

# HEALING INSIGHTS FROM *THE GOSPEL OF MARK*

## LESSON 7 – CHAPTERS 13 & 14

- A. Jesus Predicts the Temple’s Destruction (Mark 13:1-2).** In contrast to what the disciples see, Jesus speaks of what will truly be. This chapter begins with an illustration of something we saw earlier in Mark’s gospel; namely, how appearances and reality are often discordant.
1. This is also true in the medical realm. Consider some examples:
    - a. John is an apparently fit, body builder with coronary arteries so clogged he is “a heart attack waiting to happen.”
    - b. Rachel appears “the picture of health” but is ignoring a steadily growing cancerous lump.
    - c. Ironically, when they have serious diseases, a segment of the population takes pains to convince themselves they are healthy—and don’t need to see a physician for any kind of diagnosis.
  2. Is this scenario playing out as Mark 13 opens?
    - a. Matthew provides some additional context that Mark left out. Read Matthew 23:34 – 24:2.
    - b. Clearly, in these two passages the same event is being discussed. The difference is that Matthew records Jesus’ stern judgment on Jerusalem and the temple: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matthew 23:38, KJV). “Desolate” is a translation of the Greek *eremos* a word which literally means uninhabited, desolate or abandoned.
    - c. Note also how, tragically, Jesus now calls it *your* house as opposed to *my* house (compare Mark 11:17). It seems the Jews have gone so far that God has now separated Himself from the very place where He sought to most lucidly reveal His character.
    - d. Thus the openings of both Mark 13 and Matthew 24 (parallel passages) seem to reflect the disciples’ incredulity that God could have changed His plans for the temple. Apparently they were wrestling with the following question: how could such an amazing, God-ordained structure have lost its significance?
  3. Can we be dealing with the same thing when it comes to our physical, mental, spiritual, and/or social health?
    - a. Might there be signs of impending demise that we are ignoring?
    - b. Like the disciples, do we today stand in need of the Great Physician, Jesus, to first function as the Great Diagnostician in our lives—and then as the Great Healer?
- B. Jesus Mingles a Description of the Signs of Jerusalem’s Destruction with the Signs of His Second Coming (Mark 13:5-36).**
1. Mark 13:3-4 records a question about the destruction of Jerusalem from the lips of the four disciples who arguably were the closest to Jesus. However, in the parallel passage of Matthew 24 we see an even deeper questioning was taking place by all the disciples: “As

He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when shall these things be [i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem]? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?’” (Matthew 24:3, KJV).

- a. That the end of all things (i.e., the end of the world) is on Mark’s mind as he writes his account is attested to by verse 7, “the end [Greek *telos*] is not yet.”
- b. Historically we know that when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, the world didn’t end. However, the disciples’ questions reveal that these two momentous events were connected in their minds. How was Jesus to respond to this mistaken notion?
- c. A parallel worth considering: sometimes questions are posed to us by those who possess significantly less maturity than we do. Whether they are much younger friends or our own children or grandchildren is immaterial. The challenge is this: how do we answer questions asked by someone who we are convinced could not handle the full answer. Don’t we typically tell them only what we think they can comprehend?
  - i. Just as we may not give a full answer to our children—when they ask a question whose complete answer would be beyond their level of understanding—so Jesus responds in truth without providing His disciples the full details. Jesus only told them what they needed to know; further particulars could be provided later. Indeed, it was in mercy that Jesus mingled prophecies focused on the destruction of Jerusalem with those pointing to His second coming.
  - ii. Can you see how merciful Jesus was by not separating the two events? How do you think the disciples would have handled Jesus telling them all their question seemed to demand? Namely, that Jerusalem soon would be destroyed, but He would not return for some 2000 years. After all, the disciples’ line of questioning indicates they believed the destruction of Jerusalem would occur at the end of human history. Listen to the words of a popular commentary on this interchange: “The future was mercifully veiled from the disciples. Had they at that time fully comprehend the two awful facts—the Redeemer’s sufferings and death, and the destruction of their city and temple—they would have been overwhelmed with horror. Christ presented before them an outline of the prominent events to take place before the close of time. His words were not then fully understood; but their meaning was to be unfolded as His people should need the instruction therein given. The prophecy which He uttered was twofold in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it prefigured also the terrors of the last great day.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 25.
  - iii. Why do you suppose Mark’s gospel, the first one of the four written, leaves out the details that showed the disciples were not merely inquiring about the destruction of Jerusalem, but also about Jesus’ second coming?

2. How do you see the theme of “proper diagnosis” carried out in this chapter?
  - a. Were the disciples ignoring the signs of the impending demise of the divinely ordained Hebrew religious system?
  - b. Can we be dealing with similar denial when it comes to our physical, mental, spiritual, and/or social health?
  - c. How does Jesus express His concern that the disciples not be deceived? What was He most concerned about their being deceived regarding? (See, for example, Mark 13:5-6; 21-23)
3. Physical difficulties do not mean God has abandoned us. Contrary to what many well-meaning Christians teach and believe, the faithful often experience serious physical challenges.
  - a. Although Jesus is not speaking about physical disease in this chapter, consider the following: “you will be beaten in synagogues... brother will deliver brother over to death... you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (v. 9-13).
  - b. That these individuals who suffer such things are not manifesting lack of faith or lack of solidarity with Christ is evidenced by how v. 13 concludes: “But the one who endures to the end will be *saved*” (ESV).
  - c. The emphasis in this passage is remarkable. Jesus does not call on His followers to pray for deliverance, but rather encourages patience and faith. “Do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour” and, as we earlier noted, “the one who *endures* to the end will be saved.”
  - d. This passage identifies similar characteristics in the end-time believers as we see in Revelation 14:12, “Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (KJV).
4. Many find it distressing to learn about upcoming adversity. Could this in any way be helpful?
  - a. Being prepared for future calamity can be life saving in a literal sense: “Christ gave His disciples a sign of the ruin to come on Jerusalem, and He told them how to escape: ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.’ This warning was given to be heeded forty years after, at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Christians obeyed the warning, and not a Christian perished in the fall of the city.” *The Desire of Ages*, page 630.

- b. A more detailed account of the deliverance of Jerusalem's Christian population is found in the book, *The Great Controversy*: "Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given His disciples warning, and all who believed His words watched for the promised sign. 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies' [equated with "the abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14) because of "the idolatrous standards of the Romans... set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls"] said Jesus, 'then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.' Luke 21:20, 21. After the Romans under Cestius had surrounded the city, they unexpectedly abandoned the siege when everything seemed favorable for an immediate attack. The besieged, despairing of successful resistance, were on the point of surrender, when the Roman general withdrew his forces without the least apparent reason. But God's merciful providence was directing events for the good of His own people. The promised sign had been given to the waiting Christians, and now an opportunity was offered for all who would, to obey the Saviour's warning. Events were so overruled that neither Jews nor Romans should hinder the flight of the Christians." (p. 30)
- c. How could the following counsel in Mark 13:9-13 (ESV) be both sobering and healing? "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."
- d. Hazard preparedness can actually help preserve mental health if the anticipated problems arise. Consequently, school fire drills can not only help students survive a fire, survivors are also less likely to be severely traumatized by a conflagration. This can also be illustrated by the condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Consider the following aspects of this disorder:
- i. Following a major traumatic event, individuals can develop PTSD.
  - ii. It can include nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, and emotional numbness.
  - iii. The majority of us will have a sufficiently traumatic event to trigger PTSD; however, only about 8% of us will ever suffer from this condition.
  - iv. Therefore, other factors influence whether or not one develops PTSD.
    - For example: lower levels of "hazard preparedness" increase the likelihood of developing PTSD.
    - Put another way, if you have some idea of the significant stressors you may face, then you are less likely to have serious adverse events if such an event occurs.

- v. Consequently, Bible prophecies about distressing future events, rather than being designed to make us fearful or anxious can actually help decrease our risk of serious mental trauma.
5. Further connections with the book of Daniel... In Mark 13:14, Jesus again referred to this Old Testament prophetic book. Mark saw the Master's words as an encouragement to study the book of Daniel, adding his endorsement: "let the reader [of my gospel] understand." How does this fit in with the themes we have been discussing so far?

**C. Plotting Jesus' Death (Mark 14:1-2).** In these two short verses, chief priests and the scribes conspire to destroy Jesus. Note their resolution in v. 2. They are determined not to kill Jesus "during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." (ESV) However, they did end up killing Jesus "during the feast."

1. What does this illustrate about our best resolutions when they are formulated apart from Christ?
2. What implications does this have when it comes to changing our lifestyle?
3. Is it possible that our own sinful tendencies and desires will shape our lives unless God helps us overcome them?

**D. Against the Backdrop of the Religious Leaders' Faithlessness Another Ostracized Woman Presents a Glowing Example (Mark 14:3-9).** This woman, identified elsewhere as Mary Magdalene (see John 12:1-8, Luke 7:36 – 8:3), pours out a costly ointment on Jesus.

1. Note: some question whether the account in Luke is describing the same event as found in Matthew, Mark and John. Several lines of biblical evidence reveal this descriptions are all referring to the same incident. These include the following:
  - a. Jesus prophesied in Mark 14:9, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."
  - b. Although some argue Luke 7 is describing a different anointing, Jesus prophecy is only fulfilled if Luke's account is describing the same incident. Nowhere else in Luke's gospel do we find anything resembling this story. (We have already listed the parallel accounts in Luke and John; Matthew 26:6-13 also relates this story. Thus all the gospels include this "memorial" to Mary.)
  - c. John 12 identifies the woman performing the anointing as "Mary." The reaction of the guests and the very words of Jesus indicate this is the same account as described in Mark 14.
2. Do you see any similarities between Mary's anointing and the description of the widow with the two mites at the end of Mark 12?
  - a. Note: while Mark 13 and the beginning of Mark 14 deal with sad topics like the enmity of the Jews, the terrible fate of Jerusalem, and end-time tribulation, the inspiring stories of these devoted women provide bookends to those more depressing themes.

- b. An impoverished widow and a prostitute would both be ranked among the lowest on the social scale. Yet, they brought joy to Jesus' heart while the "prosperous" and "spiritual" ones like the religious leaders were seeking to destroy Him. What encouragement should be drawn from these stories regardless of our standing in life?
3. Among those present, anger was the overwhelming response to Mary's act.
  - a. See Mark 14:4-5.
  - b. Matthew 26:8-9 indicates the disciples were among those who did not have a high opinion of Mary's sacrifice.
  - c. In John's account of this event (John 12:2-8), Judas emerges as the key figure criticizing Mary. "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?' Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it." (John 12:4-6, NASB)
4. The context of Mark 14:10-11 seems to connect Judas' betrayal with Mary's selfless gift. How might these two actions be related?
  - a. Do you suppose Judas was stung by Jesus' commendation of Mary—in view of his condemnation of her act?
  - b. Do you find it ironic that Mary, a social outcast, spent much money on Jesus' behalf while Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, received a significant sum to act as Jesus' enemy?
5. Just as Jesus commended the widow in Mark 12, He commends Mary in this context.
  - a. What is it that makes Jesus happy?
  - b. Does our bringing joy to Jesus' heart have any bearing on our own hearts being encouraged? If so, how might this impact our own mental health?
6. How significant was Jesus' prophetic promise, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9)? How many stories actually occur in all four gospels?

**E. Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples, Providing Some Sobering Diagnoses During and Immediately After (Mark 14:12 - 31).**

1. How does Jesus again display His divinity in the context of the Passover preparations? What similarities do you see with Mark 11:1-6?
2. Again in this context Jesus emerges as the Divine Diagnostician (v. 18)
  - a. What does the disciples' questioning in verse 19 indicate?
  - b. Do most of them seem open to Jesus' diagnosis—or is there evidence they are in denial?

- c. How about later in the chapter when, in verse 27, Jesus gives a more generalized diagnosis; namely, all the disciples would be offended [from the Greek *skandalizo*] and leave Him?
    - i. What did Peter's response in this context indicate (v. 29-31)?
    - ii. Would greater receptivity to the diagnosis have helped Peter better address his condition?
    - iii. Do you think things would have been different if Peter had prayed the prayer of David and had been receptive to Christ's honest answer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24)? How about us? Are we willing to go to the Great Physician for an accurate diagnosis of our spiritual state—and then act upon it?
3. Do you see any special healing parallels in the account of the last supper?
- a. For example, do the events of the last supper help explain Jesus' difficult sermon in John 6:22-71?
  - b. Do you see any healing significance in Jesus' promise in Mark 14:25, "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"?
  - c. In what ways do Jesus' words speak to us about self-denial and self-sacrifice?
  - d. The last supper makes it clear that Jesus was choosing to lay down His life. He was offering His followers His very body and blood. In other words, the cross of Christ was not the setting of a murder for which He did not consent. (See also John 10:15-18.) How does this help us better appreciate Jesus' personal demonstration of one of the Bible's great healing themes; namely that true healing often only comes when we give ourselves for others? (See, for example, Isaiah 58.)
4. Motives for Fasting—Medical Insights
- a. At the last supper, Jesus vows to abstain from drinking grape juice until He will "drink it new in the kingdom of God" (v. 25). The context indicates He regards grape juice, "the fruit of the vine," as a sign of the covenant—representing His blood. In essence, Jesus is saying He will not partake in a covenant sign until the covenant is fully ratified. Are there any parallels between this and a groom saying he will not eat the wedding cake until after the marriage ceremony?
  - b. Regardless of the motives prompting Jesus' declaration, He is committing to a special type of fast—abstaining from a single food. Of note, fasting has an interesting history in the gospel of Mark. Consider the following:

- i. First Jesus is condemned for not fasting. Mark 2:18-20.
  - ii. Later, Jesus refuses to force others to fast. In Mark 8:3, the Master says, in the context of the ultimate feeding of the 4000: “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.”
  - iii. Then, Jesus endorses fasting for spiritual power: “And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.” Mark 9:29
  - iv. Finally, as we have just observed, at the last supper we see Jesus articulating a commitment to fasting from a specific beverage.
- c. What does all this tell us about fasting?
- i. Some types of fasting or times for fasting may be inappropriate.
  - ii. In other contexts, fasting still has a purpose in the New Testament.
  - iii. Denial from food is not intrinsically a heathen or legalistic work.
- d. There are a variety of types of fasts. Some of these fasts include:
- i. Eating less on a regular basis—by whatever means (e.g., see items asterisked below)
  - ii. Excluding specific foods
  - iii. Skipping suppers\*
  - iv. No eating between meals\*
  - v. Very low calorie diets
  - vi. Juice fasts
  - vii. Total fasts (no caloric intake)
  - viii. The leaf-stalk-flower fast (eating only specific vegetables—those that constitute the leaf, stalk, or flower of the plant—for a period of time; e.g., broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, asparagus, celery, kale, etc.)
- e. Applications. Jesus, in Mark 14 commits to a type of fast, avoiding a single food item for a delimited period of time. Does this make Him a legalist? Of course not.
- i. However, many Christians automatically equate avoiding specified foods for life (or any extended period of time) with a shallow—or even defective—Christian experience.
  - ii. Think about it this way: what would have happened if Jesus had determined to deny Himself of a broader category of foods (rather than grape juice) for a prolonged period (we’re now talking millennia in His case)?
  - iii. What would happen if He had decided to leave off all flesh food?
  - iv. If we have a hard time imagining Jesus making such a commitment, how do we deal with the example of John the Baptist who ate no animal flesh, dairy, or eggs? Remember, Jesus had greater commendation for John than any other human (see Matthew 11:11).
- f. Clearly, since Jesus fasted, there must be at least some acts of dietary denial that are in keeping with the gospel.

## F. Jesus Prays—and is Betrayed—in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32 - 52).

1. Introductory Questions: What did Jesus experience at Gethsemane?
  - a. Does Jesus request that the “hour might pass” give any indication as to the magnitude of His suffering?
  - b. Why was Jesus “greatly distressed and troubled” (v. 33, ESV)? Don’t miss the significance of the Greek words used:
    - i. The word translated “greatly distressed” is from the Greek root, *ekthambeo*. It could more accurately be translated “to be struck with terror” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*).
    - ii. The word translated “troubled” is from the Greek *ademoneo*. This is the strongest of three New Testament Greek words for depression.
    - iii. If there is any question about the magnitude of Christ’s agony, consider His words: “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.” (v.34)
    - iv. The Greek *Gethsemane* literally means “an oil press.” Of what significance is this name to what Jesus experienced? Could it suggest that Jesus’ very life was being pressed out of Him?
  - c. The evidence indicates that in Gethsemane Jesus finalized His decision to die for you and me. His agony likely stemmed at least in part from an impending sense of separation from the Father. Realize at least two things:
    - i. Jesus and the Father had been together and in intimate communion from eternity past.
      - Jesus said in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one.”
      - Jesus asserted the following earlier in John’s gospel: “He [the Father] who sent Me is with Me: He has not left Me alone; for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (John 8:29, NASB).
    - ii. The penalty of sin is eternal death (not a mere three-day rest in a tomb).
      - “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, ESV)
      - “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6:23, KJV)
  - d. All of this indicates that Jesus was willing to give up His eternal life for the human race. Although Jesus knew the prophecies of His resurrection (and shared them earlier with His disciples), it seems that by the time He finds Himself in Gethsemane on an emotional, experiential level Jesus was feeling the weight of the sins of the world with their penalty/consequence of eternal death. Thus, He could rightly say, “My *soul* is very sorrowful, even to death.” (v.34)
2. Again the subject of diagnosis and responding to a diagnosis surfaces.
  - a. Jesus had prophesied that all the disciples would be offended and scattered
  - b. This is ultimately what happened (v. 50)

- c. However, Jesus seemed to offer a divine prescription suitable for the diagnosis (v. 34, 38). Jesus offered the remedy of watchfulness and prayer, but even His three closest disciples did not seem to have the resolve to accept and employ the therapy.
  - d. If the disciples had watched and prayed, do you think they might have responded differently when the crowd arrived?
3. Analyze further Jesus' words to Peter in v. 38 (which reecho earlier counsel to Peter, James and John in vs 33-34): "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- a. What does this reveal about Jesus? Does this indicate that Jesus sometimes calls His followers to exercise strong willpower in order to cooperate with Him and overcome their fleshly desires?
  - b. What does this tell us about the disciples—and, by extension, ourselves? Do we sometimes allow our own weak wills to interfere with complying with Jesus' "therapeutic plan"?
    - i. Is it legalism—or a lack of faith—to take antibiotics prescribed by a physician for a life-threatening infection?
    - ii. Is then any more or less a denial of faith or evidence of "trying to save ourselves by works" to follow the prescriptions of the Great Physician?
  - c. Jesus' words indicate that human flesh is weak—however, He calls us to act in "holy" ways that are contrary to our feelings and desires.
  - d. Could this be "the good fight of faith" to which Paul encouraged Timothy to fight? (See 1 Timothy 6:12.) Note the context of this admonition was calling Timothy to say no to fleshly desires (v. 8-11) and keep Paul's "commandments (v. 14).
  - e. Indeed, the context of Gethsemane has powerful lifestyle implications. As we have seen, Jesus recognizes the weakness of human flesh. However, He essentially calls His disciples to follow His example. Namely, to rely on the power of the Father to say "no" to carnal desires. This is not a classification of Christians by willpower. None of us have the willpower to live the disciplined life to which Christ calls us. However, the gospels provide examples of the weak-willed becoming strong in the power of Christ.
    - i. The demoniacs, totally captivated by Satan, become disciplined evangelists
    - ii. Mary Magdalene, a prostitute who living a sexually undisciplined life, could "go and sin no more"
  - f. Don't you think we should choose to follow Jesus' counsel and live a life of watchfulness and prayer—and obedience to all His instructions?
4. Do the events of Gethsemane offer additional applications for us?
- a. Specifically, how does our weak flesh factor into our attempts to live a healthy lifestyle?
  - b. In this account of the disciple's failure can we draw lessons that will increase our likelihood of success?
  - c. Does the account of the young man who fled away naked (v. 51-52) have any bearing in this regard? Could it indicate that fleeing from Jesus ultimately only reveals our weakness and nakedness?

5. In Mark 14:43-45 we read how Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. What lessons are there for us in this well-known act of betrayal?
- a. First consider the following:
    - i. Neither Matthew, Mark nor John records the poignant statement of Jesus that Luke notes: *“Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” Luke 22:48*. Why do you think Mark, in particular, failed to mention Jesus’ response?
    - ii. Luke’s words highlight the personal agony that Jesus felt over the betrayal of one He loved and tried to win for eternity.
    - iii. As we will see later, in the closing hours of Jesus life, Mark spent most of His energies providing details about those who were saved by Jesus—rather than those who were lost
    - iv. We have spent a lot dealing with social health in this series on Mark. How do you think Judas’ betrayal affected Jesus on the various levels of His personhood: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual?
  - b. Why would Judas need some method (in this case, a kiss) to single out Jesus to the mob?
    - i. Didn’t the religious leaders know what Jesus, “public enemy, number one,” looked like?
    - ii. It seems it was important for Judas to make sure everyone knew he was the one responsible for the capture of Jesus.
  - c. Why do you think Judas choose specifically to use the kiss as the sign of betrayal and combine that with calling Jesus “Master”?
    - i. Note the word translated “Master” in the King James Version is more often transliterated “Rabbi” in newer versions.
    - ii. Yes, Judas, called Jesus “Rabbi” in Gethsemane.
    - iii. Although “rabbi” came to have the connotation of teacher, it came from a Hebrew word that had the sense of “great one, lord, or master.”
    - iv. Peter, among others, apparently commonly used this term of respect to refer to Jesus (see Mark 9:5; 11:21)
  - d. Is it possible for us to betray Jesus “with a kiss” today? Contemplate the words of the famous preacher of yesteryear, Charles Spurgeon:
 

“But what if I should be guilty of the same accursed sin as Judas, that son of perdition? I have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; I am a member of his visible Church; I sit at the communion table: all these are so many kisses of my lips. Am I sincere in them? If not, I am a base traitor. Do I live in the world as carelessly as others do, and yet make a profession of being a follower of Jesus? Then I must expose religion to ridicule, and lead men to speak evil of the holy name by which I am called. Surely if I act thus inconsistently I am a Judas, and it were better for me that I had never been born. Dare I hope that I am clear in this matter? Then, O Lord, keep me so. O Lord, make me sincere and true. Preserve me from every false way. Never let me betray my Saviour. I do love thee, Jesus, and though I often grieve thee,

yet I would desire to abide faithful even unto death. O God, forbid that I should be a high-soaring professor, and then fall at last into the lake of fire, because I betrayed my Master with a kiss. !” (*Morning and evening: Daily readings*. “Morning, March 25” entry.)

- e. Is it possible today for us to be betrayed by others “with a kiss”? Again, Spurgeon provides some salient insights:

“The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” [Proverbs 27:6.] Let me be on my guard when the world puts on a loving face, for it will, if possible, betray me as it did my Master, with a kiss. Whenever a man is about to stab religion, he usually professes very great reverence for it. Let me beware of the sleek-faced hypocrisy which is armour-bearer to heresy and infidelity. Knowing the deceivableness of unrighteousness, let me be wise as a serpent to detect and avoid the designs of the enemy. The young man, void of understanding, was led astray by the kiss of the strange woman: may my soul be so graciously instructed all this day, that “the much fair speech” of the world may have no effect upon me. Holy Spirit, let me not, a poor frail son of man, be betrayed with a kiss.” (Spurgeon, *Ibid.*)

**G. Jesus Endures A Series of Spurious Trials (Mark 14:53 - 65).** Mark gives the sparsest details of any of the gospel writers when it comes to Jesus’ “legal trials.” Note the following:

1. Most commentators agree that even by legal standards of the day each of the so called “trials” of Jesus was nothing but a farce.
  - a. Even a cursory reading of the accounts reveals that Jesus did nothing worthy of death.
  - b. Our Lord refused to defend Himself, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
  - c. In fact, it appears the only times Jesus spoke was when the saving truths of the gospel were at stake.
2. As we have previously suggested, in his recounting of Jesus’ closing days, Mark focuses on the lives of those who were redeemed by the gospel. In keeping with this he does not even mention by name the High Priest.
  - a. Furthermore, when we piece together the accounts, we realize that Mark gives a very stripped down account of what amounted to two separate “trials” before those representing the priesthood.
  - b. At this time, Caiaphas was actually the High Priest, but his father-in-law Annas had apparently served in this position previously (see Luke 3:2). Just as we refer to past

- living United States presidents as “President Clinton” or “President Bush” even after they are out of office, it seems this practice may have been carried out in ancient Israel.
- c. The gospel accounts suggest that the desperation to find charges against Jesus led the leaders to bring Christ before both Caiaphas and Annas. John records the following detail: “And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.” (John 18:13)
3. It seems Caiaphas gets more and more frustrated as he is unable to establish charges that justify the death penalty.
- a. Mark makes it clear that Caiaphas and his colleagues “were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.” (Mark 14:55, ESV)
  - b. He further emphasizes repeatedly that the testimony of the witnesses against Jesus was inconsistent (see vs. 56, 59).
  - c. Finally, Caiaphas in desperation tries to get Jesus to say something that can be used against Him (v.61): “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”
    - i. Here the truth of the gospel is at stake. Jesus has not sought to save Himself. He will not fail to testify of His divine character.
    - ii. Consequently, Jesus responds simply “I am” but then adds: “and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”
      - Here Jesus makes a clear and transparent reference to Daniel 7:13. Observe the striking parallels: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days [God the Father] and was presented before him.” (ESV)
      - Why do you think Jesus again made this connection with the book of Daniel?
      - Could it relate to His desire for all honest seekers to recognize Him as the Messiah of Prophecy?
  - d. Indeed, Caiaphas uses Jesus own testimony to condemn Him.
    - i. The practice of self-incrimination without corroborating witnesses is not accepted in many legitimate courts of law.
    - ii. Furthermore, note that Jesus has not been charged with anything that would warrant the death penalty under Roman law.
    - iii. Caiaphas’ seeming regard for Jewish legal practices and “holy law” is also revealed to be a sham.

- iv. Leviticus 21:10 makes it clear that the High Priest was never to tear his garments.
- This was apparently because the High Priest was to represent Jesus in blameless perfection (compare Hebrews 3:1).
  - In fact, in Leviticus 10:6, God threatened the first High Priest, Moses' brother, Aaron, with the death sentence if he was to rend his garments.
  - Although some regard this as a situation-specific penalty in the context of the divine judgment on Aaron's wicked sons, Nadab and Abihu, others see this as a general penalty for a high priest tearing his clothes based on Leviticus 21.
  - Consider the following commentary from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 708-709:

Caiaphas...was maddened by satanic fury... Rending his robe, that the people might see his pretended horror, he demanded that without further preliminaries the prisoner be condemned for blasphemy. "What further need have we of witnesses?" he said; "behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" And they all condemned Him.

Conviction mingled with passion led Caiaphas to do as he did... instead of rending his heart under a deep sense of truth, and confessing that Jesus was the Messiah, he rent his priestly robes in determined resistance. This act was deeply significant. Little did Caiaphas realize its meaning. In this act, done to influence the judges and secure Christ's condemnation, the high priest had condemned himself. By the law of God he was disqualified for the priesthood. He had pronounced upon himself the death sentence.

A high priest was not to rend his garments. By the Levitical law, this was prohibited under sentence of death. Under no circumstances, on no occasion, was the priest to rend his robe. It was the custom among the Jews for the garments to be rent at the death of friends, but this custom the priests were not to observe. Express command had been given by Christ to Moses concerning this. Leviticus 10:6.

Everything worn by the priest was to be whole and without blemish. By those beautiful official garments was represented the character of the great antitype, Jesus Christ. Nothing but perfection, in dress and attitude, in word and spirit, could be acceptable to God. He is holy, and His glory and perfection must be represented by the earthly service. Nothing but perfection could properly represent the sacredness of the heavenly service. Finite man might rend his own heart by showing a contrite and humble spirit. This God would discern. But no rent must be made in the priestly robes, for this would mar the representation of heavenly things. The high priest who dared to appear in holy office, and engage in the service of the sanctuary, with a rent robe, was looked upon as having severed himself from God. By rending his garment he cut himself off from being a representative character. He was no longer accepted by God

as an officiating priest. This course of action, as exhibited by Caiaphas, showed human passion, human imperfection.

By rending his garments, Caiaphas made of no effect the law of God, to follow the tradition of men. A man-made law provided that in case of blasphemy a priest might rend his garments in horror at the sin, and be guiltless. Thus the law of God was made void by the laws of men.

Each action of the high priest was watched with interest by the people; and Caiaphas thought for effect to display his piety. But in this act, designed as an accusation against Christ, he was reviling the One of whom God had said, "My name is in Him." Exodus 23:21. He himself was committing blasphemy. Standing under the condemnation of God, he pronounced sentence upon Christ as a blasphemer.

When Caiaphas rent his garment, his act was significant of the place that the Jewish nation as a nation would thereafter occupy toward God. The once favored people of God were separating themselves from Him, and were fast becoming a people disowned by Jehovah. When Christ upon the cross cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the Holy Watcher declared that the Jewish people had rejected Him who was the antitype of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. Israel was divorced from God. Well might Caiaphas then rend his official robes, which signified that he claimed to be a representative of the great High Priest; for no longer had they any meaning for him or for the people. Well might the high priest rend his robes in horror for himself and for the nation.

4. Although the proceedings did not meet the requirements of a valid Jewish trial (it was illegal to try a prisoner by night and to not have a full representation of the ruling Sanhedrin council), Jesus is treated as condemned following Caiaphas' proclamation: "And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophesy!' And the guards received him with blows." (Mark 14:64-65, ESV)
  - a. How do you think Jesus felt under this treatment?
  - b. Consider some further insights from *The Desire of Ages*: "Christ suffered keenly under abuse and insult. At the hands of the beings whom He had created, and for whom He was making an infinite sacrifice, He received every indignity. And He suffered in proportion to the perfection of His holiness and His hatred of sin. His trial by men who acted as fiends was to Him a perpetual sacrifice. To be surrounded by human beings under the control of Satan was revolting to Him. And He knew that in a moment, by the flashing forth of His divine power, He could lay His cruel tormentors in the dust. This made the trial the harder to bear." (Page 700.)

#### **H. Peter Denies His Lord (Mark 14:66 - 72).**

1. Although Caiaphas is not mentioned by name, Peter is. In fact, a large portion of Mark's account of Jesus' trials before He is sent to Pilate centers on Peter. (Of the 22 verses devoted to this portion of Jesus' passion, 8 deal specifically with Peter.)

2. Why does Peter warrant so much attention?
  - a. Remember, there was a very close connection that existed between Mark and Peter. (In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter called Mark his very “son.”)
  - b. Peter’s story illustrates one of the great lessons from Jesus’ passion and death; namely, although we may misrepresent and disappoint our Savior, He still offers us life-changing power.
3. Does Peter’s standing at a distance from Jesus (v. 54) reveal anything that may have set the stage for his denial?
  - a. Peter curses and swears to make a lifestyle statement to those around him. However, soon after we find him weeping.
  - b. In what ways do we make lifestyle statements to try to gain the approval of others, only to ultimately weep over our decisions?
  - c. What health implications follow from this common dynamic of “peer pressure”?
    - i. Consider the example of overweight in America.
      - In 2014 Harvard researchers published a book entitled “Thinfluence.” The book’s thesis is this: the more social connections you have with individuals who are overweight, the more likely you are to have weight problems yourself.
      - The book relates increased risk of becoming obese based on those with whom one closely associates. If a close friend is obese, one’s own risk of obesity climbs 57%. An obese sibling or spouse increases personal obesity risk by 40 and 37% respectively.
      - None of this should be interpreted as shunning the overweight. Rather, it should serve as motivation for those carrying extra pounds to trim down. The evidence is that their “peer influence” impacts the health of those around them.
    - ii. What health outcomes and/or health behaviors in your own life have been affected by who you stand close to—or at a distance from?
4. Peter and Judas both denied their Lord, why do you suppose one killed himself in despair, while the other wept himself to ultimate repentance?