

NEW TESTAMENT 1

UNIT TEN:

THE KING IS DEAD: LONG LIVE THE KING

- In Mark's account of Jesus' last hours, a number of earlier themes reappear.
- Mark stresses two things that have been present throughout the Gospel.
 - Who is Jesus?
 - What has Jesus done?

THE PLOT TO BETRAY

(Mark 14:1-11)

- The revival of the plot by the chief priests and scribes introduces the passion narrative.
- They are keen to get rid of Jesus without embarrassment as he is still popular with the people.
- The woman who anoints Jesus is a stark contrast to the chief priest.

THE BETRAYAL

(Mark 14:12-52)

- Preparing the Meal (Mk 14:12-16).
 - The meal Jesus celebrated with his disciples was the Passover.
 - Jesus wanted to celebrate the Passover undisturbed.

- Announcing the Betrayal (Mk 14:17-21).
 - As Jesus begins to eat he announces the betrayal, recalling Psalm 41:9.
 - Judas shares the meal while planning the death of the one with whom he shares.

- Re-interpreting the Meal (Mk 14:22-25).
 - The words spoken over the bread & wine were usually separated by the meal.
 - Jesus intended both sayings to refer to himself as a sacrifice.
 - A pledge of the full salvation achieved by the king's death in place of many.
 - Jesus will not drink of the cup until he drinks it in his kingdom – he will follow the path laid down for him by God.

- Increasingly abandoned (Mk 14:26-52).
- Jesus predicts his disciples' apostasy.
 - Peter promises his loyalty, but Jesus tells him he will not even endure the events of that night.
 - Words of commitment are not enough.
 - Jesus faced his last crisis alone – his closest followers could not stay awake.
 - Jesus prays *take this cup from me* – the cup was a symbol of God's wrath.
 - Jesus constantly maintains his view of God and his awareness of his relationship with him.
 - Jesus acknowledged God and what God wanted; the disciples failed to do what was asked of them.
 - At Jesus' arrest, Judas identifies him to the authorities with a kiss, and by calling him *Rabbi*.
 - Judas' lips declare respect for Jesus, but his actions show contempt.
 - Jesus could have been arrested at almost any time over the previous few days, but instead they come for him as if he were an armed robber.
 - The account closes with the young man fleeing, recalling Amos 2:16 and beginning the judgement of which Amos speaks.

ENDURING THE SUFFERING

(Mark 14:43-15:47)

➤ Before the Council: condemned as Messiah (Mk 14:52-65).

- Three attempts were made to convict Jesus.
- The first failed because witnesses' testimonies did not agree.
- The second, that Jesus had said he would destroy the temple, also failed.
- Finally, Jesus was asked if he was the Messiah.
- Anyone claiming to be the Messiah in these circumstances would be seen as a blasphemer.
- Jesus admitted that he was the Messiah – this was regarded as blasphemy.
- He was sentenced to death.
- While this was happening, Peter denied Jesus three times.

➤ Before Pilate: condemned as King of the Jews (Mk 15:1-20).

- Only Pilate could confirm the death sentence, and then not for blasphemy as that was not a crime in Roman law.
- Pilate was offered the charge of high treason, but found Jesus innocent.

- He left the decision to the mob, who chose Barabbas, leaving Pilate no other choice but to have Jesus crucified.

➤ Crucified, Dead and Buried (Mk 15:21-47).

- Death by crucifixion was one of the worst forms of punishment ever used.
- The death of Jesus was accompanied by a number of significant signs.
- There was darkness from noon until 3pm.
- This darkness marked a critical moment in history, and pointed to the cosmic aspect of Jesus' suffering on the cross.
- Jesus used the words of Psalm 22:1, an appeal to God to intervene on behalf of the righteous sufferer.
- Jesus died with a loud cry – much more quickly and violently than most deaths by crucifixion.
- Jesus' death was different from others – he died for us according to the will of God.
- The curtain in the temple was torn – a sign of the destruction of the formal structures of Judaism.
- The centurion recognised that this was no normal crucifixion.
- The testimony of the women is critical – it would have been inadmissible as evidence.
- The circumstances of Jesus' burial show that Pilate knew he was innocent.

VINDICATION

(Mark 16:1-8)

- Mark's account of the resurrection is much shorter than the others.
- The longer ending (16:9-20) seems to be a later addition.
- Most scholars agree that Mark intended his Gospel to finish abruptly at 16:8.
- Even this short paragraph emphasises three things:
 - The resurrection of Jesus is a historical event.
 - The evidence of the empty tomb.
 - The prophecies of Jesus are being fulfilled.
- The gospel ends with a reference to the women's fear and astonishment.
- They have recognised the significance of the empty tomb.
- Modern readers can sympathise with the women's fear.
- However, it is now a time for speech, not silence – to proclaim the message.