LESSON *eleven*

A TRIAL AND THREE DENIALS

Mark 13:1–14:72

GETTING STARTED

If you could take back one moment in your life, what would it be? Why?

SETTING THE STAGE

In Mark 13–14, the disciples experienced a rollercoaster of emotions as the Passover week unfolded. They were excited to be given a glimpse of the future as Jesus revealed events that would occur in the end times and usher in His kingdom. At the same time, they were confused. The kingdom Jesus described bore little resemblance to the kingdom they had anticipated.

At one point, they became outraged when a woman in Bethany poured an entire jar of expensive perfume on Jesus' head. They argued the perfume should have been sold and the money used to care for the poor. They were startled when Jesus came to the woman's defense and explained that she was preparing His body for burial.

The Passover meal itself was disconcerting. Alone with His disciples, Jesus announced one of them would betray Him. Eleven of the men were stunned by the news. Yet none of them scoffed at the notion. Instead, each man asked Jesus if He would be the betrayer. As the disciples wrestled with that news, Jesus spoke more about His impending death.

And then came Gethsemane, where everything seemed to fall apart. For the first time, the disciples saw Jesus in a vulnerable position. He agonized over what lay ahead. But they could do nothing to help. He asked them to keep watch while He prayed, but they fell asleep—not once, but three times. They awakened in time to see one of their own, Judas Iscariot, leading a group of Jesus' enemies. Some of them tried to put up a fight, but Jesus stopped them. They stared helplessly as Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested and led away.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Signs of the End Times (Mark 13:1–31)

[1] Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him,
"Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great
buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not
be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple,
Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when
will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things
will be fulfilled?"

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no
one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,'
and will deceive many. 7 But when you hear of wars and rumors of
wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end
is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against
kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there
will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to
councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be
brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.
10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 But
when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand,
or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in
that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.
12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child;
and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put
to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he
who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of
by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader
understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
15 Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor
enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the
field not go back to get his clothes. 17 But woe to those who are
pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 And
pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19 For in those days there

will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. [20] And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

[21] "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. [22] For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. [23] But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

[24] "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; [25] the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. [26] Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. [27] And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

[28] "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. [29] So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! [30] Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. [31] Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

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1. Some of the disciples lived to see the utter destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (see verse 2). What emotions do you think they experienced when they saw that not one stone was left on another?

2. Jesus warned, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (verse 5). What insights did Jesus give that would help keep His followers from being spiritually deceived (see verses 6–31)?

Jesus Anointed at Bethany and the Last Supper (Mark 14:1–21)

1 After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened
Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might
take Him by trickery and put Him to death. 2 But they said, "Not during
the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

3 And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat
at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly
oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head.
4 But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and
said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? 5 For it might have been
sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor."
And they criticized her sharply.

6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She
has done a good work for Me. 7 For you have the poor with you
always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you
do not have always. 8 She has done what she could. She has come
beforehand to anoint My body for burial. 9 Assuredly, I say to you,
wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman
has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests
to betray Him to them. 11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and
promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently
betray Him.

12 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed
the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want
us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?"

13 And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go
into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water;
follow him. 14 Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house,
'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the
Passover with My disciples?"' 15 Then he will show you a large upper
room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us."

16 So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it
just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

17 In the evening He came with the twelve. 18 Now as they sat
and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats
with Me will betray Me."

19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by
one, "Is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?"

20 He answered and said to them, "It is one of the twelve, who
dips with Me in the dish. 21 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it
is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is
betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never
been born."

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3. How would you compare the unnamed woman with Judas Iscariot—especially as it relates to their attitudes toward money and the Lord (see verses 3, 10–11)?

4. What thoughts do you think Judas had as he listened to Jesus' warning (see verse 21)?

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane (Mark 14:27–50)

27 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble
because of Me this night, for it is written:

'I will strike the Shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered.'

28 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

29 Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

30 Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."

31 But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"

And they all said likewise.

32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and

deeply distressed. [34] Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."

[35] He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. [36] And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

[37] Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? [38] Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

[39] Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. [40] And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

[41] Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. [42] Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

[43] And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. [44] Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely."

[45] As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

[46] Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. [47] And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

[48] Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? [49] I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

[50] Then they all forsook Him and fled.

5. Jesus knew what lay ahead for Him as He prayed in Gethsemane. What insights about His humanity do you find in this passage (see verses 32–41)?

6. It was customary at the time for disciples to greet their rabbi with a kiss. But what greater implications did Judas's kiss have in this story (see verses 44–46)?

Peter Disowns Jesus (Mark 14:53–72)

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were
assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. 54 But
Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high
priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

55 Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony
against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. 56 For many
bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

57 Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying,
58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands,

and within three days I will build another made without hands.'"
59 But not even then did their testimony agree.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" 61 But He kept silent and answered nothing.

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

62 Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

63 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

65 Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophesy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

66 Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."

68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." 70 But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."

71 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"

72 A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept.

7. Read Deuteronomy 17:6. Why were the chief priests so intent on finding two witnesses whose testimony agreed about Jesus (see verses 55–56)?

8. What do you think changed in Peter's life between his vow never to "stumble" or to "deny" Jesus and his triple denial of Jesus in this passage (see verses 66–71)?

Reviewing the Story

From all appearances, the disciples had reason to panic. The Passover week, which began so promisingly with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, had spiraled into something out of a nightmare. Jesus' enemies appeared to have outmaneuvered Him. After Jesus' arrest, the disciples faced a worst-case scenario that none of them had fully anticipated. Jesus seemed to accept His fate. He offered no resistance when His enemies came for Him, even though His life was at stake. From all appearances, Jesus' ministry—and the disciples' hopes for roles in His kingdom—had come to an abrupt end. Appearances, however, can be deceiving.

9. What did Jesus say would happen to His followers as the time of His return drew near (see Mark 13:9–13)?

10. How did Jesus respond to the disciples when they criticized the woman for pouring expensive oil over His head (see Mark 14:6–9)?

11. What do Jesus' words and actions in Gethsemane reveal about the way in which we should deal with our own personal struggles (see Mark 14:35–36)?

12. How did all of the disciples ultimately fulfill Jesus' promise that they would stumble and betray Him (see Mark 14:50, 66–72)?

Applying the Message

13. What would be your best-case scenario as far as Jesus' return is concerned? What would you like Him to find you doing when He returns?

14. What will you do the next time you're tempted to deny or downplay having a personal relationship with Christ?

Reflecting on the Meaning

Jesus had warned His disciples about the high cost of following Him when they began arguing about which of them was the greatest. Yet here again, we see that His warnings did little to shake their confidence. You can almost hear the cockiness in Peter's voice as he now vows never to leave Jesus' side. The other disciples likely voiced their pledges with similar cockiness.

That's what makes their subsequent failures so stunning. Jesus made a single request of Peter, James, and John in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had the weight of the world on His shoulders, and He needed to talk to His Father without being disturbed. So He asked the trio to keep watch for Him while He prayed. He gave them an opportunity to do something *for Him*.

Three times He asked them to keep watch . . . and three times they fell asleep. Then, when Judas Iscariot and his co-conspirators came to arrest Jesus, the disciples put up a token defense and ran away. Peter followed the arrest party to the high priest's residence and hid in the courtyard. Three times people recognized him, giving him a chance to stand boldly with Jesus. Three times Peter denied even *knowing* Jesus.

The disciples failed Jesus when He needed them the most. But that's not the takeaway here. The takeaway is that none of the disciples—aside from Judas Iscariot, who killed himself—were defined by their failures. After repenting and seeking forgiveness, they all came back strong. They all played vital roles in spreading the news of Christ throughout the world.

If you have failed in a public way, know that you can come back strong as well. Take the necessary steps. Ask forgiveness, first from God, and

second from anyone who was hurt by your failure. Take whatever lessons you can learn from the experience. And then move forward. God has big plans for you.

Journaling Your Response

What steps do you need to take in order to put a failure behind you?