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*Repentance is heart-sorrow with a turning to
Christ for forgiveness and a better life.*



DENIAL OF THE ELEVEN FORETOLD

MARK 14:26-31

Jesus had presented long discourses in the Upper Chamber to the eleven disciples as recorded in John 13:31-17:26. The ceremonies were now over, concluded with the chanting of one of the Hallel psalms, 113-118, and they left the Upper Room and went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus went with His disciples over the brook Kidron (John 18:1), which means “dark waters” because all the uncleanness of the temple, including the blood of the sacrifices, was emptied into the brook (2 Chron. 29:16).

Jesus foretold the defection of the eleven, saying, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” But He added a word of encouragement, promising to meet with them after His resurrection in their home province of Galilee (14:27-28; Zech. 13:7).

Peter didn't like what he heard. He protested, saying, “Even though they all fall away, I will not” (14:29). He was overconfident, implicitly trusting his good intentions, forgetting that, as we say today, “The path to hell is paved with good intentions.” Human nature, when facing immediate and dire threats, becomes inexpressively weak and chicken-hearted. It yields to every gust of wind, like a weathervane in the form of a rooster on top of a church steeple. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. But it didn't turn out that way for Peter because he didn't heed Christ's warning: “Truly, I

tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times” (14:30).

In response, Peter was emphatic. He should not have challenged the authoritative statement of the Son of Man, for Jesus had perfect knowledge of the human psyche. Peter, however, was sure of his own opinion. So he increased the volume of his voice, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” The other ten chimed in and said the same thing. They followed the leader. It was safe to talk big when no danger was close at hand.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN OF THE OIL PRESS

MARK 14:32-42

“And they went to a place called Gethsemane” (14:32). An olive orchard was situated on the slope of Mount of Olives, one half mile east of the city wall. In the center of the orchard was an oil press, where the olives were crushed and the olive oil extracted. It was therefore called Gethsemane or the garden of the oil press. Jesus often times went there with his disciples for meditation, rest, instruction and prayer. Naturally, Judas also knew the place.

Jesus had eight of His disciples remain at the entrance. He gave them the parting warning, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). He took with Him the three members of the inner circle - Peter, James, and John - and began to be greatly distressed and troubled at the enormity of the world’s sin that He had come to bear as man’s Substitute. He said, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch. And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him” (14:34-35). But this could not be, for He “came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Therefore, He submitted His will to the will of His Father, to the terms of the great mystery, the plan of salvation, saying, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (14:36b).

And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him. Surely, this was an added humiliation that a creature of God, an angel, should minister to the Prince of life and Lord of glory. But, in Gethsemane, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly. Luke the physician even records that His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:43-44).

Jesus returned three times to the disciples who were supposed to watch and pray. Each time He found them fast asleep, even Peter. However, the time for sleep was now past. “It is enough; the hour has come. Behold, The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand” (14:41-42).

THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS

MARK 14:43-46

Judas appeared on the scene in Gethsemane directing the band to the spot he knew so well. The captors are described by Mark as “a crowd armed.” That crowd included soldiers or at least officers from the temple guard (Luke 22:52). It’s also likely there was a “detachment” (John 18:3 employs the standard term for a Roman cohort) of Roman soldiers from Fortress Antonia which adjoined the temple. Representatives of the Sanhedrin (“Chief priests and the scribes and the elders”) helped form and lead the arresting group. A sign was agreed upon by which the identity of Jesus would be made known. Horrible to relate, the sign was a kiss. “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” The other evangelists, Matthew, Luke and John, supply additional details on what happened in Gethsemane, but Mark contents himself with reporting, “and they laid hands on him and seized him” (14:46).

PETER'S IMPETUOUSNESS*MARK 14:47*

Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it. The intended victim, Malchus, must have seen the glitter of the blade in the light of the lanterns and torches, and ducked, but not fast enough. The sword grazed his head, and lopped off his right ear. Then Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION*MARK 14:48-52*

Jesus was displeased that the leaders of the people should treat Him as a criminal and a thief, coming out against Him with swords and clubs to take Him. They could have apprehended Him in an orderly fashion as He taught publicly in the temple and thereafter leveled charges against Him in court. But this present procedure had to come to pass that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, He was "numbered with the transgressors" (Is. 53:12b), and "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech. 13:7). So we are not surprised to read concerning the disciples, "And they all left him and fled" (14:50).

A certain young man, wearing only a linen nightshirt, tagged along. Suspecting he was a follower of Jesus, someone lunged at him and grabbed his scant apparel. The young man succeeded in squirming out of his covering and made his escape. "He left the linen cloth and ran away naked." The young man is assumed to have been the writer of the Gospel that bears his name, for he is the only one who records this incident: Mark.

JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN*MARK 14:53-65*

They led Jesus away to Annas first, father-in-law to Caiaphas, high priest that year (John 18:13). Then Caiaphas, who had given counsel to the Jews, spoke better than he knew, saying it was expedient that one man should die for the people (John 11:50, 18:14).

Peter mustered enough courage to follow Jesus, but it was from afar off. Through the intercession of John, who was known to the high priest (John 18:15), Peter gained admittance into the courtyard, where he joined the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death, and found none. Though false witnesses testified, their testimonies did not agree (14:55-59). When Caiaphas asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" Jesus held His peace and answered nothing (14:60-61).

Caiaphas resorted to an extreme measure. He placed Christ under the oath of adjuration, which definitely required an answer. He asked Him point-blank, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:61-62). That's the answer Caiaphas wanted, for, in his opinion, that answer constituted blasphemy, and blasphemy was punishable by death according to the Mosaic Law: "Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 24:16). Caiaphas melodramatically tore his

tunic at the chest to demonstrate how utterly shocked he was at the irreverent statement made about God.

Some of the members of the Sanhedrin began to spit on Him, to cover His face, to buffet Him, and to tell Him to prophesy which one of them struck Him. The servants took their cue from their masters. They, too, struck Him with the palms of their hands. How despicable, the way men denigrated the Son of God.

Jesus was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. And it was for us He suffered insult and shame. God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53).

PETER’S DENIAL

MARK 14:66–72

Peter was guilty of three mistakes that eventually caused him to deny his Lord three times. For one thing, he followed Jesus afar off. He wished to be far enough away so no one could identify him with Jesus. At the same time, he wished to be near enough to see what was going on, and to salve his conscience.

Second, Peter fraternized with the enemies of the gospel. It is easier to catch the sickness of others than their health, easier to catch their vices than their virtues. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” (Ps. 1:1). At first, Peter walked with the enemies of Christ. Then he stood with them around the coal fire, and warmed himself. Then he committed the fatal mistake: he sat with them. When that happened, Peter was done for. Next, he denied the Lord, once, twice, thrice. He even added curses and blasphemies for good measure. Surely, no follower of Jesus would use foul language like that. He seems to have convinced them that he was no follower of Jesus.

Third, Peter was overconfident. He was too sure of his inner strength. He thought he could face temptation and overcome it through his own power. He figured he could do all things by himself, without Christ to strengthen him. He deemed himself a self-made man, and such he was, and therefore poorly made. He had to be made all over again. Peter learned from bitter experience.

When later Peter wrote a general epistle to the churches, he dipped deeply into his own experience, and cautioned his readers, saying, “Clothe yourselves...with humility.” And then, perhaps with a tear moistening the page, he added, “For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). Pride had been his downfall. But, by the grace of God, he was later transformed into Petros, the Rock-man.

We learn from Peter what true repentance is. It is not mere heart-sorrow, as in the case of Judas Iscariot. The tragedy of Judas’ life was that he turned from sin to the hangman’s rope. Peter, however, turned from sin to amazing grace. Repentance is heart-sorrow with a turning to Christ for forgiveness and a better life.

The gracious Lord kept Peter in mind. Jesus made provision against the day when Peter should be among the first to hear the resurrection tidings. The Lord knew how distraught His disciple had become after the threefold denial. He knew how anxiously, how eagerly, Peter longed for the assurance of reinstatement. Therefore, Jesus gave instruction to the Resurrection Angel, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter...” (16:7). What divine thoughtfulness!

Moreover, the risen Lord appeared to Peter specifically on Easter Day; “And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:5). Jesus also gave Peter the great charge: “Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–19).

PERSONAL APPLICATION

MARK 15:1-20

*A Twelfth Century Prayer — May I know Thee more clearly,
love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly.*

Mark 15:1-5

1. It is Good Friday morning. Dawn is about to break. A session of the Sanhedrin had been held earlier. Now “the whole council” was assembled. They agreed that Christ deserved to die. Why? (14:63-64)

2. How could they justify their verdict? (Lev. 24:16)

3. What mode of execution did the Jews utilize? (See Num. 15:36)

4. Why was it necessary, in order for the fulfillment of prophecy and the prediction of Jesus, that He be sentenced to death by a Roman Court? Form your answer by consulting the following passages: (Ps. 22:16b; Zech. 12:10; Matt. 20:18-19; John 18:31-32).

5. Before which persons did Jesus, on occasion, maintain strict silence?

15:3

15:4-5

Luke 23:8-9

Mark 15:6-15

6. What mark of favor did Pilate show Israel on the celebration of their Passover?

7. Pilate gave the people a choice: “Whom shall I release unto you? Jesus or Barabbas?” Why did he expect them to ask for the release of Jesus?

8. Why did Pilate, wishing to act in a fair, just, and legal fashion, desire to set Jesus free?

9. Who stirred up the people to ask for the release of Barabbas?

10. What answer did the frenzied people give to Pilate's question: "What shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"

11. Why did Pilate finally grant the people their wish? (See also Matt. 27:24)

Mark 15:16–20

12. Jesus was made to stand in the place of Barabbas. He became the substitute for the sinner. The guilty one went free because the Innocent One suffered and eventually died in His stead. This is called the substitutionary death of Christ or the vicarious atonement. Write what the following Bible verses mean to you: Rom. 5:8

2 Cor. 5:21

Is. 53:5

1 Peter 2:24

Which of these is your favorite?

13. We confess in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Which mockeries and sufferings are recorded in 15:15–20? (List at least five.)

14. Matthew, Luke, and John recount other happenings than does Mark in connection with Christ before Pontius Pilate. Name these happenings.

John 18:28–38

Luke 23:2–11

Matt. 27:1–9

Matt. 27:24–25

John 19:4–5, 12–15

16. What great spiritual truth do we draw from this section of the passion story? (1 Peter 3:18)

17. What is the Great Question of the human race? (Acts 16:30)

18. What is the Great Answer? (Acts 16:31)

