

OUTLINE - THE GOSPEL OF MARK - PRESENTATION 13

THE FINAL DAYS BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

I. The Conspiracy Against Jesus, Anointing at Bethany and Betrayal by Judas (Mark 14:1-11)

A. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread were to begin either Thursday or Friday at dusk.

1. The Passover would begin at dusk of the fourteenth of the Jewish month Nissan. Sunset would mark the beginning of the fifteenth, and thus the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which celebrated Israel's liberation from Egypt and God's providence in general. See Lev. 23:2-8.

- Jewish months are based upon the phases of the moon, and thus vary in relation to our calendar. A new day would begin at sunset.

2. The Synoptic Gospels describe the Last Supper, which began at dusk on Thursday as a Passover meal. This fact would imply that Passover began at that time. On the other hand, the Gospel of John indicates that on Friday preparations were occurring for the Passover. See John 18:28, 19:4.

3. The two most likely solutions are:

a. Friday would be the ordinary beginning of Passover. But Jesus moved it to Thursday for Himself and His disciples, knowing that He was to be crucified the next day. Also, there is evidence that some rabbis of the time moved the Passover back a day if it would otherwise fall on a Sabbath.

b. The Passover began on Thursday. John, who frequently rearranged chronology to organize his material by topic was only cross referencing what usually happens on the Passover. The scribes who, according to John 18:28, were preparing to eat the Passover on Friday at dusk had put it off because of the events surrounding the trial of Jesus.

4. In any case, the chief priests and scribes were plotting either to arrest Jesus before the public aspect of the feast began or to arrest Him shortly thereafter. They were plotting either on Tuesday night or Wednesday, although there were

probably some discussions earlier.

- There were hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover, and the situation was unpredictable.

B. The woman who anoints Jesus at Bethany (apparently identified by the Gospel of John as Mary the sister of Lazarus) acts in dramatic contrast to those plotting against Jesus.

1. This event probably occurred on Wednesday, although it may have been Tuesday night. John 12:1-2 could imply that it occurred just before the entrance into Jerusalem, and that Mark and Matthew place it here to emphasize the contrast. But it was more often John who rearranges chronology.
2. The event occurred at the home of Simon the leper, who was probably a person whom Jesus cured.
3. A generous host would pour water, with some perfume, on the head of a guest. This sort of extravagant anointing would be more likely at the death of a rich man, or possibly the anointing of a king. See 1 Sam 16:13; 2 Kings 9:6. Breaking a jar and burying it with the deceased was also common at a burial.
4. Contrasting with the disciples, Jesus commends her generosity, possibly referring to Deuteronomy 15:11 which says that one can always be generous, for there are always those in need, and that God will reward such generosity. The implication is that one can always be generous both to God and to the poor.
5. This event was apparently the final break that led to Judas' decision to betray Jesus, possibly because Jesus was apparently being so impractical, and possibly because He referred to His death. Matthew and John refer to Judas' greed, and Luke and John refer to Satan entering Judas.

II. The Lord's Supper (Mark 14:12-26)

A. Jesus apparently waited for the last possible moment before revealing where the Last Supper would be. It may be that He did not want Judas to lead the chief priests to Him until after the Last Supper was over.

- But Jesus had likely planned on this location for some time, as is indicated by the signal of a man carrying a jug of water, which was usually a woman's work. The term "Rabbi" may also have been a signal.

B. The upper room was likely the guest room of someone sympathetic to Jesus. An upper room may have been used to keep the location more secret.

C. The Passover meal was meant to be a joyful one, but Jesus begins by warning of a betrayal. The predictions of the betrayal and Peter's denials sandwich the institution narrative. The implication is that there is a connection between the Eucharist and God's overcoming of human sinfulness.

- In making this prediction, Jesus may have been offering Judas one last opportunity to repent.

- The betrayal at a Passover meal was particularly dramatic, for the Passover meal was the most solemn one in Judaism, and was meant to be eaten by a family.

D. The institution narrative is the focal point of the Last Supper.

1. Jesus says over the bread "This is my body." The Greek term Mark uses (soma) implies the whole of the person.

2. Jesus says over the wine "This is the blood of the covenant which will be shed for many." These first phrase is the same as the words Moses used in establishing the first covenant. See Ex. 24:8. However, in that covenant only Moses and the elders could behold God, and then only for a short time. With the new covenant, all can approach God. See Hebrews 12:18-24.

- The notion of being poured out for many may refer to Isaiah 53:12, regarding the offering of the life of servant of the Lord for the sins of the many.

3. Jesus then connects the Eucharist to the heavenly kingdom and banquet. See Isaiah 25:6ff.

E. The hymns they then sang probably included Psalms 113-118, the Hallel, which end every Passover meal.

III. The Agony in the Garden and the Arrest of Jesus (Mark 14:27-52)

A. Jesus and His disciples then go to the Mount of Olives again, just east of Jerusalem. In prophesying of their flight after His arrest, Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7, which precedes the description of the great battle between God and the enemies of His people, to take place in Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

- Peter again in the forefront is confident of his courage, as are the rest of the disciples. Jesus refutes him, but apparently more in sorrow than in anger.
- Jesus' description of His soul being sorrowful even unto death may reflect Psalm 42, which alternates between the sorrow of the author and his confidence in God's providence.

B. Jesus engages in a very human prayer, making clear both His fear of suffering and His fidelity to God. There is a common tradition that Jesus also saw the sins of all of humanity at this point.

- In His prayer, Jesus refers to God as "Abba, Father." Among the evangelists, only Mark uses the term "Abba," the Aramaic and Hebrew of "Father." Elsewhere in the New Testament, it is used to describe how we can pray to God as a loving Father. See Romans 8:15; Gal. 4:6.

- Jesus' use of this term reflects His confidence in God, even as He shows fear at the impending passion. The term had been used in the Old Testament for God's relationship to the king, see 2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 2, and for God's relationship to His people as a whole, see Ps. 103:12-13, Jer. 31:9. As used in the latter sense it often is in the context of Israel's failure to honor God as a Father. See Jer. 3:19ff; Hos 11:7ff; Mal. 1:6ff, 2:10. Thus, Jesus is, among other things, at last offering the true reverence that God is due.

- The cup of suffering reflects Jesus' own prediction that James and John would share in the cup of which He drinks. See 10:38-39.

C. The disciples fail three times to stay awake. It is a foreshadowing of Peter's threefold denial.

1. The sleep is in once sense understandable, for it was a long meal and late at night. The disciples were also exhausted with the tension surrounding Jesus' predictions. See Luke 22:45. Nevertheless, they are demonstrating that, whatever their desire for goodness is, they cannot carry it out. The need for God's grace shows through.

2. Jesus emphasizes this contrast between desire for goodness and human weakness. See Romans 7:18-21.

D. Judas arrives with a crowd. The descriptions of clubs and swords emphasizes the chaotic nature of the situation.

1. The betrayal with a kiss was probably designed in part to take Jesus off guard, the foolishness of which Mark indicates. It was also a final note of dishonesty.

2. Jesus says He must be arrested then in order for the Scriptures to be fulfilled. He does not say which Scriptural passages He is referring to. Some possibilities include Isaiah 53:7, 12 (describing the servant of the Lord being led off as a sheep to the slaughter), Zechariah 14:4 (describing the Lord at battle in the Mount of Olives); the prefigure of Joseph (who was betrayed by family members and sold off, but who later forgave them) of the appropriateness of the Fall in the garden of Eden being reversed in another garden.

E. The young man clothed in a linen garment is mysterious. The fact that Mark uses the term for a young man (*neaniskos*) only here and at the Resurrection, where an angel appears in the tomb as a young man wrapped in a white garment may indicate that this is an angel. The term for the linen cloth (*sindova*) is also the term used for the shroud of Jesus at the burial. Thus the angel may have been casting off the symbol of death, to bring with him the symbol of new life at the Resurrection. See also Gen 3:24; Gal. 3:27.