

SUMMER 4 - Mark, the Man - Why have You Forsaken Me?

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[0 : 00] . .

Be seated and we're looking at the last four chapters of Mark, chapter 13 through to chapter 16. On November the 12th, 1998, Anthony Carrick died.

He was aged 18. He was killed at work in Footscray in the western suburbs of Melbourne when a five-ton concrete panel fell on him.

It was his first day at work. And a few years ago, sometime after that event, the court found the company guilty and fined the company \$65,000.

What price for a life? Is it a life for a life? Ten years for murder, a bit less for manslaughter.

[1 : 46] Maybe less for a drunken driver, guilty of manslaughter. A few dollars for an abortion. Surely life is cheap at \$65,000.

Life is cheap at 30 pieces of silver. In Mark's Gospel, the value of Jesus' life is seen in two ways.

It's cheap. 30 pieces of silver. That's what Judas bought Jesus' life for. Not much, really.

Even in those days. The Jewish authorities valued Jesus' life as worth 30 pieces of silver.

And the Roman governor Pilate valued it less. But at the same time, Mark's Gospel, indeed the Scriptures as a whole, show us that the value of Jesus' life is extremely high.

[2 : 46] Not just cheap. It's a precious life. Precious because his life was the ransom for many.

As we saw last week in chapter 10, verse 45. A precious life indeed. It's the life of the Son of God himself. Highly precious.

It's his life that brings us life. It's a precious life indeed. And that's why Mark devotes a third of his Gospel to the events surrounding the death of Jesus.

Because it's all about the value of his life and the value of ours in the end. We saw last week that, somewhat provocatively, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, on what we call now Palm Sunday, to commemorate that event.

Riding in with crowds acclaiming him, singing Hosanna, as we saw at the very beginning of chapter 11. It was a somewhat provocative act. And we saw last week the associations deliberate, not only by Mark recording the events, but by Jesus on the donkey, associating Jesus with kingship and with being the Messiah.

[4 : 04] Jesus continued his provocative acts in the days after that Sunday. The next day he provoked the authorities further in his words about the temple in Jerusalem.

The central place of all that the Old Testament looked forward to, so they thought. The central place of religion, of prestige and power for those who were officials and who were priests, the ruling Jewish authorities and so on.

He provoked them further, as we saw by teaching parables, which they knew were taught against them. He provoked them further by his cunning answers to their devious questions, all of which we saw at the tail end of last week's study.

And much of that provocation by Jesus is centred on the temple. We often think of Jesus arriving in Jerusalem to die, going to Jerusalem and being crucified just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

But in those days, in fact, the first day when he arrives and then the days following, it's the temple that is the focus of his daytime activity, words, teaching and communication.

[5 : 17] Not just Jerusalem, but in particular the temple. It was the largest ancient building built for one God. There were bigger ancient religious buildings, but they were for a variety, a number of gods.

This is the biggest ancient building in the world for just one God. It had not long been, in fact, in many respects, it was yet to be finished, magnificently refurbished by Herod the Great.

One of his acts to try and keep the balance of favour with Rome and favour with the Jews. So he poured a huge amount of his engineering skill and wealth into rebuilding the Temple Mount, at least, and refurbishing the temple itself of Jerusalem.

And those who've been there have, and many who haven't, have seen the pictures of Jews to this day at the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall, as it's sometimes called, saying their prayers at the beginning of Sabbath or at other times during the week as well.

That is part of the temple wall built by Herod the Great. Much more modern than Solomon and more modern than the second temple built in 520 BC after the return from the exile.

[6 : 28] Herod the Great's huge achievements are among the best of the ancient world anywhere in the ancient world. Huge slabs of stones, some of them weighing perhaps 120 tonnes, which is up to about 10 times the weight of the stones of Stonehenge in England.

And some of them are still so finely sat together that you can't put a sharp blade or knife down between them. So no wonder Jesus' words about the temple and his actions in the temple precincts were so provocative because this was the building.

Much, much more important than say the MCG is in Melbourne or the Opera House is in Sydney. This is the building that actually defines the city of ancient Jerusalem.

Well, we come to midweek, perhaps about the Tuesday or Wednesday. There are little indications in chapter 11 that Jesus the next day comes in and he goes back to Bethany.

So during this last week, Jesus is travelling to and fro about two kilometres each way to a little town of Bethany over the other side of the Mount of Olives. He would leave Jerusalem from near the temple.

[7 : 41] He would cross down a little bit to the Kidron Valley, walk up the Mount of Olives and then just over the top and beyond was a little village of Bethany where it seems he most likely was staying with Mary, Martha, the sisters of Lazarus of whom we know something from John's Gospel.

Chapter 13 begins with Jesus departing from the temple. As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples, rather, said to him, look, teacher, what large stones and what large buildings.

And they are just echoing the thoughts and comments of Jews of Jesus' day who clearly marvelled at the temple and marvelled at its refurbishment by Herod the Great who is now dead, of course, as we've seen in recent weeks.

Jesus asked him, do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another.

All will be thrown down. Now these are words admittedly to the disciples, not to the crowds and the Jewish authorities, but clearly they would have shaken the disciples and certainly would have shaken the Jewish authorities.

[8 : 53] Jesus is not referring to Jerusalem itself, but the temple. That's where the great stones were and that's where the glorious buildings were on top of the temple mount. And Jesus in his reply of verse 2 dismisses their praise.

Part of the ongoing sequence of these days where Jesus is saying somewhat provocative things in the environs and about the temple.

And then he goes across to the Mount of Olives in verse 3, opposite the temple. Those who've been there know that in fact the Mount of Olives is higher than Jerusalem. So from a high point of the Mount of Olives you look down on Jerusalem and down on the temple and the temple mount.

What there now is now of course is the dome of the rock, that rather brilliant gold covered dome of a mosque built in 690 AD.

And Jesus there as they look back across the Kidron Valley into Jerusalem, down on the temple mount and it's glistening I suppose, maybe not gold covered but certainly very elaborate and huge.

[10 : 01] As they look back across the disciples ask him, picking up the language of all the stones being thrown down and not left one upon another in verse 3, tell us when will this be?

And what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished? Two things I guess, when and what will be the signs leading up to that?

And that leads Jesus into a warning, in fact three warnings, one after the other. Not always in our English translations quite so clear, but each of the three warnings has the word beware, at least in this translation in verse 5, but it's the same word that's used later in verse 9 and verse 23 as well.

Here come the signs, if you like. Firstly, beware deception, false teachers. Beware that no one leads you astray, verse 5 said.

Many will come in my name and say I am he and they'll lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, don't be alarmed, this must take place, but the end is still to come.

[11 : 09] For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs. So beware. Notice that Jesus is not just saying, okay, well here's the first sign.

He's saying beware. Don't be misled by the deceptions of false messiahs or by the rumours of wars or by the wars themselves.

Beware. Don't be misled. And then in verse 9c, beware again. As for yourselves, beware. And now comes the threat of persecution.

Jesus is saying here that we ought to expect deception. We ought to expect persecution if we're followers of Jesus. They'll hand you over to councils and you'll be beaten in synagogues.

You'll stand before governors and kings because of me as a testimony to them. And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. Now clearly Jesus' audience here are the original disciples and followers and for them these words were fulfilled.

[12 : 17] But Jesus because he's talking about in the end the grand scope till his return is therefore also in a sense addressing those followers of him in another generation as well.

In ours too. Beware persecution. He's not saying there flee it. But he's saying be ready for it. Be alert for it.

Be on the lookout for it. And expect it. Indeed in many respects one of the great weaknesses of the church in Australia is that we actually don't face in a sense too hostile persecution.

I think it's mounting year by year. I wouldn't be surprised if by the end of my life the persecution against Christians in Australia will be much more severe than it is now. I think we should be ready for that.

Not to look forward to it eagerly, far from it. But to be ready and to expect opposition and persecution. And if we keep thinking that we're living in some sort of tail end of Christendom and basically society sympathetic, I think we're conning ourselves.

[13 : 22] Beware is what Jesus is saying about persecution. And then if we look down to verse 14, the third warning, this time though the beware comes at the very end of it.

Verse 23, be alert in this translation but it's the same word. Be alert, beware. And now comes something very specific if you like. When you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be, let the reader understand, and often we wish we did.

Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. The one on the house top must not go down or enter the house to take anything away. The one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days.

Pray that it won't be in winter for in those days there will be suffering such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now. No, it never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved but for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he's cut short those days.

And if anyone says to you at that time, look here is the Messiah, look there he is, do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens to lead astray if possible the elect. But beware, I have already told you everything.

[14 : 37] Well, lots of us puzzle, what on earth is that talking about? It ends back at the issue of deception and false messiahs. But it's that expression, the desolating sacrilege that often causes us to be a bit confused perhaps is the way to say it.

And all of this it seems is coming soon, is the thrust of it. What most probably Jesus is referring to in these verses by the description of the desolating sacrilege and let the reader understand inserted by mark in brackets is most probably the destruction of the temple.

70 AD, 40 years or a bit less after Jesus spoke these words, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Not a stone was left upon a stone. It was destroyed by the Romans who finally got sick of the Jews and the uprising of the 60s against the Romans.

And so they destroyed Jerusalem and laid it waste and it stayed a wasted city for the best part of 70 years or so after that. Most probably that's what Jesus is referring to.

Maybe even a bit earlier when I think it was Caligula brought one of his royal banners into the temple itself. A desolating sacrilege in a Jewish temple if ever there was one. Maybe it's referring later on to the actual destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

[15 : 55] These are events that were going to happen soon and were going to happen in the lifetime of many people in the days of Jesus. He's not talking here I think, I'm sure, about the very end of history.

He's talking about what will happen in 70 AD. But notice verse 24 then. In those days after that suffering the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light and the days, the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Now that certainly seems to be end of history stuff and it is.

It's cosmic in its scope. The sky getting dark and so on. That's the day of the Lord language from the Old Testament prophets. But notice how verse 26 said, Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds.

Not you will see, they will see. And though verse 24 says in those days after that suffering, what we're talking about is actually probably, well at least 2,000 years and who knows how much more, a time period in between.

[17 : 12] The destruction of 70 AD and you will see those events. They will see these end times events. The end of history events.

So two things are being addressed here. Just like the disciples in effect were asking Jesus two questions. When will this be and what will be the signs? And Jesus is saying in effect in your lifetime or in the lifetime of some of you, the desolating sacrilege will be there.

There will be false messiahs and there will be some persecution. And they experience that. Some of those things continue on to the end. Deception and persecution and so on. But the actual sky getting darkened and all that sort of stuff.

That's later. And what Jesus is saying is that the destruction of the temple in 70 AD is a sign of the end of history. It's a foretaste of the cataclysmic end of our world as we know it.

When Jesus returns and gathers the elect to be in God's presence forever. So you see he is actually answering the disciples questions in a sense.

[18 : 20] When and what signs? And in effect all of these things are signs of the end. The persecution, the wars, the deception and one thing that's already happened in a sense once of.

The destruction of the Jerusalem temple. So we live in the end times. We ought not to be going around looking for are we in the last days? Is the war of Iraq the last days? Is the settlement of Israel in 1948 a sign of the last days?

I think we've lost it if that's our focus. The last days began in effect when Jesus rose. And they'll end when he returns.

And we're in those last days. As his disciples post resurrection were in the last days. I don't think that we should be sucked in by some of the last day hysteria that's around in some Christian teaching.

And as well as whole series of Christian fiction. I think we need to be careful. And hold fast to what Jesus teaches here. Notice I think too that the destruction of the temple as foretold in verse 14 onwards I think.

[19 : 27] As well as Jesus' earlier words that we saw last week. As well as the beginning of chapter 13. Is replaced by the gathering of the elect in verse 27. You see the temple as a people gathered around Christ.

And so in effect I think the gathering of the elect is just hinting at the sort of theology we find more in Paul later. But it's very consonant with it.

That we gathered together are the temple of God. Gathered in Christ. Unified in him. He teaches then two parables to finish this chapter that reinforce much of what he's been saying.

He talks about signs in verse 28 through to verse 31 about the fig tree. And he says you all know when summer's coming and all those sorts of things because of the state of the fig tree. So what I've just told you he's saying about deception, persecution, wars and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

They're just signs like the seasons change and the fig tree buds and the leaves go green and so on. He's also saying in that first little parable if you like in verse 31.

[20 : 36] Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away. He's making a very significant claim about his words. In the Old Testament in several places the word of the Lord lasts forever.

Jesus is saying my words will not pass away. There's a claim that he's making there for those who have ears to hear.

And then the last little parable in verses 32 to the end of the chapter are about being watchful. Because even though there are signs it doesn't mean we'll pick the day. Jesus makes it clear we won't.

No one knows the day. Not even he then. So even though we know we're in the last days and the signs are all the time pointing towards that from the time of the resurrection through to today and onwards.

We've got to be alert and got to be watchful. We don't know exactly which day when the end of history comes and Jesus returns and gathers the elect. When I've taught in Bible college I've sometimes, as I've taught about the sort of expectation of the end, said to my class, I'm very tempted.

[21 : 42] I'm not allowed to do it I don't think. But I'm very tempted to say to them, on one day this year you will have an exam. I will not tell you what day it will be. You'll find out when you arrive in class. Well it changed the way people studied.

But actually that should change. That's how we should live. Because one day Jesus is coming and we will give account before him and we won't know until it happens.

Sadly at Bible college they all know when the exams are and no one studies till the night before. Well we move into chapter 14. A long chapter that becomes more descriptive now of events that are happening rather than the words of Jesus in teaching his disciples about things.

Two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread which was usually a week long festival following the day of Passover. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

Well they said not during the festival or there may be a riot among the people. That is they're trying to do it by secrecy and stealth. They know he's in the city. So this is a good opportunity to get him.

[22 : 53] But they've got to act quickly. But they've also got to act by stealth because they know there are many many pilgrims in Jerusalem who've come for the feast. Many of them have claimed Jesus as king on the previous Sunday.

So they're not wanting to arrest him in public where they might end up with a huge riot. And several thousands probably of opponents. During the week as I mentioned before Jesus is staying at Bethany as we're told here in verse 3.

He's in the house of Simon the leper who's not known but this doesn't mean he was staying at that house. Maybe he's gone there for a meal. And a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard.

And she broke open the jar and poured it on his head. There were some there who said to one another in anger, Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and the money given to the poor.

And I scolded her. But Jesus said, Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She's performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you. And you can show kindness to them whenever you wish.

[24 : 03] But you'll not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Yet another of Jesus' predictions of his death.

Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her. It's an act of symbolism. It's an act of devotion.

It's a lavish act. Jesus, we might think, might agree. Yes, the money should go to the poor. But Jesus knows that it's symbolic of his burial. Bodies buried would be anointed.

That's why the women went, of course, on that first Sunday morning to anoint the body with spices and seeds. Spices and so on. And he's acknowledging there too, his own importance.

Not in a grandiose way or particularly egocentric way, I guess. But he's making it clear to his disciples, and it could well be Judas leading the anger.

[25 : 04] He's making it clear that what she did was worth doing. He was worth that devotion. Well, some of the disciples, as I said, were unimpressed.

And it leads on in verses 10 and 11 to Judas deciding now is the time to betray him. He went to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus to them. They were greatly pleased.

They promised to give him money. Maybe Judas had actually gone wanting money because we know that he was the treasurer of the disciples. He had been a thief. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

That is somewhere quiet, somewhere by stealth, where the crowds would not cause a riot. Now it comes to the Thursday. So that's presumably the Wednesday night.

And then on the first day of unleavened bread, we're told in verse 12. Now you may know that there are debates about whether the Gospels actually agree and have got the days right.

[26 : 00] Because here it seems the meal that Jesus had with his disciples is the Passover meal. So the day of Passover, it would be that day. John's Gospel seems to be clearer that Jesus died at the time that the Passover sacrifice was sacrificed.

Therefore, the meal the night before was a day early. That's probably the right chronology. Jesus dying at the time where the Passover animals were sacrificed, the beginning of the Sabbath.

That would be the Passover celebration meal that night. This is probably a day early. Mark's perhaps not being too worried about the precise details. There's clearly a Passover link.

And Jesus' meal with the disciples seems to have been a Passover sort of meal, even if it's a day early. And who knows? Who knows whether they were that strict like today. People celebrate Christmas dinners in July and so on.

It's probably not that chaotic. But we shouldn't be too worried about the chronology. And all the Gospels tie in Jesus dying to the Passover festival. Deliberately.

[27 : 04] Not just because it's the occasion that brings Jesus to Jerusalem, but because he fulfills what the Passover looked forward to. That time when a quick meal was had before the Israelites fled Egypt and found liberation towards the promised land.

Jesus' death is that sacrifice that liberates the people of God, not from an Egyptian or a political oppressor, but from their sins and takes them towards the promised land of heaven, is in effect the fulfilment of Jesus' death there.

So that night the disciples with Jesus in an upper room somewhere within the walls of Jerusalem, as they then were. The traditional site for this is now outside the walls, but the walls encompassed that building that's now there, where people go and thinking this is the upper room.

It's probably not the right building, but it may be the right site. But the rules were that you had to eat within the walls of Jerusalem. That's why it's a guest room as it's described. They couldn't just eat it in Bethany. That's outside Jerusalem.

So for it to be a pilgrimage feast, they have to actually find a guest room or a house or somewhere within the walls to celebrate the Passover meal together. And during the meal, Jesus acknowledges that he knows he's going to be betrayed.

[28 : 18] Indeed, we know, surely, that he knows that it's Judas. But for Jesus, this is nothing new. For way back in chapter 9, he predicted his betrayal, as we saw last week.

And he reiterated that in chapter 10 as well. The words that Jesus speaks about the one who betrays him are amongst his most severe words. Look at verse 21 of chapter 14.

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that one not to have been born.

Fairly horrifying words. And so even at one level where Judas is unknown to him, actually fulfilling, if you like, and bringing about the purposes of God, he in no way is condoned or exonerated by that.

The end does not justify the means. And Judas is very clearly condemned by Jesus in these words. And yet, knowing that he was to be betrayed, Judas is still part of the meal.

[29 : 26] Part of the Passover meal. Part of sharing the bread and the foods and the cup and so on. Extraordinary act in a way of mercy. While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, verse 22.

And after blessing it, he broke it, gave it to them and said, take, this is my body. Very famous words, of course, hotly contested through church history.

This is my body. Does that mean that the bit of wafer or the bit of bread on a Sunday morning is literally the body of Jesus? Surely not. Though many have thought it and taught it and killed others for it.

Jesus is surely speaking figuratively and metaphorically as he, in his own physical body, sits there holding a piece of bread. This is my body.

And then he took a cup. And after giving thanks, he gave it to them and all of them drank from it. He said to them, this is my blood. My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

[30 : 30] Truly, I tell you, I'll never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day, when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Well, those words are repeated in celebrations of the Lord's Supper around the world for the last 2,000 years nearly.

Very famous words indeed. Jesus is in effect showing that the Passover meal is being transformed. Not that our celebration of the Lord's Supper is strictly a Passover meal itself, but he's actually showing that he fulfils the Passover and the celebratory commemorative meal is quite a different sort of meal than the Passover meal.

In the Passover, they would have bread, a bread of affliction, to remember the affliction in Egypt. Jesus' body is it, he says. The wine of redemption, possibly, is the cup of Jesus' blood.

So what's he meaning here? Just a few little brief points. Jesus is pointing to himself as the sacrifice. Not just bread and wine. Jesus himself is the sacrifice that brings liberation and freedom.

His death or his blood, same idea, different words, are sealing a covenant. Just like in the Old Testament, the covenant promises of God were sealed by blood.

[31 : 48] So the new covenant is being sealed by his blood. That's a solemn thing. It's showing us how determined God is to keep his covenant promises to us in Christ.

How serious they are and how seriously they're treated by God. And if then it's the new covenant, which is implied in Mark and explicit elsewhere, then it's picking up the language of Jeremiah and other places as well, or the ideas of other places, and reminding us that here is a covenant where sins are forgiven.

Because that's one of the significant things of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31. And notice too that he says, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for, and the word there has got the sense of on behalf of or in the place of.

That is, it is a language, a little preposition that has, it's weighty in effect, because it's got the sense of a substitute, somebody in my place.

You know, will you go onto the field and find a third man for me because I've hurt my leg, Tendulka might have said to somebody, a 12th man or something recently. That is, his substitute is on the field.

[33 : 03] So when Jesus says, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, it's not just for our benefit, but the language, the word for there has also got the concept of in the place of, a place of, on behalf of, or we might even say as a substitute for many.

Too often in modern Christianity, Jesus' death is not regarded as a substitutionary sacrifice. Yet the language of the scriptures are clear, is clear.

Jesus died in our place. That is, we deserve to die because of our sins. Jesus dies in our place so that for eternity we might live.

He takes our sins on him when he dies for us. And lastly, it's worth commenting on the last word of verse 24, many. The sense of many, like we saw last week in chapter 10, verse 45, to give his life a ransom for many, has got the sense of anyone, not limited in number perhaps, but it's certainly not saying that everybody will benefit from Jesus' death regardless of what they believe, but that no one will be excluded by it if they want to receive its benefit.

And in particular, in the context of the Gospels, it's also making it clear that the benefit of Jesus' death for many is not limited by race or descent. It's not just for Jews.

[34 : 30] The Gentiles are included and that's hinted at by this language here. So this is valuable life, not cheap life, worth much more than 30 pieces of silver or \$65,000.

Well, after the meal, as we all know very well, I'm sure, Jesus with his disciples, minus Judas, who's left, leaves Jerusalem. He crosses again the Kidron Valley.

He crosses again the Mount of Olives. He crosses again the Mount of Olives. After that, in verse, after having done that to the Mount of Olives, he speaks to them, predicting their forsaking him and Peter's denial in verses 26 to 31.

And then possibly they come down the Mount of Olives a little bit to a garden somewhere on the side of the Mount of Olives. There's a place today with a church, of course, built next to it to commemorate it, with a little courtyard garden of olive trees that commemorates the Garden of Gethsemane.

It's probably close, if not the right place. The trees are newer than Jesus' day, of course, even though some people try to con you otherwise. And there in a garden, Jesus prays.

[35 : 34] He prays as he's distressed. We're told in these verses, he took, he left most of the disciples. It's now late at night. He takes Peter, James and John a distance away with him, the three disciples who've been up the Mount of Transfiguration with him, the inner circle, if you like, of his twelve.

And then he went on a bit further in the garden to pray. The language is strong. He says in verse 34, I'm deeply grieved, even to death. Remain here and keep awake.

We must never think that Jesus went to the cross lightly. Here we get the best expression of his horror, his grief, his distress at what he's about to do.

Deeply grieved, even to death, we're told here. And he prays in verse 35. He prays that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

Remember at the beginning of the Gospel, it says the kingdom of God is near. Near, well now that nearness has come, the hour has come. And he's praying that if possible, that hour might pass from him.

- [36 : 49] That is, that he doesn't have to die. That's been Satan's temptation throughout the Gospel. That somehow Jesus could have the glory without dying on a cross. Because Satan knew the benefits that would come to us through his death on the cross.

And Jesus saying, God, if there is any other way to bring about salvation for people, other than me dying, I pray that I might avoid this hour.

We don't know, in a sense, the internal economics of God. But there was no other way, other than Jesus dying for us.

His life, for our lives. Take this cup from me. He prays in verse 36. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I want, but what you want.

Jesus, though he didn't want to die, is willing to die. He asks God to take the cup, but there is no other way.

- [37 : 56] The cup is a metaphor for the wrath of God. It's an Old Testament image. You see, Jesus is not afraid just of the pain of nails and a bit of bloodshed.

The pain on fear, if you like, the terror, the despair, the distress and grief he's undergoing even here, is not because of a physical death.

It's because of the cup of wrath, of God's wrath being poured out on him in death. Because he's dying for us. Carrying our sins on him.

And that's why he's distressed. Even here in the garden, before his arrest. But he's willing to die. He doesn't give in to the temptations of the devil.

Not my will, but what you want. He drinks the cup of wrath, so that we can drink the cup of redemption.

- [38 : 59] Well, Judas has gone. He's arranged to arrest Jesus. Maybe Judas has said, where are we going after this meal? Jesus might have said, I'm going to go and pray in the garden over the other side of the Kidron Valley.

After all, for three or four days, they've walked up and down that same valley and up and down that same hill towards Bethany. So maybe they've already stopped and prayed there sometimes. Judas goes out, as we're told in other Gospels.

And now he brings with him, what we're told in fact is an overabundance of people armed to the hilt to arrest Jesus. And a mixture of Romans and Jews showing just how significant this person is.

They are not going to let him get away. This is all the heavy artillery coming out. There's one unarmed man in the dead of night, probably very late.

And they come and they arrest Jesus. We'll skip over to verse 61 now. Jesus is taken. He's brought before the Jewish council, probably an irregular event.

- [40 : 04] It probably seems to infringe all the Jewish laws about when the council and the Sanhedrin could meet and not meeting in the middle of the night and all that sort of thing. And then the high priest, Caiaphas probably by name.

They've even found what they are sure is Caiaphas' house and maybe even his ossuary or tomb box in the last decade or so in Jerusalem. And he asks him, are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed one?

They are not using God's name, lest they take it in vain, as Jews to this day of course will not. And Jesus says, I am. Words that resonate with God's words to Moses on Mount Sinai.

I am who I am. Yahweh, the name of the Lord. The high priest didn't use Yahweh's name, Jehovah, the I am. But Jesus does. Very clear.

He accepts that he is God. He is not hiding now. And moreover, he then says, and you will see the son of man, Jesus' name for himself, but coming out of the Old Testament prophets again, from Daniel 7, seated at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

[41 : 14] A very bold statement. Jesus knows the hour has come. He is now willing to be arrested, tried and put to death.

And the Jewish leaders have all they need. Verse 64. You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision? And all of them condemned him as deserving death. Blasphemy deserved death according to the Old Testament law.

Breaking of the Ten Commandments. But there was a problem that these Jews had. Their council is a bit irregular. It is in the middle of the night. But also the other problem is they weren't allowed anymore to execute anyone.

They are under Roman rule in Judea at least. So therefore they had to go to the Jewish authorities. And blasphemy wasn't a capital offence for Rome. I mean Rome after all had dozens of gods.

They weren't fussed about another one or somebody who would claim to be God. That's not a crime for the Romans. So now the issue becomes the issue of treason. Which is a crime for Rome.

[42 : 16] But the Jews aren't fussed about that. So notice here how two natural enemies are becoming very quickly bedfellows in order to conduct a highly evil and illegitimate act.

Chapter 15 begins, verse 1, As soon as it was morning, the first light of the day, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and the whole council. Probably to legitimate their interrogation during the night.

Because it had to be conducted in daylight. So as soon as it was morning suggests the very first glimpse of light in the sky, they're at it. No sleep for them that night. Because they are very, they're acting as precipitously as possible to get Jesus put to death before the feast proper begins later that day or at sunset I suppose.

They bound Jesus, they led him away and they handed him over to Pilate. Pilate was the Roman procurator, the Roman governor of Judea, put there because the son of Herod the Great, Herod Archelaus, was so evil, even worse than his father Herod the Great, that even the Jews wanted to get rid of him.

And so he was deposed in 6 AD and Roman governors had ruled over Judea ever since. And Pilate asks him, not are you the Messiah? He doesn't care whether he's the Messiah.

[43 : 29] The issue is treason. Are you the king of the Jews? The title that Herod the Great had tried to use for himself and therefore a title that if Jesus was trying to use it for himself.

Now the tape's being changed at this point. This is a little bit ambivalent. It is you who said that I am. But Jesus' words do seem to imply the affirmative.

You said it, implying I am. And so the answer of Jesus leads him to be convicted of treason.

Of course, the theme of kingship we've seen running all the way through these later chapters of Mark. We saw it last week. Here it is again. Jesus was bold to suggest that he was a king as he rode in on a donkey.

A provocative act, as I said, and one that claimed for himself that he really was claiming to be a king. That's all that Jesus says. The chief priests accused him of many things.

[44 : 29] Pilate asked him again, have you no answer? How many charges they bring against you? But verse 5, Jesus made no further reply. So the pilot was amazed. Why isn't he doing something? Pilate knows that he's innocent.

That's very clear in all the Gospels, I think. But Jesus speaks no more. He's not going to throw his pearls before swine, perhaps. And so then comes the very famous capitulation, if you like, by Pilate.

Now, remember, Pilate is no friend of the Jews at all, this Roman governor. He was despised by Jews and he despised them. The reason that he's the procurator, he's a weak man, is probably because of his well-connected connections.

It seems that he had a patron, a man called Sir Junus. And so I think it was about 26 AD that Pilate became the procurator of Judea. Sir Junus was executed in 31 AD when he fell out of favour.

If Jesus is crucified in 33, as many would think, it may have been 30, but maybe 33, then Pilate now is in weaker water. He's got to keep the Jews happier than he did before.

[45 : 34] In his first years, he was a tyrant against the Jews. But most probably in his latter years, especially after his patron had died, he was much more a weak person. So for political expediency, despite his own hunches about Jesus' innocence, he can fix Jesus.

Jesus is then mocked by soldiers who dress him in purple robes and so on. And that was just a free-for-all that usually the soldiers had as a sort of way of sort of keeping them happy, I suppose. And then about 9am, perhaps, on the Friday morning, verse 25 tells us, Jesus is crucified.

Words fairly simply put. And the charge is put above him, King of the Jews. Because usually on a piece of wood above the cross would be the charge that was levelled against the person being killed.

A few things to notice. In the way this story is told, there are little details that are giving us hints of important things. In verse 24, they divide the clothes just before they crucify him.

It fulfils very clearly Psalm 22. I think we're meant to think of that psalm because Jesus quotes it a bit later on. But isn't it extraordinary how in a time of great evil, when the sky is about to turn black, Scripture is being fulfilled.

[46 : 49] The greatest act of evil, but God is still sovereign. And Scripture is still being fulfilled. Two bandits, one on either side. Of course, Jesus' place was actually Barabbas' place.

He was the one who was going to die. There's a substitution very clearly. And bandits on either side. Revolutionaries, actually, is the idea. Not just sort of petty criminals. They're revolutionaries.

They're treasonable offences. Little petty thieves wouldn't normally be crucified. Jesus is dying in the place of someone, Barabbas. But of course, it's hinting at him dying in the place of many.

And there's this ironic mockery going on as well. Verse 31. The chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him. That is, they didn't stand back in a dignified distance.

The elders of the Jewish society. They're there. They're shouting out. He saved others. He cannot save himself. It's almost like the members of the MCG joining in.

[47 : 49] The sort of rude name calling to the players on the field or something. I mean, shock horror. I'm a member. It would never happen, surely. But here they are. The dignified citizens of Jerusalem. And they're joining in. He saved others.

He cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now. So that we may see and believe. They're taunting him. Ridiculing him. Mocking him. But what irony.

He saved others. He cannot save himself. But it's precisely by staying on the cross that he saves others. In a way that they didn't understand.

Come down now, they say, so we can see and believe. But you and I see and believe because he stayed up there. From noon to three o'clock.

Darkness. Verse 33 tells us. Three hours of darkness. Because this is not just a human battle. It's a cosmic battle underway. It's Satan versus God.

[48 : 48] What we've seen from chapter one of Mark's Gospel. And then those famous words in verse 34. A loud voice crying out in English.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Not that Jesus spoke English, but I'm translating using the translation, of course. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalm 22 verse one.

Fulfilling scripture again. Of course, God hasn't forsaken Jesus. And Jesus is not being deceived. But what he's saying in those words is that this is not just death.

It's death subject to the wrath of God poured out on the sins of the world which are on the shoulders of Jesus. Or on him. As he dies.

That's why as Jesus dies, he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because he's carrying sin. And sin is the ultimate barrier between people and God.

[49 : 48] That's why Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden. And why guards were placed there to prevent them going back in. They'd sinned. And so a barrier had to be between them and God in the garden. And as Jesus dies on the cross.

He was God forsaken. Because he carried sin. Our sin. And the sins of the world. Of course, Psalm 22 goes on to talk about the ultimate vindication of the psalmist.

And I think so often when the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament, it's not just one verse plucked out of obscurity, but often one verse implying the context of the original bit of the Old Testament.

So here. Here. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? But for those who know their psalms and would read on through Psalm 22 and see the casting of lots for the clothes being fulfilled, but see at the end of the psalm the vindication of the psalmist who's suffering such enmity and oppression.

Jesus quoting those words, I'm sure, is looking forward to the end of the psalm, so to speak. It's not a cry of absolute dereliction.

[50 : 55] Because Jesus cries out to God in faith. A psalm that ends with confidence in vindication. Jesus cries and breathes his last.

Right to the end he's in control. He decides when his life is given up, not they who try to take it. The curtain is torn into in verse 38 from top to bottom, from God's side to ours.

And of course the symbolism of that is the barrier torn away. If Jesus dies forsaken because of the barrier of our sin between him and the Father, the curtain which symbolised the barrier between people and God is torn.

Because sin is dealt with and taken away as Jesus dies in our place. And so within the temple precincts that Jesus has spoken so much in and about in the last few days, there if you like is almost a desecration of the temple in Jerusalem because its curtain is torn.

Protecting the Holy of Holies from the priests and the High Priests who might somehow inadvertently gaze on the holiness of God behind the curtain. But of course sin is being dealt with here. That's the symbolism of the curtain torn in two.

[52 : 01] This is a sacrifice that has brought about atonement. Bigger than any Old Testament sacrifice ever did. And then of course the climax not only of Jesus' death but the climax of Mark's Gospel.

Verse 39. When the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly this man was God's son.

That's extraordinary. He's a Roman centurion. He's not a Jew. He doesn't know his Old Testament. He hasn't just flipped up Psalm 22 to find out what Jesus was speaking about.

He's got no understanding, or perhaps very little we should say, of Jews, Judaism, Old Testament. But here is this astonishing confession of faith.

As he looks on Jesus dying and he's probably seen many people die on crosses. Truly this man was God's son. The words from heaven announced at the beginning of this Gospel, this is my son, listen to him.

[53 : 02] And now bracketing the Gospel, at the very end come a confession like that. In the middle we saw that confession of Peter, you're the Messiah. The transfiguration we heard a voice from God, this is my son.

In the middle of the Gospel, at the end of eight and early nine. But now at the end comes a confession, and not from a Jew, from a Gentile. Because God's son dies for the sins of the world.

Not just those racially descended from Abraham. Before it gets dark, when the Sabbath begins, they bury Jesus.

The women watch in verse 47. The same women buy spices. Later that night probably, or early morning, verse 1 of chapter 16. And the same women go to the tomb on the Sunday morning, verse 2.

But they're too late because the tomb is empty. An angel is there who declares that he is risen, he's not here. And he tells them to tell the disciples in verses 6 and 7.

[54 : 01] But they keep silent. So often Jesus has told people earlier in the Gospel not to say a thing, and they go and tell everyone. But now the opposite happens. Just when they should speak, they're silent because they're fearful, afraid, alarmed, or have terror.

Several of those words occur in verses 5 to 8. Who is this man who made people afraid in life and in death?

In life, in a storm on the boat, in the transfiguration, they're afraid. And here in death, or at least at an empty tomb, those women are afraid. Who is this man?

Who do you say that he is? What do you want him to do for you? Is the question we saw last week. What is your life worth?

What is your life worth? Life is not cheap. And the precious death of Jesus to ransom us from our death and sin tells us that.

[55 : 06] That as his death was precious, so our lives must be of immeasurable worth since he died for us.

The question is, how would the Jewish authorities have dealt with the torn curtain? I presume they would have had to fix it. They might have got their wives to do it.

The comment is, if it was torn from top to bottom, they couldn't in all faith replace it. Who knows? We just don't know what they did. But presumably, they fixed it.

They sewed it back together. And presumably, you could sort of do that with a ladder, and stand with your back to it, and sort of sew like that with the... I don't know.

Any other questions? Yeah. Concerning Judas and Bethlehem. The question is, was there any other way? Did Jesus really have to die on the cross?

[56 : 13] I think scripture does say yes. It predicts it. Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is in effect saying, if there's another way, let's go down that path, because I don't want to die. But because from the very beginning, from Genesis 3, the soul that sins shall die, death is the punishment for sin.

And in order for human beings to be forgiven morally by God, the penalty still needs to be paid. And the penalty is death.

So in the end, death needs to happen for the penalty to be paid. No, not at all, because even though Jesus is in the hands of various people betraying him, arresting him, it's very clear that he's in control.

I didn't stress that too much. It's clearer actually in some other Gospels than Mark. Jesus is in control. He, it's the time, he's willing to be betrayed. He doesn't hide. He's in control.

It could be part of it. John the Baptist was beheaded, remember, at Herod Antipas' feast. And Herod Antipas was not under the Roman rule because he was the ruler of Galilee.

[57 : 28] When Herod the Great died, sons took over different areas. The bad son in Judea was so bad that the Romans came in and did it themselves. So that's, you've got Pilate in the same role as Herod Antipas, but Herod Antipas is the son of Herod the Great.

So in a sense, in his own jurisdiction, he could call the shots. That's John the Baptist. Stephen Stoning, there is, you know, comment about that, but it's, it's probably an irregular event.

It's probably just the hatred spilling over while he's speaking in their midst. It may well have been illegal. There's another hand at the back.

I think, no? Paul? That's right. I think that the language probably comes from a version of Isaiah 53, the suffering servant, who bears the griefs, I think.

It's not in this version, but, and so it's not so much Jesus, you know, not being upset for himself. It's not that he's, I can't even, and of course, words of songs are not divinely inspired, usually.

[58 : 50] But, he had no care for his own griefs is probably meaning his own sins, sorrows, failings, the things that he's actually carrying of ours.

I think that's how I understand the word griefs in that context. I think that's how I understand the word griefs in that context. What is an infer value in that context? Have I read them? Well, Peter is shares my pen the way they do. I think that his thinking is very.

My climb I see a t straightstart your parents. I think not only the credit in that context. I think that each direction entails a tracer of things that I know in that context. I focus on that speed, quite a lot ofroscopy. You know, it's a speck of sin. Community sorry, but not just cause some type of dignity.

They think that it is very small. So we need to know the difference. You know what's toxic, and that's how to deal with the natural turcular. Thank you.