

Mark Study
Week 22
Mark 14:66-15:34

Day One

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 on himself, 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.

v. 66 – The high priest must have been wealthy, for he had some servants. Peter and the disciples had argued about who was the greatest. Greatness often brings fame and recognition and Peter's association was about to bring him that fame along with a humiliating experience.

vs. 67&68 – The servant girl studied Peter and then declared that he had been with Jesus. I wonder if she had heard Jesus preach or how she knew about Peter. At any rate, Peter, who had declared his loyalty and willingness to die for Jesus just a few hours earlier, this Peter, who had pulled out his sword and cut off the high priest's servant's ear, had a panic attack when one of the servants, and a young girl at that, had recognized him.

vs. 69&70 – Peter changed locations where the light wasn't as good, but the servant girl either followed him or saw him there as she walked on. She announced to no one in particular that Peter was an associate of Jesus. Again he denied it.

Now others agreed with the servant girl's assessment, and voiced their certainty that Peter was one of Jesus' entourage. I wonder how they knew he was a Galilean? I would think he had an accent that gave him away, and we know that Peter could talk! The more he denied his association, the more he gave himself away!

v. 71 – Peter was then in a frenzy of fear and vehemently denied that he had been with Jesus. Suddenly the rooster crowed and Peter remembered that Jesus had predicted this very scenario. He wept at the realization of his own weakness, failure and betrayal. I can only think of one verse here:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Romans 12:3-4).

Do you have sober judgment where you personally are concerned? Ask the Lord to show you if you have a higher opinion of yourself than is warranted in some area of life.

Day Two

15:1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," 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.

v. 1 – The leaders of Israel had to work all night to carry out their plan before anyone woke up and discovered what was going on. Remember that at one point they were concerned that the people would riot if they made a move on Him because the people considered Jesus to be a prophet. The leaders had already arrested, interrogated, beaten and then, after deliberating their next step, handed Jesus over to Pilate. What hypocrites! They judged and condemned Jesus, but would not put him to death, since they claimed it was against their Law from God. Yet in Acts, they would not hesitate to kill Stephen.

vs. 2&3 – Pilate asked Jesus whether or not He was the King of the Jews, and Jesus replied that He was. The leaders accused Jesus of all kinds of crimes, yet He said nothing in response. I would think that Pilate had seen many such scenarios in his career but there and then he saw a Man who was calm in the face of his accusers. That probably impressed Him, but then again, Jesus was an extraordinary man.

vs. 4&5 – Pilate was amazed at Jesus' demeanor and composure at such a time. Jesus made no effort to defend Himself but entrusted Himself to the Father's will and purpose. Jesus gave us an example of how we should act when we are in a similar situation. It isn't wrong to defend yourself, but there are times when you must simply trust God for your reputation and the outcome of the trial that you are encountering. This is why Peter quoted Psalm 34 in his first epistle about how to handle yourself in such a situation:

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth (Psalm 34:12-16).

Are you defensive? Do you respond to your critics more than you should? If so, then learn to do what Jesus did: Be quiet and let God fight your battle for you! Your vindication may not come immediately, but it will come.

Day Three

6 Now it was the custom at the Feast 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 envy 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.

v. 6 – This strikes me as a strange custom: to release a prisoner who may very well have been guilty of a crime or crimes at the request of the people. This would mean that the people had to know this prisoner (he had to have some fame and notoriety) to be able to request his freedom. This would seem to be a travesty of justice, a concession to public and community relations, which was blatantly contrary to the Roman law that is always held in such high regard.

v. 7 – The man Barabbas was a rebel and murderer. Jesus was a peaceful man and giver of life. **Which one would the people choose to have released according to the custom?**

vs. 8-10 – These proceedings with Jesus must have taken place in a public place and, by now, there was a crowd, perhaps assembled by the Jewish authorities. They approached Pilate to grant amnesty to one of the political prisoners. Pilate assumed that they would want Jesus released, since he knew that Jesus was innocent and was a victim of the envy of the leaders.

Pilate had more sense than the leaders and people. Yet the Jews asked for Barabbas. And this was in keeping with Jesus' mission. Barabbas, who was guilty, was about to be set free by the sacrificial life of one innocent Savior, Jesus. But what a travesty of justice it represented, and showed the skewed values of the Jews! They sought the release of the guilty while condemning the innocent. This was not what God's law commanded, but by now the Law and Jewish system were corrupt and bankrupt. That is why God sent Jesus to fulfill it and then do away with it.

What a long way the Jews had fallen since David and Solomon, who distributed justice with God's wisdom. The Jews wanted a King like those two, yet they showed by their actions that they were not ready or worthy of such a King with their current spiritual condition and thinking. They needed a new start and that would require a new heart. Of course, they saw no such need for any renewal. The authorities thought that they were serving God by doing what they did to Jesus, another indication of what a mess things were.

Yet the leaders were doing just what the Scriptures predicted, which was of course the will of God! So while they were acting out their drama with full freedom of will, God's sovereign purpose was being accomplished! One final observation: **Isn't it ironic that a Roman authority had more spiritual insight than the leaders and people of Israel?** You can sometimes find spiritual sensitivity where you least expect it, so don't pre-judge people according to your preconceived notions.

Day Four

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!"

v. 12 – Pilate asked a specific question and undoubtedly the Spirit led Him to ask it so that there would be **no** question as to who delivered Jesus and requested His death. Pilate noticed that the Jews referred to Jesus as their king, the king of the Jews. The Jews requested that their king be killed, pure and simple. They wanted a king but not the kind of king that Jesus turned out to be. They wanted a military leader, not a suffering servant.

Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus and they responded that He should be killed.

v. 13 – The request to Pilate was simple – crucify Jesus! The Romans had devised this gruesome form of execution and now the Jews demanded that their king be killed using this method.

v. 14 – Pilate himself asked for a reason for such a request, since he knew that Jesus was innocent, delivered to him because of envy on the part of the Jewish leaders. Pilate seemed to be a shrewd man, who read this particular situation accurately. Pilate wanted to know what crime Jesus had committed to warrant such a sentence. The crowd could not produce an answer, so they just got louder. Urgency and noise should never substitute for reason and order, but they did on this occasion.

v. 15 – This fascinates me. The Roman governor wanted to please the crowd! I thought the Romans ruled by force? They did, but no dictator can totally overlook the desires of the people or they may not be dictator for long! Pilate did not want any complaints going to Rome from the Jews, so he decided to acquiesce to their demands. What a weak leader he was! He had insight but not the courage to act on it. He condemned an innocent man and he knew what he was doing!

Yet the Lord's will was being accomplished and He was using the governing officials, as predicted and promised in Proverbs:

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases (Proverbs 21:1).

v. 16 – Jesus was turned over to the soldiers and they must have needed some recreation and diversion, for they proceeded to make sport of Jesus. They called the whole

company together, even though Jesus was unarmed and harmless, suffering from a night without sleep.

v. 17 – They put a purple robe on Jesus, purple being the color of royalty. Jesus was worthy of a royal robe, but not under such conditions! They gave Jesus a crown but it was one made of thorns, which they proceeded to hammer into his head. Some have said that these thorns were long enough that they would have been driven into Jesus’ brain through His skull! I have been to Israel and seen the thorns that grow on vines all around the Old City. They aren’t that long, but they are plenty sharp. I always touch one with the tip of my finger to remind me of the pain that Jesus endured for you and me.

v. 18 – They mocked Jesus, while speaking true words, “Hail, king of the Jews!” They proclaimed the truth but despised Him as they did. Not everyone who says the right things actually has a right heart where the things of God are concerned. Jesus had alluded to this in Matthew

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21-22).

Are you sure that your heart matches what you say where Jesus is concerned? Do you proclaim truth that exceeds your ability to live it with integrity?

Day Five

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. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

v. 19 – What an ugly, painful scene to even read about. These hardened, godless soldiers abused and mocked our Lord Jesus Christ! The creatures mistreated their Creator and He submitted to their cruelty for it was the will of His Father to do so! *Lord Jesus, have mercy on me!* What a picture of a holy, good God and a fallen, sinful race of men. We needed a Savior then and need One now.

v. 20 – When they were done with the preliminaries, they were ready to lead Jesus out to the main event, which was His crucifixion. It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross, but Jesus was so fatigued from the night before that they chose a man named Simon to carry the cross for Jesus. It seems that this man’s sons, Alexander and Rufus were known, for Mark mentioned them as if his readers would know who they were.

Everyone will have to make a decision concerning the cross of Jesus. Some will do it willingly, choose to identify with Jesus, pick up their cross and follow Him. Others will be forced to do so against their will and there will not be any benefit when they do it under those conditions. We are taught that

at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

So which is it for you? Will you willingly pick up your cross or will it forced on you? If you have given your life to the Lord, you have willingly chosen to identify with Jesus. If not, then one day you will have no choice but to recognize that Jesus is Lord and King.

vs. 22&23 – I always use verse 23 when I talk to those with addictions to show that Jesus was tempted to take something to deaden the pain of His rejection and suffering. They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He refused to take it. Jesus was tempted to take drugs! So if you are ever tempted to take something – alcohol, drugs, pornography, food – to deaden the pain in your life, don't do it! Do what Jesus did; rely on the Father to bring you through the pain.

v. 24 – They did not even turn Jesus' clothes over to His family. Instead the soldiers gambled to see who would get what. Mark doesn't go into many details. He just wrote that they crucified Him. There is so much to say about the significance and effects of the cross. Men have composed songs and poems, others have written books and many have preached sermons. Read what one man had to say about the cross in a book about preaching.

*Preach the Cross in the context of the world's suffering, and men will learn, not only that Christ is with them in the dark valley, God "afflicted in all their affliction," gathering up their distress and desolation into His own eternal heart – not only that, though that indeed, even if there were no more to be said, would be a mighty reinforcement: they will learn this other great thing, that God in His sovereign love still leads captivity captive, still transforms the wrecking circumstances of life into means of grace, the dark places into a Holy of Holies, and the thorns that pierce into a crown of glory. **For the Cross means that even when things are at their worst, even when life does not bear thinking about, God is master of the situation still, and nothing can spoil His final pattern or defeat His purpose of love** (Heralds of God by James S. Stewart, page 78, emphasis added).*

Day Six

25 It was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. 28[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And

He was numbered with transgressors."] 29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!"

v. 25 – The time would have been about noon when the Romans finally stopped abusing Jesus and proceeded to torture Him on the cross. I won't go into the details of how they crucified their victims, but suffice it to say that crucifixion is the cruelest form of death that man has ever perpetrated against man.

v. 26 – We are told in the other gospels that Pilate had the sign hung about Jesus that read "King of the Jews." When the Jews objected, Pilate refused to take it down. Once again, I find this ironic, for Pilate wrote the truth! During the whole process of Jesus arrest, trial, torture and death, the truth was spoken concerning Jesus' Kingship. He was and is the King of the Jews. Yet that is the very role for which He was killed. He was charged, tried and found "guilty" of nothing more than being Himself, and for that the Jews and Romans executed Him.

This is how skewed fallen man is. We judge the wicked innocent, just like we did Barabbas, and the innocent guilty, just like we did Jesus.

v. 27 – To add to His humiliation, Jesus hung between two convicted robbers. We placed the sinless Son of Man at His death in the company of two convicted felons. Mark does not tell us that Jesus ministered salvation to one of those two thieves as they were dying, but we know that He did. What a man Jesus was! In His agony of death, He ministered life!

v. 28 – This verse is not included in the NIV translation, but it is in the NAS. Why? Because it is not included in earlier transcripts. Is it a problem to include it or take it out? Absolutely not! In fact, for as old as the Bible is, there are very few challenges like the one in this verse. It is remarkably consistent. This reference to Isaiah 53:12, even if added later, does not take away from the meaning or impact of this particular passage or story. So I am not troubled at all by its inclusion or exclusion.

vs. 29&30 – These verses mention what people thought Jesus said about destroying the Temple and rebuilding it in three days. This must have been quite a popular topic of discussion due to the impossibility of what they thought Jesus meant. If you remember, this issue was mentioned at Jesus' so-called trial as well, although the witnesses could not agree on the lies they were telling.

If He would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, that would have been quite a sign and adequate proof that Jews were looking for that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Now that He was dying, they thought His promise was an idle boast.

Of course, Jesus was referring to His body as the Temple and He was about to fulfill His promise. They *were* destroying His temple and He *would* be back to life in three days.

Look at the challenge, however, that those abusers gave Jesus. “Come down and save yourself.” That is the challenge that we are faced with daily, in the marketplace, in relationship, in our finances and even in the ministry. We are challenged to take matters into our own hands to improve our lot and be set free from pain, suffering or humiliation. Jesus did not “save Himself” and you and I shouldn’t either. Instead we should apply what Peter wrote:

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23-24).

Day Seven

31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. 33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

v. 31 – I am sure that Jesus’ pain on the cross was hideous, but I wonder if the stinging insults from those who passed by weren’t just as painful. Jesus had all the power and authority to save Himself, yet He refused, ignoring the taunts of His enemies. Again, we read in Peter

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:19-25).

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

NIV

v. 32 – You can see why God did not give the Jews the dramatic sign they requested. Even if Jesus had come down from the cross at that point, they would not have believed! Hard hearts don’t respond to any supernatural intervention.

And the abuse continued unabated, for those crucified with Jesus also verbally assaulted Him. Jesus was verbally abused by the high priests, their guards, the Roman guards, those who passed by and saw Him on the cross, and the Jewish leaders and rulers.

Lord, when someone says something to me that I don't like, I tend to retaliate. I never saw before how much verbal abuse you took and you carried it on the cross along with my sins and sicknesses. Now, Lord, I know that you are asking me to follow your example and not respond to those who insult me or who say something that hurts my feelings. I want to be like Jesus and part of that is not responding to those who attack me or who are insensitive to me. I need the power of the Spirit in my life to do that, for it is my nature to "come down off the cross and save myself." I commit my way to you in Jesus' name, Amen!

Can you pray that prayer with me?

v. 33 – Darkness covered the land for three hours! This shows that there is some connection between the physical and the spiritual. There was great spiritual darkness when Jesus was on the cross and it spilled over into nature.

v. 34 – Jesus cried out with the opening words from Psalm 22. While He did not quote the entire psalm, it was enough to get the message across that He was referring to the whole psalm. While this appears to be a cry of despair, look at the words found later in that psalm:

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help (Psalm 22:22-24).

Jesus was actually praising God when He said this, declaring His determination to serve and praise the Father no matter what and affirming His belief that the Father would not desert Him.

While it may seem like God abandons you for a season, take heart! He isn't far off. While He may have forsaken you, the truth is that He will come and save you.