

Mark 14:43-72 – The Betrayal And Trial Of Jesus

As we begin this passage, Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane. He had just told his disciples that his betrayer (Judas) was arriving (v42). At that very moment, he arrived! Now Jesus was handed over to his enemies – because of our sins. Christians will spend eternity rejoicing in what he did – so let us study it well.

1. Jesus betrayed (v43-52)

Judas came, with a crowd and weapons, went to Jesus and kissed him. It was a deed of darkness. He did not come openly to accuse Jesus of wrong, but pretended to be a friend. He did not come in the day, but at night. The rulers of Israel did not come themselves, but sent others, and brought weapons to make sure they took him. Deeds done like this are never right. What needs to be hidden in darkness is almost always evil (John 3:19-21)! Jesus' life was full of light, and fallen man never enjoys the rebuke of godly life and teaching: we should not be surprised to see the same things. Then the disciples fled. Before, they felt very strong – but in truth, they were not. Yet Jesus was perfectly calm and in control (v42, 48). Before, he had healed diseases, calmed the sea, cast out demons and raised the dead – he had all power. But he did not use that power. Rather, he humbly handed himself over, submitting to die for our sins. He chose not to fight, but to give himself for our salvation by dying at Calvary.

2. Jesus tried (v53-65)

Next, Jesus had to have a trial. His enemies needed to find reasons to put him to death. The Jewish law said that nobody could die unless two or three witnesses agreed together. But the lying witnesses they brought to Jesus' trial did not agree with each other! They even tried to use his own teaching about the temple and about his body (John 2:19) against him, but they did not succeed. Jesus humbly remained silent (Isaiah 53v7) – the false witnesses were only showing that really he was innocent. The High Priest became desperate (v61), and asked Jesus a question himself, if he was the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus now spoke openly – yes, and he (Daniel 7:13-14) was the one who would rule over all nations, forever and ever. Jesus clearly told them that he was God's chosen king. Have you believed his testimony? He is not simply a teacher or healer – but the Lord of the universe. He is either that, or a lying blasphemer who deserves to die. Which side are you on? His enemies condemned him to die, and showed the hatred they had, by mocking and beating him.

3. Peter's fall (v47, 54, 66-72)

John's gospel (18:10) tells us that Peter cut off the servant's ear (v47). But he did this in his own strength and wisdom, not God's. He followed Jesus to his trial (v54) – but at a distance, not going himself to die with him as he had promised (v31). He was too weak, because he had failed to “watch and pray” (v38). Verses 66-68 give Peter's first denial – he was too weak to confess Jesus even to a servant girl. But after denying Jesus, he did not repent – one sin led to another, and then another. God was patient with him, but at the end (v70-71) Peter was even using curses and oaths to say that he never knew Jesus at all. Once we begin in sin, there is no way to stop without repentance. Do not start! When Peter realised his sin, he repented quickly – that is the only way! Peter was restored; and we who also have shamed Christ, can be too.