . . .”* 2 Cor. 5:21). Certainly the fact that Christ was taking on himself the sins of all mankind from the beginning to the end of time -- was the bitterest factor of all in the cup of suffering. Added to this was the treachery of Judas, the desertion of the disciples, Peter’s denial, the trail before the council, the trial before Pilate, the whipping, the soldiers making fun of him, the cruel death by crucifixion, etc. Christ prayed to the Father and he heard him (Heb. 5:7).

But the question was not: “What do I want?” It was: “What You want.” Jesus had said: *“But that is why I came -- so that I might go through this hour of suffering”* (John 12:27). His whole life on earth has been preparation for this *hour*. His death will fulfill God’s purpose (compare Luke 9:31). Without His death, He would be a seed preserved but not planted, and therefore *fruitless!*

Luke explains the strange action of the three disciples by saying they were “worn out by their grief” (Luke 22:45). Had Jesus expected them to pray with Him??? His words to them (verse 38) show that they were not able to face temptation either then or later. *“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Only Mark records the personal rebuke to Peter in verse 37.) Twice more Jesus repeats this prayer. Then he says: *“Get up, let us go.”* The traitor and the enemy are here!

The Arrest of Jesus

(Mark 14:43-52)

43 Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived. With him was a crowd carrying swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders. 44 The traitor had given the crowd a signal: “The man I kiss is the one you want. Arrest him and take him away under guard.”

45 As soon as Judas arrived he went up to Jesus and said, “Teacher!” and kissed him. 46 So they arrested Jesus and held him tight. 47 But one of those standing by drew his sword and struck at the High Priest’s slave, cutting off his ear. 48 Then Jesus spoke up and said to them, “Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me, as though I were an outlaw? 49 Day after day I was with you teaching in the temple, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must come true.”

50 Then all the disciples left him and ran away.

51 A certain young man, dressed only in a linen cloth, was following Jesus. They tried to arrest him, 52 but he ran away naked, leaving the linen cloth behind.

Did God answer Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane??? Heb. 5:7 says he did! Luke says an angel came and strengthened him. A prayer to remove a crisis may be answered in two ways: 1) the crisis is taken away, and we remain the same; 2) we are made so

strong that the crisis ceases to be such a problem. With strength won by prayer, Jesus goes confidently to meet those who have come to arrest him.

We can only look in amazement at the sins of Judas. He was one of the Twelve; he spoke to Jesus as “Teacher” (literally Rabbi) he gave Jesus a kiss of greeting (the Jews kissed as we would shake hands); and he did these things voluntarily -- of his own free will. Mark makes no attempt to cover up what Judas did, nor to explain it. We can only guess at the motives behind his action. Probably he was most disappointed that Jesus had not led an armed uprising against the Romans. Since the others clearly did not understand what Jesus had come to do, certainly Judas would still be thinking in political terms. Money was also a factor. Thirty pieces of silver would be the wage of 30 days for a working man! He may have thought that Jesus was not going to be killed anyway. The rulers could not overcome such a miracle worker as Jesus. He may have thought that if Jesus was killed, he would never get to be treasurer of the earthly kingdom he expected, and so he ought to get what he could out of the situation. But only the Lord knows all the motives which drove Judas.

Judas had come with a large crowd made up of soldiers and temple guards (see John 18:3, 12). These had instructions to arrest only Jesus, and they make no attempt to seize any of the disciples, even though Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the High Priest’s slave (see John 18:10). Mark records the protest of Jesus at being treated as an *outlaw* (verses 48-49). “Thief” is now an incorrect translation. The word means “outlaw” or “insurrectionist,” and would likely be “armed terrorist” in the newspaper. It is ironic that Jesus was charged with being an insurrectionist, and Barabbas, who was an insurrectionist, was set free. Compare Luke 23:2; Mark 15:7.) When Jesus said the Scriptures must come true, he may have been thinking of Isaiah 53, especially verses three and twelve. As soon as the crowd captured Jesus, the disciples all ran away into the darkness. They had been quick to promise their loyalty (verse 31), but they panicked and fled like sheep! Mimpriss writes: “This statement of the desertion of Jesus by all the disciples is one of the most remarkable instances of that honesty which led the evangelists to record facts, though to their own dishonor.”

Only Mark records the incident in verses 51-52. This points to his own self being the “certain young man.” Mark’s mother lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25), and some think the Passover was eaten and the Lord’s Supper instituted in the upstairs room of her house. Perhaps he had been sleeping and had risen quickly from bed to follow Jesus and the others out to the garden. The “linen cloth” was a nightrobe which only the wealthy would wear. Mark was not an apostle, but he was very close to them. This whole incident shows the panic of the disciples when the attack suddenly struck them.

The Jewish Trial

(Mark 14:53-65)

53 Then they took Jesus to the High Priest’s house, where all the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the Law were gathering. 54 Peter followed from a distance and went into the courtyard of the High Priest’s house. There he sat down with the guards, keeping himself warm by the fire. 55 The chief priests and the whole Council tried to find some evidence against Jesus, in order to put him to death; but they could not find any. 56 Many witnesses told lies against Jesus, but their stories did not agree.

57 Then some men stood up and told this lie against Jesus, 58 “We heard him say, ‘I will tear down this temple which men made, and after three days I will build one that is not made by men.’” 59 Not even they, however, could make their stories agree.

60 The High Priest stood up in front of them all and questioned Jesus, “Have you no answer to the accusation they bring against you?”

61 But Jesus kept quiet and would not say a word. Again the High Priest questioned him, “Are you the messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?”

62 “I am,” answered Jesus, “and you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right side of the Almighty, and coming with the clouds of heaven!”

63 The High Priest tore his robes and said, “We don’t need any more witnesses!

64 You heard his wicked words. What is your decision?”

They all voted against him: he was guilty and should be put to death. 65 Some of them began to spit on Jesus, and they blindfolded him and hit him. “Guess who hit you!” they said. And the guards took him and slapped him.

The scene here takes place at night. The Jewish council (Sanhedrin) of seventy-two (presided over by the High Priest) was made up of representatives from the priestly families, the teachers of the law, and elders of the people. Lawyers and judges have studied this trial, and have said that it flagrantly violated the rules of Jewish law! The accused was deprived of his rights and treated worse than a criminal! His arrest was at night (illegal); he was tied-up as an outlaw; he was beaten before his arraignment before the court; he was abused in open court during the trial. His trial was on a “feast-day” (illegal) and before sunrise (illegal). He was forced to incriminate himself (illegal) and this under the solemn oath (charge) of the court. He was convicted, sentenced, and executed the same day. All this was contrary to Jewish law.

Here is the order of events after the arrest: 1) Jesus is taken before Annas, ex-high priest (Pilate had appointed Caiaphas, see Luke 3:2), for a preliminary hearing (see John 18:13). 2) Next to Caiaphas, with Peter and John following along (John 18:15, 24). Alford says both Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same *great building*, which must have been the Castle of Antonia -- a “city within a city.” 3) First stage of Jewish trial before Caiaphas (John 18:19-24). It is possible that Jesus was shuffled from room to room, since both Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same castle. The Jewish trial was illegal by their own law, since it took place at night. 4) Peter’s three denials during the Jewish trial (Matt. 26:69-75). 5) After condemning Jesus to death, the council recessed until dawn. 6) It is implied that Jesus was cruelly treated during the recess (Mark 14:65). 7) The council reconvened at dawn (Matt. 27:1). This would be the third stage of the Jewish trial -- to *legalize* the whole thing. 8) Jesus is again questioned and officially condemned to death (Luke 22:66-71). 9) Jesus is tied with chains and taken to Pilate (Mark 15:1).

The purpose was simple. They had already decided to put Jesus to death. But they had to do it in such a way that they could *justify* what they had done. Jewish law required the testimony of at least two witnesses, and their testimonies had to agree. It had to be a charge which would “hold up in court; that is, something which would convince the Roman ruler that he should condemn the prisoner to death. (The Roman government reserved the right of capital punishment for themselves. They did not permit the Jews to execute a prisoner on their own.) But their lying witnesses could not get together on their stories (verse 56). Finally two bring up the charge about destroying the temple. This

gives the High Priest an idea (compare 2 Sam. 7:13; Zech. 6:12-13). What Jesus had said could be taken as a claim to *divinity*. The High Priest puts Jesus on oath (see Matt. 26:63) to tell the truth: “*Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?*” Jesus’ answer means: “*You have declared the truth in what you said.*” At the greatest moment of crisis in his life, Jesus breaks his silence to declare himself the Son of God! -- at the cost of his life. Then he emphasized his declaration by using the words of Psalm 110 and Daniel 7:13. Verse 62 should not be taken as a prediction of the Second Coming. Rather, what they were doing right then would raise Jesus to glory on the *cross*, bring the victory of the Resurrection, and seat him at the right side of God in heaven. Their places would shortly be reversed, with Jesus on the throne, and them standing to be judged by him!!!

Peter Denies Jesus

(Mark 14:66-72)

66 Peter was still down in the courtyard when one of the High Priest’s servant girls came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked straight at him and said, “You, too, were with Jesus of Nazareth.”

68 But he denied it. “I don’t know . . . I don’t understand what you are talking about,” he answered, and went out into the passageway; just then a rooster crowed.

69 The servant girl saw him there and began to repeat to the bystanders, “He is one of them!” 70 But Peter denied it again.

A little while later the bystanders accused Peter again, “You can’t deny that you are one of them, because you, too, are from Galilee.”

71 Then Peter made a vow: “May God punish me if I am not telling the truth! I do not know the man you are talking about!”

72 Just then a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows two times you will say three times that you do not know me.” And he broke down and cried.

The brief mention of Peter in verse 54 is to remind us that he was present (along with John, see John 18:15-18) throughout the trial, and to prepare us for the denial. It isn’t a very pretty record that the disciples had during this crisis. They continually misunderstood the things that Jesus taught, one of them had turned traitor, they had all left him and run away at the arrest, and now the “leader” of the group openly denies his Lord.

The Castle of Antonia had a courtyard in the center, enclosed by rooms built around it. Doors and windows opened into the courtyard from the rooms (they had no window glass), so Peter and John could sit and watch the things which were happening inside. Luke gives the most complete account of the denial. Peter sits warming himself at the fire, along with the guards and servants. One of the High Priest’s servant girls (John identifies her as the girl at the gate) recognizes Peter in the dim light, as one who had been with Jesus of Nazareth. (Nazareth was a “hick-town,” and *Nazarene* was an

insult, see John 1:46.) Just a few hours earlier, Peter had been ready to die with Jesus! Now he is on the spot. A wrong word will place him up there in front of the High Priest also, or at least this is how Peter must see it. He takes the easy way out (Would we do any differently???) and denies that he knows anything at all about this Jesus. Then he moves away to escape any more questions. At this point the rooster crows the first time. But the servant girl will not give up and she continues to accuse Peter. He again denies that he has anything to do with Jesus. (Matthew shows Peter using an oath or vow to strengthen his denial this second time.) The third time the bystanders join in also in accusing him. Luke says this was about an hour later, and John says the man who spoke was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. Each language has its dialects, and Peter's accent clearly identifies him as a Galilean. The man says this is proof that Peter is one of *them*! (Eleven of the Twelve were Galileans.) This time Peter makes his statement as strong as he can! He calls down God's curse on himself to witness the truth of what he is saying (but of course he is telling a lie). The TEV reconstructs the language so we will not misunderstand what Peter is doing. *"I swear that I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know the man you are talking about!"* Just then a rooster crows the second time, and Peter remembers it all in a flash! Jesus had predicted. *"Before the rooster crows two times, you will say three times that you do not know me."* Luke says the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter at this time. Peter breaks down and cries. He has sinned greatly! His heart is broken!

The Scriptures reveal all the "warts and wrinkles" of the great men of faith (and also the great women of faith). This is a vital lesson for those under persecution. Even such a sin as this *can be forgiven!* *"If we are not faithful, he remains faithful, because he cannot be false to himself"* (2 Tim. 2:13). But notice carefully the important difference between the actions of Peter and Judas. Peter's sorrow makes him turn away from his sin (i.e., repent) and turn back to Christ. Judas' sorrow makes him despair and kill himself. Compare 2 Cor. 7:10. Peter basically *loved God*. The fact that he sinned in a weak moment did not destroy that love, and so he came back! Judas, however, *did not love God*, and so he could not find it in himself to return to God and ask forgiveness. The opposite of *love* is *fear* (compare 1 John 4:18). Fear drove Judas to suicide.

The Roman Trial

(Mark 15:1-15)

15 *Early in the morning the chief priests met hurriedly with the elders, the teachers of the Law, and the whole Council, and made their plans. They put Jesus in chains, took him away, and handed him over to Pilate. 2 Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"*

Jesus answered, "So you say."

3 *The chief priests accused Jesus of many things, 4 so Pilate questioned him again, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they accuse you of!"*

5 *Again Jesus refused to say a word, and Pilate was filled with surprise.*

6 *At every Passover Feast Pilate would set free any prisoner the people asked for. 7 At that time a man named Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder in the riot. 8 When the crowd gathered and began to ask Pilate for the usual favor, 9 he asked them, "Do you want me to set free for you the king of the Jews?" 10*

He knew very well that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous.

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask, instead, for Pilate to set Barabbas free for them. 12 Pilate spoke again to the crowd, "What, then, do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews?"

13 They shouted back, "Nail him to the cross!"

14 "But what crime has he committed?" Pilate asked. They shouted all the louder, "Nail him to the cross!"

15 Pilate wanted to please the crowd, so he set Barabbas free for them. Then he had Jesus whipped and handed him over to be nailed to the cross.

The ancient world got up early in the morning, and it could have been no later than 6 a.m. when the council met to put the official stamp of approval on what they had done in the night. The Jewish council had charged Jesus with blasphemy (*but He really was the Son of God!*). This would not do in the Roman court, however, and the charge was reframed. A sentence of death had to be cleared with the Roman court, and so the charge is made that Jesus was a political danger to the Roman government. It is ironic that Barabbas was such a danger (verse seven). *Zealots* (at least some of them) were *vigilante-outlaws* who used the cloak of "freedom-fighter" to cover their hoodlum activities. This helps to explain why the Jewish leaders would make such a charge against Jesus. They felt it would hold up in the Roman court. (The choice of Barabbas was prophetic of the doom of the Jewish nation. The ferment generated by the Zealots created the Jewish wars which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem. During the last siege, bands of zealots roamed inside the city looting and killing and burning.)

There is no excuse for what Pilate did, yet we can understand something of why he did it. Jerusalem was crowded with perhaps three million people, and only a small Roman garrison (about 1000) was on hand to keep order. He knew he was executing an innocent man, and he probably could have done something about it. But human life was cheap, and Pilate took the easy way out (as so many do).

"*Crucify him!*" is the decision of the Jewish leaders and the people they represent. Jesus, the innocent man, will receive the punishment which Barabbas should have received for his crimes. Matthew shows Pilate washing his hands as a symbolic act. Pilate says: "*I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!*" The whole crowd answers back: "*Let the punishment for his death fall on us and on our children!*" They understood what Pilate has said, and they are willing to accept the guilt. But later they try to escape from what they have done (see Acts 5:28). Luke 11:50 records this prediction of Jesus: "*So the people of this time will be punished for the murder of all the prophets killed since the creation of the world.*" Compare Luke 23:27-31; Deut. 28:49-57; 1 Thess. 2:14-16.

As was customary, Pilate had Jesus whipped before handing him over to the soldiers. The whip was made of leather strips, and had small sharp pieces of bone or stone tied into the ends, and would cut the skin. This was done cruelly to drain the strength of the condemned man before nailing him to the cross.

Questions for Discussion

(Mark 14:32-15:15)

1. Why did Jesus go to Gethsemane? What need did this fill?
2. In what way is the inner logic of the Bible fulfilled in Jesus?
3. Where and what was “Gethsemane”?
4. Didn’t Jesus know what the Father wanted? Why then the prayer in verse 36?
5. Who were the “sinful men” to whom the Son of Man was being handed over?
6. How do we “share in His sufferings” (Phil 3:10; Col. 1:24)? Does the event in Gethsemane teach us anything about this?
7. How did God answer Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane?
8. Why the need for a signal? Why use a kiss as a sign?
9. What was right and wrong in Peter’s defense of Jesus (verse 57)?
10. How did Jesus plainly show that no one could arrest him without his consent (verses 48-49)?

11. What scripture came true in the betrayal and capture of Jesus?
12. Why the incident of the young man in verses 51-52?
13. The Jewish leaders were very concerned about ethical behavior. Did they carefully follow the rules of procedure in the Jewish trial?
14. Why was the whole council so eager to condemn Jesus to death?
15. Why did the High Priest personally try to get Jesus to answer the charges?
16. Why did Jesus answer the second question, but not the first one?
17. Just what was the specific charge of *blasphemy*?
8. Why did Jesus say what he did in verse 62?
19. Where was Peter during the Jewish trial?
20. Where was this courtyard and how were the surroundings arranged?
21. Why was Peter so quick in his denial? Wouldn't it have been easier to just ignore the whole thing?

22. Did Peter have reason to be ashamed of his association with Jesus?

23. What was Peter doing in verse 71? It was not “profanity.”

24. Both Judas and Peter *denied* Jesus and in effect, both *betrayed* Him. What was the difference between the two? Why was Peter forgiven, but not Judas?

25. Why were the Jewish leaders so anxious to bring Jesus before Pilate?

26. Why did they reframe the charge against him?

27. Did Pilate believe Jesus was guilty as charged?

28. Why did the crowd demand that Barabbas be released instead of Jesus?

29. Pilate really tried to set Jesus free. What was the great sin of Pilate?

30. In what ways do the four Gospels show Jesus as the innocent victim who is forced to suffer unjustly?