

Mark 14:1-15:39

THEME SENTENCE:

The heart of the gospel is the cross where Jesus is forsaken by all

It has been said that the gospels are 'a passion narrative with a long introduction' (- not a total exaggeration, since chapters 11-16 are all concerned with a single week of Jesus' life), so it is entirely appropriate that Mark takes us here: *the heart of the gospel is the cross where Jesus is forsaken by all*.

The death of Jesus is the heart of the gospel

1-11	the death of Jesus anticipated	This paragraph is all about Jesus' death. It begins and ends (1-2, 10-11) with the ugly plot to kill him, and this surrounds the woman who 'did what she could' by honouring his death (3-9) – a costly thing to do. From now on, 'wherever the gospel is preached', hearers will be presented with the cross of Christ and the challenge to respond in one of these ways – to plot against Jesus, or to honour his death.
12-26	the Passover is about Jesus' death	Presumably the traditional Passover questions of Exodus 12:26 will now be answered by pointing not to 'the Passover Lamb' (12) but to Jesus' flesh that is to be eaten (22) and his blood that is poured out (23-24). For his death is the substitute that saves us from God's judgement (whereas previously, it was the annually killed lamb that spoke of God's redemption cf Exod 13:14-16).

At the cross, Jesus is forsaken

17-21, 27-31, 32-52, 66-72	forsaken by friends	Those chosen 'to be with Jesus' (3:14) are now scattered' (27) – Judas, Peter/James/John, 'all', the naked young man (- often thought to be Mark's autobiographical admission: 'yes I was there and I ran away too'), and even the Peter of 8:29 'fall away' (27). Note the strong emphasis that fulfils Scripture/Jesus' words, for the tragedy here is not that it is <u>unexpected</u> (ie a surprise desertion would be bad enough) but expected. 'What you will' (36) is to be fulfilled; but 14:21 makes it plain that divine sovereignty does not remove individual culpability.
14:1-2, 10-11, 43-50, 53-65, 15:1-15, 16-20, 21-32	forsaken by foes	As if to prove the prediction of 12:7, the only charge brought against Jesus in his trial is his claim to be the Christ/King (cf 14:61-64, 15:2, 9, 12, 26): the rejection and murder of the Son is wilful rebellion against 'the owner of the vineyard'. The high priest can hear the patent lies (56, 59) and Pilate knows his innocence (14), yet they hand Jesus over to the mockery of the soldiers (16-20) and then of everyone (27-32). Like the Passover lamb he truly is, he is 'led' to the slaughter, and rarely opens his mouth (cf Isaiah 53:7).
15:33-39	forsaken by his Father	15:24a plays down the gore and physical agony (much loved in contemporary, visual-centred media), for the gospel's attention is elsewhere: at his death, Jesus experienced the agony of separation from the Father with whom he'd known eternal fellowship. Although this crucial paragraph is packed with theology (cf next sections' notes), the heart of it all is the cry from the cross in 34. In quoting Psalm 22:1, Jesus up on David's 'worm' experience knowing that any deliverance and rescue must come from the Lord (and not from him saving himself 31).

In other words, all the world conspires together (with all of Israel) to kill the Christ/the King, for this is what the world does when confronted with the Son of 12:1-12: 'come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours'. All humankind is guilty and if we had been there, we would have been no different. But alongside human guilt, Mark shows how the one who 'gave his life ...' achieves '... a ransom for many': through that very death, he experiences God's wrath.