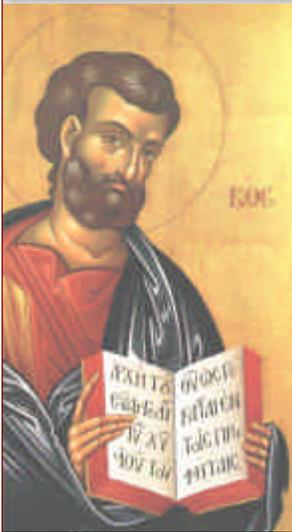


FOLLOW ME

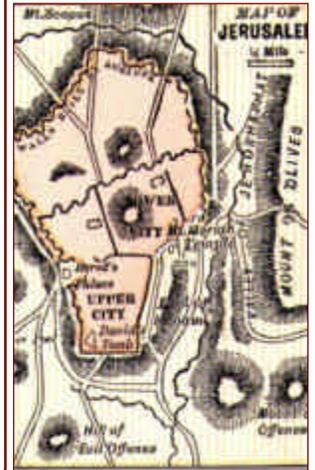
LESSON EIGHTEEN: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK 14:43-72



FAST FACTS

- Judas led a mob of Temple servants to capture Jesus.
- While a man - identified in Luke and John as St. Peter - cut off the servant's ear, Jesus refused to defend Himself.
- The Sanhedrin held a secret trial at night to convict Jesus.
- Jesus wouldn't answer the charges of the court, and the testimony against Him contradicted itself.
- Jesus told Caiaphas that He is the Christ and Son of God, and that He will sit at the right hand of Power and will return in the clouds of heaven.
- The Sanhedrin attacked and mocked Jesus.
- Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

MAP



MARK 14:43-52

Judas led a mob of Temple servants and Roman soldiers (John 18:3) to capture Jesus. Judas' greeting Jesus with "Rabbi" and a kiss was the traditional sign of respect to a teacher; because he greeted Jesus in this way while leading a mob, however, Blessed Theophylact says, "See how senselessly he acts, thinking to fool the Lord with a kiss, as if the Lord would then imagine Judas was a friend... Indeed evil is foolishness."

The Holy Apostle John provides more detail about the servant whose ear was dismembered: the man defending Jesus was St. Peter, and the servant was named Malchus (John 18:10). Both Ss. Luke and John tell us that it was Malchus' right ear that was severed (Luke 22:50; John 18:10); St. Luke includes the powerful scene where Jesus healed Malchus' ear (Luke 22:51).

Just as Jesus predicted (Mark 14:27), His Disciples abandoned Him. St. Mark adds an interesting detail about an unnamed young man who was so desperate to flee the mob that he even left behind his garment (vv. 51-52): most scholars believe this young man was St. Mark himself, although Blessed Theophylact believes it may have been St. James.

MARK 14:53-65

Early in this chapter St. Mark tells us that the religious leaders used trickery to capture Jesus because they were afraid of a riot (14:1-2). This trial before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court, with seventy judges (see Matthew 5:22)) demonstrates this trickery: the trial

OUR FAITH TEACHES

From Antiphon 4, in Tone 4, of the Matins service for Great and Holy Friday:

Today Judas counterfeits piety

And deprives himself of the gift of grace.

The Disciple becomes a betrayer.

In a gesture of friendship he conceals deceit.

He foolishly prefers thirty pieces of silver to the Master's love

And becomes a guide for the lawless assembly.

But let us glorify Christ, our salvation!

IT'S IN THE BIBLE...

St. Matthew describes what happened to Judas after He betrayed Jesus (27:3-10):

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.'

And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!'

Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.'

And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me.'

took place at night, which was illegal, and incorporated conflicting testimonies against Jesus. Many scholars believe that this meeting of the Sanhedrin itself was illegitimate.

The dilemma this court faced was that, while they wanted Jesus to be executed, they did not have the authority to do so themselves (v. 55). Therefore, as we can see, the trial was a desperate attempt to coerce Jesus into saying something they could use to convict Him: for most of the trial, however, Jesus simply remained silent.

In verse 62, under direct questioning from Caiaphas, Jesus made an explicit statement about His deity and power. His response of “I am” when asked if He is the Christ and Son of God is more than simply an affirmative response: He was using the same self-description used by God to Moses (Exodus 3:14). Jesus then went on to paraphrase Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 3:17, giving further support to His claim to be the Messiah.

MARK 14:66-72

The Holy Apostle John tells us two Disciples — St. Peter and an unnamed Disciple believed to be St. John himself — followed Jesus after His capture (18:15), but St. Mark focuses on St. Peter’s actions. As Jesus predicted (Mark 14:30), St. Peter — while maintaining enough loyalty to at least follow the mob that captured Him — ultimately denied Jesus three times over the space of a few hours. St. Peter was so desperate to avoid capture Himself that he even cursed and swore, shouting that he didn’t know Jesus (and notice his words — “I do not know this Man” (v. 71): he pretended to not even know Jesus’ name).



St. Peter’s denial was of course a terrible betrayal, and yet God used it to benefit both St. Peter and the Church. St. Gregory the Great explains:

[Why did God permit St. Peter] to be frightened by the voice of a maidservant, and even to deny



WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS?

- Have there been times when I’ve abandoned Jesus by refusing to admit to others that I’m a Christian?
- Jesus’ statement of “I am” tells us that He is God. What does this mean for my relationship with Him?
- Are there times in my daily life when I betray Jesus? How should I respond to my acts of betrayal?



LOOK AT YOURSELF

In chapter nine of *The Martyrdom of Holy Polycarp* (a contemporary of the Apostles who died approximately 155), the Roman proconsul interrogating St. Polycarp exhorts him to deny Christ. St. Polycarp responds, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”

When we read accounts like this, it seems easy for us to be critical of St. Peter’s denial of Christ. We can blithely say, “I wouldn’t have denied Him!” When we really think about it, however, we regularly deny Jesus in our daily lives. We frequently behave as if we aren’t Christians, we fail to pray to Him, we do not give our full attention to Him when we receive Holy Communion — our lives are too often a minute-to-minute denial of Jesus.

Do you truly understand how failing to live a godly life betrays Christ? If you do, how do you respond? The Mystery of Confession provides us the opportunity to truly repent of our denial of Christ. We should respond to our denial of Christ the way St. Peter did: He wept bitterly. Similarly, Abba Moses of Optina wrote in the 19th century:

Should you be sorrowful over your sins, or be moved, or shed a tear, or sigh, your sighing will not be hidden from Him. St. Simeon tells us, ‘Nothing is hidden from Thee, my God, my Creator, my Redeemer, neither a teardrop, nor a part of a drop.’ St. John Chrysostom states, ‘If you only lament over your sins, He will take it as a reason for your salvation.’

Christ Himself? This we know was a great dispensation of the divine mercy, so that he who was to be the shepherd of the church might learn through his own fall to have compassion on others. God therefore first shows him to himself, and then places him over others: to learn through his own weakness how to bear mercifully with the weakness of others.