

SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES

MARK 13-16 (34 studies)

The final chapters of Mark's Gospel narrate Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives, his actions before his arrest in Gethsemane, his trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, his treatment by the authorities, his crucifixion and death, and his resurrection.

References to parallels in the other Gospels have been kept to a minimum, since our purpose is to study Mark's Gospel, not 'the Synoptic question' as a whole. As for commentaries, those of France, Edwards, Osborne and Cole (in NBC or Tyndale), and Wright's *Mark for Everyone*, are among the most helpful. Major differences of interpretation are noted below.

For an introduction to Mark's Gospel, and studies on previous chapters, click on 'Resources' or see TNV 74, 76, 80.

- 13:1-4** Are my priorities for the future concerned with preserving cherished structures, predicting crises, promoting discipleship, or what? *Ps 46:1-3; Ps 48:9-14; Mal 3:16-18.*
- 13:5-8** What world events may or may not be signs that 'the end' is upon us? What attitude is required of Christ's followers? *Ps 27:14; Isa 26:3-4; 2 Thess 2:3-4.*
- 13:9-11** How are secular and religious authorities likely to react to our testimony to Christ? What is going to keep us on track? *Acts 13:44-48; 14:22; 26:19-29.*
- 13:12-13** Are Christ's warnings a 'worst-case scenario'? What does being 'saved' mean? *Heb 10:32-39; 1 Pet 4:12-19; Rev 2:10.*
- 13:14-20** Taking the consensus view that these warnings apply prophetically to the situation in Judea at the time of the Roman invasion of AD 66-70, is there any sense in which they might also apply to future generations such as our own? *Rom 13:11-14; 1 Cor 7:29-31; 2Thess 3:1-5.*
- 13:21-23** What would it take for me to be fooled by a 'false messiah'? *Deut 13:1-3; Acts 5:35-39; 2 Thess 2:9-12.* Google may offer some present-day examples.
- 13:24-27** How will it be clear that the second coming will feature Jesus Christ himself and not just another 'false messiah'? *Dan 7:13-14; Mk 14:61-62; 1 Thess 4:16-17; Rev 1:7.* France and Wright relate these verses to the events of AD 70. Edwards and Osborne defend the traditional view that they (and the parallels in Mt and Lk) describe the *parousia* or second coming of Christ at the end of time.
- 13:28-31** Do I have confidence in Christ's words even where I may not fully understand their meaning (as in the reference to 'this generation')? *Jn 6:60-63, 68; Phil 3:15-16; 2 Pet 3:14-16.*
- 13:32-37** If v32 refers to Christ's second coming, am I obeying the command to be 'awake' to its possibility at any time? Could this lead to unbalanced speculations? What does it mean in practice? *1 Thess 5:1-11; 2 Thess 2:1-2; 2 Tim 2:18-19.* France, Edwards and Osborne, but not Wright, relate these verses to Christ's second coming.
- 14:1-5** Contrast the attitudes of the religious leaders and of some present at the meal to that of the woman (identified as Mary of Bethany in Jn 12:3). Do I want Jesus to have the best I've got? *Num 14:24; 2 Cor 11:2-3; Phil 3:8.*
- 14:6-11** Do I take Jesus' sacrificial death for granted? *Gal 2:20; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:14.*
- 14:12-16** Has God got everything worked out where my life is concerned? *Job 23:10; Ps 5:8; Ps 78:52-54; Rom 8:28.*
- 14:17-21** Mark emphasises Divine foreknowledge and human responsibility. Was (a) Jesus (b) Judas a free agent? Am I? *Ps 41:9; Rom 9:14-24; Rom 11:33-36; Phil 2:12-13.*
- 14:22-25** How does the narrative of the 'Last Supper' or 'Eucharist' help me to understand the significance of Christ's death? *Exod 24:8; Isa 53:12; Jer 31:31-34; Mk 10:45; 1 Cor 11:23-26.*

- 14:26-31** What is Jesus trying to tell his disciples, and why do they contradict him? Am I unwilling to admit my own frailty? *Jud 7:2; Jn 15:5; 1 Cor 1:25; 2 Tim 2:1.*
- 14:32-36** 'Prayer consists not in changing God's mind, but in finding our own alignment with God's will' (France). Why did this cost Jesus such anguish at Gethsemane? *Ps 40:6-8; Isa 53:4-6; Heb 5:7-9; Rev 5:9.*
- 14:37-42** Is Jesus' warning in v38 just about sleeping when we should be praying? What is meant by 'the flesh'? *Jer 17:5, 9; Mk 7:21-23; Gal 5:16-18, 24-26.*
- 14:43-52** Wright asks, 'Are we ready to betray Jesus if it suits our other plans, or if he fails to live up to our expectations?' What options do we have in a crisis? *Isa 7:11-18; Phil 2:21; 2 Tim 4:14-18.*
- 14:53-59** Is my witness to Jesus based on compromise (like Peter) or on simple truth (unlike the false accusers)? *Mk 5:19; Acts 4:18-20; Acts 26:22-23.*
- 14:60-65** What is Jesus claiming for himself? Why does the high priest consider it blasphemy? *Ps 2:7; Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13-14; Mt 16:16.* For 'coming on the clouds of heaven' see *Mt 24:30, Acts 1:9, 11.* France and Wright differ from the traditional view followed by Edwards and Osborne, that this refers to the *parousia* or second coming of Christ.
- 14:66-72** Am I ever justified in keeping quiet about my faith in Christ? *Mt 5:14-16; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 1 Pet 3:14-17; Rev 12:11.*
- 15:1-5** Does the title 'king of the Jews' adequately reflect the greatness of Jesus? *Ps 2; 1 Tim 6:12-16; Rev 17:14.*
- 15:6-15 (A)** How does the release of Barabbas help us to understand the significance of the cross of Christ? *Rom 5:6-11; Col 1:21-22; 1 Pet 3:18.*
- 15:6-15 (B)** Of the various actors in this drama (Pilate, chief priests, crowd, disciples, rebel fighters, soldiers) who should bear chief responsibility for Jesus' suffering and death? *Isa 53:5; Matt 27:3-4, 24-25; Acts 3:14; Rev 11:8.*
- 15:16-20** Jesus identifies with all victims of bullying and physical or mental torture. How do I regard bullying, whether as a victim, or a perpetrator, or as an authority? *Isa 50:6; Jer 22:3; Lam 3:28-36; 1 Pet 2:23.*
- 15:21-24** 'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him' (C T Studd). Does the logic of the cross operate in my life? *Rom 14:7-9; 2 Cor 5:15; Phil 3:10-11, 18-19.*
- 15:25-32** Consider the depths of rejection and humiliation suffered by Jesus. Why did God allow all this to happen? *Isa 53:3, 12; Jn 3:16; Phil 2:6-11.*
- 15:33-36** Jesus' cry of abandonment is quoted from Psalm 22, which contains several preechoes of the crucifixion as recorded in the Gospels. How does the cross of Christ affect my relationship with God? *Ps 22:1ff; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24-25.*
- 15:37-39** What is the significance of (a) the tearing of the curtain (b) the centurion's statement? *Eph 2:11-22; Heb 6:19-20.*
- 15:40-41** In what ways are these women models of discipleship? *Josh 14:8; Mk 11:9-10; Lk 8:1-3; Acts 1:14.*
- 15:42-46** How hard was it for Joseph to do what he did? What qualities did he show? *Mt 6:33; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Heb 13:6.*
- 16:1-8 (A)** What objective facts does Mark's (apparently incomplete) account present? *Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:32; Acts 26:8; 1 Cor 15:4.*
- 16:1-8 (B)** Have I met the risen Jesus? What am I afraid of? *Isa 43:1-3a; Jn 20:29; 1 Pet 1:8-9; 1 Jn 1:1-4.*
- 16:9-20** (Optional) What are we meant to do about the Resurrection? *Mt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 15:57-58.*