

Mark 14:53-15:24

Introductory Comments

1. After Jesus is betrayed by one of the Twelve and all the others flee (14:43-52), he is delivered up to the authorities and steps into the predicted time of trial and suffering (14:55-15:24). The entire section of Mark's narrative is marked by prediction fulfillment, pathos and irony. The events of Jesus' passion fulfil his earlier predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) and replicate what happens to the son and heir before the tenants of the vineyard in the Parable of the Tenants (12:6-8). The previous perspectives mold Jesus' arrest, trial, and death into patterns the authorial audience both expect and can also learn from.
2. Outline of 14:53-15:24
 - A. 14:53-72 – Jesus affirms identity; Peter denies
 1. 14:53-54 – Peter follows Jesus to courtyard
 2. 14:55-65 – Jesus before council: affirms identity
 3. 14:66-72 – Peter's three denials in courtyard
 - B. 15:1-15 – Jesus before Pilate
 1. 15:1-5 – Pilate questions Jesus
 2. 15:6-15 – Pilate's three attempts to release Jesus fail
 - C. 15:16-39 – crucifixion
 1. 15:16-20 – soldiers mock Jesus as king
 2. 15:21-22 – compel passerby to help to Golgotha
 3. 15:23 – offer him wine
 4. 15:24a – crucify him
 5. 15:24b – divide his garments

Questions and read Mark 14:53-15:24 aloud

Discussion Questions

1. **How does this section relate to the Apocalyptic Discourse in Ch 13?** *All the events of 14-15 dramatize concretely the scenarios the Jesus spoke of (see 13:9, 11-13). He is delivered up to councils, condemned to death, beaten (not in synagogues, but in the high priest's house). What does Jesus going through all these things teach us? Both who he is (recognition) and how to go through these things well (example).*
2. **What makes the statements made in 14:57-58 false?** *Jesus' words are taken out of context and scrambled together. Jesus DID say that the Temple would be destroyed, but he didn't say that he would do it, and he DID say that something special would happen in three days, but it had nothing to do with the Temple. Knowing that the testimony is false, the audience is encouraged to hear the key phrases "destroy this*

temple” and “in three days” and remember their true contexts, the Apocalyptic Discourse and the Passion predictions.

3. What are the effect of Jesus’ words in 14:62? How do they relate to the Parable of the Tenants? *Final recognition. Remove all secrecy. They embody the parable, especially where it says “as soon as they recognized him, they killed him.” (12:7-8).*

4. What is the effect of Mark naming Peter’s specific location twice (14:54, 66-67)? *Implies simultaneity with what happens in between. What Peter is going through happens at the same time as what Jesus is going through. How do these two stories compare?* *Jesus accepts his own identity. Peter rejects it, which accentuates the irony. Also, this is the last time we see the disciples in the gospel. They are not mentioned again until 16:7, by the young man at the tomb. Which personage from the Gospel does Peter remind you?* *Rich young ruler – both go away grieving.*

5. Why is 14:65 ironic? *Telling Jesus to “prophecy” highlights the Passion prophecies he has made and their fulfillment. He has demonstrated multiple times his efficacy as a prophet. Also, Peter’s story of denial that immediately follows is another fulfillment. How is Peter’s triple denial also ironic?* *In denying Jesus, he is actually telling the truth – he has no idea who Jesus really is! What is the effect of this irony on Mark’s audience?* *Highlights the distance between the chief priests, scribes, disciples and Jesus. Aligns and further bonds audience with Jesus, and creates disdain for the limitations of the others (especially the Jerusalem Jewish authorities). Historically this has been problematic, as there have been instances of anti-Semitism based on this passage.*

6. What does 15:1-15 reveal about Pilate? What kind of soil is he? *He understands that the charges are trumped up against Jesus, and arise out of the envy of the chief priests. But he still acts out of political expediency rather than conviction. So he is emblematic of thorny soil. How is the Barabbas story (15:6-15) ironic?* *“Barabbas” means “Son of the father.” So this whole debate is about freeing one “Son of the father” over another one. And the authorities choose poorly.*

7. The soldiers dress Jesus in a purple robe and crown of thorns (15:17). What does this indicate? How do Jesus’ garments function symbolically throughout Mark? *They indicate his power or state of being: touching the hem of his garments was sufficient to heal those with faith (5:27-31; 6:56); his garments became intensely white beyond the power of any human bleach as he was transfigured (9:3); and just prior to dividing his garments, the soldiers had replaced them with purple robes to mock him as king (15:16-20). His garments have been used, then, to symbolize who Jesus is and what state he is in (i.e. powerful healer, transfigured divine son, mocked human king).*

8. Do you think it's a coincidence that the passerby compelled to carry Jesus' cross is named Simon? How is this ironic? *Once again plays off the "Simon" motif with Peter, "Simon" being that version of Peter that embodied the good soil.*

9. How does 15:24 relate to the Parable of the Tenants (specifically, 12:8)? *Casting lots for his clothes is the same Greek root as throwing him out of the vineyard.*

**** For final session, read Mark 15:25-16:8*