

Taken *and* Tried



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 14, John 12:4–6, Rom. 8:28, Exod. 24:8, Jer. 31:31–34, Zech. 13:7.*

Memory Text: “And He said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’ ” (*Mark 14:36, NKJV*).

Chapters 14–16 in Mark are known as the Passion Narrative because they describe the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As noted in lesson 9, the last six chapters of Mark cover only about one week. The majority of events in Mark 14–16 occur on Thursday and Friday of this Passion Week. Jesus’ death will occur on Friday, and His resurrection on Sunday.

This week’s lesson focuses on Mark 14, beginning with the fifth sandwich story, which interlinks two opposite actions in relation to Jesus. This is followed by the Last Supper, followed by Jesus’ struggle in Gethsemane. There He is arrested and taken before the leaders to be tried. The trial scene is linked with Peter’s denial of Jesus, forming the sixth and last of the sandwich stories in Mark. Again, two opposite actions occur, but by an ironic twist, they affirm the same truth.

Throughout the narrative, two contrasting story plots march hand in hand. In a crisp style, Mark sets before the reader these clashing plots while revealing the triumph of Jesus.

* *Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 14.*

Unforgettable

Read Mark 14:1–11. What two stories are intertwined here, and how do they play off of one another?

Mark 14:1 indicates that the Passover was two days away. This meeting probably occurred on either Tuesday night or Wednesday of that week. The religious leaders have a plan and timing. They just need a means to accomplish their goal. It will come from a surprising quarter.

This passage is the fifth sandwich story in Mark (see lesson 3). The story of the plot against Jesus is linked with a story of a woman who anoints Jesus' head with precious perfume. Two parallel characters do opposite actions, displaying an ironic contrast.

Who the woman is here is not revealed by Mark. Her amazing gift to Jesus stands in contrast to Judas's perfidy in betraying his Lord. She is unnamed; he is named as one of the Twelve. The value of her gift is listed; his price is only a promise of money.

No specific reason is given for why she does this, but the guests at the dinner are appalled by what they consider a grand waste of close to a year's wages in pouring out the perfume on Jesus. Jesus, however, interposes in her defense and says that what she has done will be included in gospel proclamation throughout the world as a memorial to her. It is unforgettable. Indeed, all four Gospels tell this story in one form or another, probably because of Jesus' words memorializing her deed.

Judas's betrayal also is unforgettable. Mark implies that his motive was greed. The Gospel of John makes it explicit (*John 12:4–6*).

Mark contains a play on the word "good" in order to illustrate that two different motives, or plots, are in play in these stories. Jesus calls the woman's action "good/beautiful" in Mark 14:6. He says you can always do "good" for the poor (*Mark 14:7*). In Mark 14:9, He calls her deed part of the "good news/gospel." In Mark 14:11, Judas looks for a "good opportunity" (*ISV*) to betray Jesus. What this play on words suggests is that the plot of men to destroy the Messiah will actually become part of the gospel story because it brings to fruition the will of God in giving His Son for the salvation of humanity.

How does Romans 8:28 help explain what will happen here?

The Last Supper

Read Mark 14:22–31 and Exodus 24:8. What great significance to the Christian faith is found in this account?

Mark 14:12 notes that this is the first day of unleavened bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed. The meal was on Thursday evening.

At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes a new memorial service. It is a transition from the Jewish Passover celebration and is directly linked to Israel's leaving Egypt and becoming God's covenant people at Sinai. In the sealing of the covenant, in Exodus 24:8, Moses sprinkles the people with the blood of the sacrifices and says, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (ESV).

It is striking that in the Lord's Supper, which Jesus institutes here, no use is made of the lamb of the Passover meal. That is because Jesus is the Lamb of God (*compare with John 1:29*). The bread of the Lord's Supper represents His body. The new covenant (*compare with Jer. 31:31–34*) is sealed with the blood of Jesus, and the cup represents this. He says, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (*Mark 14:24, ESV*).

Then, amid all this, Jesus predicts that His disciples will all abandon Him. He cites Zechariah 13:7, which speaks of the sword striking the shepherd and the sheep being scattered. Jesus is the shepherd, and His disciples are the sheep. It is a stark and depressing message. But Jesus adds a word of hope, repeating the prediction of His resurrection. But He adds that He will go before the disciples to Galilee. That prediction will be referred to by the young man at Jesus' tomb, in Mark 16:7, and thus it carries special weight here.

But all this is too hard for the disciples to accept, especially Peter, who argues that everyone else may fall away, but he will not. However, Jesus continues with the solemn language and predicts that Peter will deny Him three times before the rooster crows twice. The prediction will play a crucial role in the scene of Jesus' trial and Peter's denial; so, it also plays a crucial role here.

What can you learn from whatever times you promised God that you would or would not do something and ended up doing or not doing it anyway?

Gethsemane

Read Mark 14:32–42. What did Jesus pray in Gethsemane, and how was the prayer answered?

Leaving the walled city of Jerusalem where they ate the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples go across the Kidron Valley to a garden on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The name Gethsemane means oil press, suggesting that there was an olive oil processing press in the vicinity. The exact location is unknown because the Romans cut down all the trees on the Mount of Olives during the siege in A.D. 70.

As Jesus enters the garden, He leaves His disciples there and goes farther with Peter, James, and John. But then He leaves these three, as well, and proceeds farther by Himself. This spatial distancing suggests Jesus is becoming more and more isolated as He faces His upcoming suffering.

Jesus prays for the cup of suffering to be removed but only if it is God's will (*Mark 14:36*). He uses the Aramaic term *Abba*, which Mark translates as "Father." The term does not mean "daddy," as some have suggested. The term used by a child to address his father was *abi* (see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Anchor Bible Reference Library [New York: Doubleday, 1994], vol. 1, pp. 172, 173). However, the use of the term *Abba*, "Father," does carry the close familial linkage, which should not be diminished.

What Jesus prays for is the removal of the cup of suffering. But He submits Himself to the will of God (compare with the Lord's Prayer, *Matt. 6:10*). It becomes obvious throughout the rest of the Passion Narrative that God's answer to Jesus' prayer is no. He will not remove the cup of suffering because through that experience salvation is offered to the world.

When you face hardships, it is encouraging to have friends who support you. In Philippians 4:13, Paul talks about doing all things through the One who strengthens him. Many forget Philippians 4:14, where the apostle begins, "Nevertheless." It reads: "Nevertheless, it was kind of you to share my troubles" (*ISV*). This is what Jesus desired in Gethsemane. Three times He came seeking comfort from His disciples. Three times they were sleeping. At the end, He arouses them to go forth with Him to face the trial. He is ready; they are not.

Leaving All to Flee From Jesus

Read Mark 14:43–52. What happens here that is so crucial to the plan of salvation?

It is shocking that one of Jesus' closest associates betrayed Him to His enemies. The Gospels do not go into great detail about Judas's motivation. But Ellen G. White writes: "Judas had naturally a strong love for money; but he had not always been corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. He had fostered the evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life. The love of mammon overbalanced his love for Christ. Through becoming the slave of one vice he gave himself to Satan, to be driven to any lengths in sin."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 716.

Betrayal in itself is deplored by all, even by those who make use of betrayers (*compare with Matt. 27:3–7*). But Judas's deed is particularly nefarious because he seeks to hide his betrayal under the guise of friendship. He gives the crowd instruction that the man he kisses is the man to arrest. It appears that Judas wanted to hide his perfidy from Jesus and the other disciples.

Chaos breaks out when the crowd arrests Jesus. Someone draws a sword (John 18:10, 11 says it was Peter) and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus addresses the mob, chastising them for doing in secret what they were afraid to do in the open when He was teaching in the temple. But Jesus ends with a reference to the Scriptures being fulfilled. It is another signal of that dual plot running through the Passion Narrative—that the will of God is coming to fulfillment even as the will of man works to destroy the Messiah.

The disciples all flee, including Peter, who nevertheless will reappear, following Jesus at a distance and ending up getting himself in trouble. But Mark 14:51, 52 tells of a young man following Jesus, an account found here and nowhere else in the canonical Gospels. Some think it was Mark himself, but that is unprovable. What is remarkable is that he runs away naked. The young man, instead of leaving all to follow Jesus, leaves all to flee from Jesus.

Think about the fearful idea that being a slave of only *one vice* led Judas to do what he did. What should this tell us about hating sin and, by God's grace, overcoming it?

Who Are You?

Read Mark 14:60–72. Compare how Jesus responded to events in contrast to how Peter did. What lessons can we learn from the differences?

Mark 14:53–59 describes Jesus being brought to the Sanhedrin and the first part of the trial. It is an exercise in frustration. Again and again, the leaders try to make their accusation against Jesus stick. The Gospel writer notes how the testimony was false and the witnesses never agreed.

Finally, the high priest arises and addresses Jesus directly. At first Jesus does not respond. But then the high priest places Him under oath before God (*see Matt. 26:63*) and asks the direct question if He is the Messiah. Jesus frankly and openly admits that He is and then references Daniel 7:13, 14, regarding the Son of man as seated at God’s right hand and coming with the clouds of heaven. This is too much for the high priest, who tears his robes and calls for Jesus’ condemnation, which the council immediately gives. The leaders begin to shame Jesus by spitting on Him, covering His face, beating Him, and calling on Him to prophesy.

While Jesus is inside being tried and giving a faithful testimony, Peter is outside giving a lying report. This is the sixth and final sandwich story in Mark, and here the irony is particularly pointed. Here are two parallel characters, Jesus and Peter, doing opposite actions. Jesus gives a faithful testimony, Peter a false one. Three times Peter is accosted by a servant or bystanders, and each time he denies association with Jesus, even cursing and swearing in the process.

It is at this point that a rooster crows a second time, and Peter suddenly remembers Jesus’ prophecy that he would deny his Lord three times that very night. He breaks down and weeps. Here is the striking irony—at the end of His trial, Jesus is blindfolded and struck and commanded to “prophesy!” The idea was to mock Him since He could not see who struck Him. However, at the very time they do this, Peter is denying Jesus in the courtyard below, fulfilling one of Jesus’ prophecies. Consequently, in denying Jesus, Peter demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah.

What words of hope would you give to someone who, though wanting to follow Jesus, fails at times to do so? Who of us has not, at times, failed to follow what we know Jesus wants?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Before Annas and the Court of Caiaphas,” pp. 698–715; “Judas,” pp. 716–722, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter’s lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter’s eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

“The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. Memory was active. Peter called to mind his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He remembered his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 712, 713.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How, by merely reading what Jesus predicted in Mark 14:9, are we seeing another of Jesus’ predictions—a highly unlikely prediction given the circumstances in which it has been uttered—actually being fulfilled?
- 2 Compare and contrast Judas and Peter. How were they alike and how different in the way they acted in the Passion Narrative?
- 3 Discuss the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. How can we make this more meaningful in our church and involve more members in its celebration?
- 4 Discuss the fact that God said no to Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane. What does it mean when God says no to us?
- 5 Though Peter greatly failed Jesus with his denials, Jesus did not cast him off. What hope can you take for yourself from this fact?

Fulfilling a Dream About Tofu

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Father developed stomach problems, and Mother and Anush decided to pay close attention to his diet. Anush was a vegetarian, and Mother, a biologist by training, knew which foods were healthy. But they had not sought to place the healthiest foods on the family table. Mother and Anush began to feed Father mostly plant-based meals, and the stomach problems went away.

Then Father had another dream. He saw a bright light in the garage. It was so bright that he couldn't look at it. "Do not be afraid," said a voice from the light. "Come. Take this bucket with seeds, and plant them on this table."

Father saw a bucket of seeds beside a stainless-steel table. But the command made no sense. As a university student, he had trained to become an agricultural scientist, so he knew plants. But even without that knowledge, he knew that seeds couldn't sprout on steel. "Seeds have to be planted in the ground," he protested. The voice did not waver. "Do as I say," it said.

Still in the dream, a day passed, and Father saw healthy three-inch shoots growing from the table. He was shocked. "What's going on?" he asked. "How can seeds grow in one night and on this stainless-steel table?"

"You need to pull up the green shoots and sell them," the voice said.

Father related the dream to his family. As Anush listened, she wondered if God was telling Father to make tofu. There was no company that made tofu in Armenia. Father was a business owner with agricultural training, and Anush was sure that he could do it. But she didn't want to try to interpret his dream. She prayed for Father to hear God's call directly.

Then Anush participated in a medical missionary conference in Ukraine. The 300 participants grew excited when they heard about Father's dream. It was 2019, and Adventists had flourishing tofu production facilities and health-food stores in the country. When the conference organizer asked who would be willing to teach Father to make tofu, everyone raised their hands.

Two months later, Father bought plane tickets to Ukraine. Like Abraham and Sarah, he and Mother left home without knowing exactly where they were going. God organized everything. Medical missionaries from the conference met them at the airport. Father and Mother stayed with them as they visited Adventist health-food stores and tofu facilities for 12 days. Father saw Christians could work not only for money but also for God's glory. He was impressed. He returned home and opened Armenia's first tofu company.

Anush was overjoyed. She was amazed to think that Father had once used her vegetarian lifestyle as a reason to bar her from going to church and now he was selling tofu and promoting a vegetarian lifestyle.

Part of last quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to open a center of influence for families like Anush's in Yerevan, Armenia. Thank you for helping spread the gospel with your offerings. Next week: The family unites to spread the gospel in Armenia.