

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 8TH–9TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

BETRAYAL (MARK 14:43–48)

IT'S THE NIGHT BEFORE JESUS WILL GO TO THE CROSS.

Jesus has been with His disciples, celebrating Passover in an upper room in Jerusalem, and after supper He went out to the Mount of Olives and into the Garden of Gethsemane.

- Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, has already made a deal with the Jewish religious leaders and agreed to take them to Him.
- Jesus knows exactly what's happening (v. 42).

While He was still speaking, Jesus' enemies arrived.

- Judas led the mob of Jewish religious leaders and what was likely a detachment of Roman soldiers and temple guards (v. 43).
- The fact that Judas came with a mob carrying swords and clubs proves that he didn't understand who Jesus was and what He had come to do. Judas came expecting a fight.

But Jesus came and calmly surrendered, even as Judas marked Him for arrest using a sign of endearment and friendship (vs. 44–46).

- As Jesus was arrested, one of His disciples (John 18:10 tells us it was Peter) attacked with his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (v. 47).
- In his zeal to defend Jesus, this disciple had completely misunderstood the battle plan.

The battle being fought that night wasn't a military battle with swords and clubs; it was a spiritual battle to win victory over the enemies of sin, death, and the devil.

- Jesus would fight and win the battle through His sacrificial love, and not a sword.
- The weapons Jesus' disciples brandish aren't swords. They are the gospel, prayer, God's Word, and His Spirit (2 Cor. 10:4).

If Jesus had wanted to defeat this small army in Gethsemane, He could have called down 12 legions of angels (72,000, Mt. 26:53).

- Retaliation was completely unnecessary because all of this was part of God's divine plan (v. 49).
- Even the fact that Jesus hadn't been arrested while teaching in the temple in daylight was part of God's plan (vs. 48–49).

EACH OF US MUST DECIDE WHETHER WE'LL TAKE UP THE SWORD OR THE CROSS.

Will we humbly submit to God's will for us, even when it involves pain?

- Or will we take matters into our own hands and assert our own will using fleshly means?
- The truth is God is in control and we're not.
- The cross involves suffering, but that suffering ultimately leads to glory and victory.

WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD... (MARK 14:50–52)

Amidst all the chaos and confusion of Jesus' disciples deserting Him (just as He predicted), a certain young man is identified.

- He's there tagging along with the disciples and wearing nothing more than a linen cloth.
- When the mob shows up to arrest Jesus, in a frantic effort to save his life, the man sprints out of his clothes and flees the scene naked.
- Why? What's going on with this? Who is this?

THEORY 1 – JUST AN EYEWITNESS DETAIL

If you're a detective dealing with eyewitness testimony of something that actually happened, sometimes you will have bizarre details provided that don't really seem to add much to the story itself.

- Maybe that's what's going on with this young man, and this is more proof that these events really did happen.

THEORY 2 – IT WAS MARK HIMSELF

Since the earliest days of the church, commentators and scholars have thought that perhaps this young man is Mark.

- Some believe the upper room where Jesus had the Last Supper belonged to Mark's family (Acts 12:12, disciples met in Mark's home).
- Maybe this is Mark humbly confessing to the shameful cowardice of deserting Jesus.

THEORY 3 – A MIRACLE?

"Linen cloth": *sindon*. Used to wrap the bodies of the dead (same word used in Mt. 27:59).

- John 18:3–6 tells of Jesus saying the words "I AM he" in Gethsemane, and when He did, there was such a release of spiritual power that 600 men were knocked to the ground.
- Gethsemane was near a burial site, so was this young man recently buried?

IT'S FUN TO SPECULATE WHY THIS DETAIL IS INCLUDED IN THE TEXT, BUT IN THE END...

It shows how quickly Jesus' followers deserted Him.

- It shows how shameful it is for disciples when they cave in to cowardice, fear, and pressure.
- For most of us, it just takes a little bit of pressure to "expose" our own embarrassing weakness and lack of faithfulness to Jesus.

A FALSE TRIAL (MARK 14:53–65)

Jesus is then taken by the mob to face the high priest and the rest of the Sanhedrin (the chief priests, scribes, and elders, v. 53).

- This wasn't a legitimate legal trial because it was happening in the middle of the night, in a secret meeting place, during the week of Passover—all of which were against pharisaical laws.
- Peter followed the group and watched the "trial" from a distance by a fire (v. 54).

The whole purpose of the trial was to seek testimony against Jesus to put Him to death (v. 55).

- But they couldn't find any that could legitimately stand in a Jewish court due to the law that every charge had to be established by the mouths of two witnesses (even if they were liars).
- Some came with a false charge about a comment Jesus had made about destroying the temple (v. 58).
- Yet even in their testimony against Him, they couldn't agree on what He did wrong.

Jesus never actually said He'd destroy the temple; they were misconstruing a comment He'd made about

them destroying His body and Him rising again in three days (Jn. 2:19).

- It's impossible to defend yourself in court against lies and half-truths, but Jesus wasn't interested in defending Himself in the first place.

- While Jesus' accusers lied and brought false charges against Him, He was silent (v. 61).

Finally, the high priest asks Jesus the \$1,000,000 question: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" (v. 61).

- Jesus admits who He truly is: the great I AM, the Son of Man whom they will all see seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven (v. 62).

- This was all they needed—a charge of blasphemy deserving of death (vs. 63–64).

Then they blindfolded Him, began to spit, punch, and slap His face, and mocked His claim of being the Christ by commanding Him to prophesy (v. 65).

- Why did Jesus stay completely silent for all of this? Couldn't He see that injustice and corruption was taking place?
- By staying silent, Jesus was expressing His authority and His submission to the Father's plan.
- Jesus was loving them, even as they hatefully abused Him.

GUILTY AS CHARGED

One of the most common objections skeptics raise to the deity of Christ is the idea that Jesus never actually claimed to be God.

- Sure, the church ended up worshiping Him as such, but this was a later development that was projected onto Jesus and wasn't something He intended to claim for Himself.
- He was just a social activist, teacher, and "guide."
- How do you explain verses 61–62 then?
- In Dan. 7, the "Son of Man" is a title reserved for the Sovereign Lord of all who will return to judge all things at the end of time.
- Why would Jesus make that claim, and why did those who heard respond by accusing Him of blasphemy if He only meant to be understood as an activist, teacher, or guide?
- If Jesus wasn't God, then He was a liar, because He definitely led others to believe that He was God. In that case, I'm not sure why anyone would want to follow a liar as an activist, teacher, or guide!
- Jesus is fully God. The modern person often places Him on trial simply because we don't want to acknowledge an authority greater than our own.

DENIAL (MARK 14:66–72)

Meanwhile, Peter sat watching from a distance in the courtyard (v. 66).

- A servant girl recognizes Peter as someone who had been with Jesus of Nazareth—a charge which Peter denies as a rooster crows (vs. 67–68).
- Later another woman recognizes him as someone who was "one of them," which Peter again denies (v. 69).

Later others notice Peter is Galilean and accuse him once more of being a disciple of Jesus (v. 70).

- Peter begins to curse and swear that he doesn't know Jesus or what they're even talking about (v. 71).
- Amidst his cursing and denial, he hears a rooster crow in the distance for the second time (v. 72).

Peter had done the very thing he swore to Jesus he wouldn't do.

- Just as Jesus said, he denied the Lord three times before the rooster crowed twice.
- As the realization of what he had done set in, Peter wept bitterly.
- Has this ever been you? You swore to Jesus and to yourself you wouldn't do something, only to find yourself caving in and doing it?

WHY DID PETER DENY JESUS?

Probably because of fear. If Jesus is being accused, beaten, insulted, and condemned to death, Peter is probably next.

- Jesus had warned Peter of this moment, but in the frailty of his human weakness, he gave in to the path of least resistance.
- Even if Peter's spirit was willing, his flesh was weak, and he fell to temptation.

WE ARE ALL PRONE TO WANDER, DENY, AND FALL.

- We are all capable of falling prey to temptation and committing acts of betrayal against the Lord.
- Everybody has a Kryptonite—lust, pride, anger, drunkenness/substance abuse, gossip, rebellion, judgmentalism/criticism, strife/conflict, cowardice, slander, laziness, dishonesty, or self-righteousness. We all struggle with something.

GOD'S REDEPTIVE PLAN CAN'T BE STOPPED.

- God can still use you despite your failures.
- God is still good despite suffering.
- God is still in control despite injustice.
- God doesn't need your weapons to fight His battles (or yours). You can put away your sword and take up your cross (2 Cor. 10:4).

JESUS IS A LOT STRONGER THAN YOU ARE.

- In His hour of greatest anguish and pain, Jesus endured and completely surrendered to the Father's will.
- Even as Jesus was being slandered, abused, and betrayed, He was silent as He loved His accusers.
- This is divine, supernatural strength.

GOD HAS OFFERED YOU HIS STRENGTH.

- You can admit your weakness. It's not you "swinging your sword" by being strong, self-righteous, in charge, or right.
- You are strongest spiritually when you're the most honest with yourself, others, and God about your weaknesses, inconsistencies, and struggles.
- "...when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:10)
- James 4:6–7, NIV