

Ben Leney

Salvation's Plan / John Mark

Words to introduce: docetic

Docetism is the doctrine that the bodily existence of Jesus was a mere semblance without any true reality. It is the belief that Jesus only seemed to be human.

Ebionites: The Ebionites (from the Hebrew for "poor men") denied the Divinity of Christ and the Virgin birth, considering Jesus the son of Joseph and Mary. They clung to the observance of the Jewish Law, regarding St. Paul as a complete apostate. According to St. Irenaeus, they only used the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Mark 14:32 " Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

This is the first reference to Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives. We know from Luke and John that Jesus regularly went there with his disciples.

It means 'olive press', or 'fatness' and it's across the brook Kidron. A remote walled garden. We identify Gethsemane as the lowest point in Jesus' life - the most challenging point.

Gethsemane functions as the crisis point in the passion narrative, indeed in the life of the Son of God. Here, for the first time, Jesus experiences God's silence, a divine estrangement that comes to expression finally in Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross (Mk 15:34). Gethsemane, then, does not so much demonstrate Jesus' anguish in the face of death as his fear of being abandoned by God. Green, J.B. (2013) "Gethsemane," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition*. Edited by J.B. Green, J.K. Brown, and N. Perrin.

Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP.

The instruction: 'sit here while I pray'. Some have connected it with the instruction Abraham gives to his servants to wait while he goes off with Isaac.

Mark 14:33 " And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed."

These words 'troubled' and 'deeply distressed' show real sorrow and anguish. They're extreme words of suffering.

The Greek word ἐκθαμβέω (*ekthambeō*, GK 1701) is peculiar to Mark (1:27; 9:15; 16:5–6).

It is a difficult word to translate. Swete has "terrified surprise"; Rawlinson, "shuddering awe"; Taylor, "amazement amounting to consternation." The word

ἀδημούεω (*adēmoneō*, GK 86) is translated in the NIV as “troubled.” Swete, 342, says it describes the “distress that follows a great shock”; the NEB has “My heart is ready to break with grief.” Wessel, W.W. and Strauss, M.L. (2010) “Mark,” in Longman, T., III and Garland, D.E. (eds.) *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark (Revised Edition)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, p. 952.

When he saw the wrath of God exhibited to him, as he stood at the tribunal of God charged with the sins of the whole world, he unavoidably shrunk with horror from the deep abyss of death. 11 Calvin, J. and Pringle, W. (2010) *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, p. 234. Calvin, J. and Pringle, W. (2010) *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, p. 230.

Luther said: ‘No one ever feared death so much as this man.’

1. Why is Jesus so afraid about his death?

Another comment on this word is: ‘to be in the grip of a shuddering horror in the face of the dreadful prospect before him.’ Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Cambridge 1959, p.431

Mark 14:34 “Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.””

Luke 22:40–43 “When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” 41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.”

Luke 22:44–46 “ And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. 46 Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.””

The drops of blood could have arisen from hematodrosis - an extremely rare condition in which you sweat blood. A.C. Allen (1967), *The Skin: A Clinicopathological Treatise* (New York: Grune and Stratton), second edition, pp. 745-747; “Hematidrosis” (2002), *Dorland’s Illustrated Medical Dictionary*, p. 832, <https://goo.gl/U192fy>.

Mark 14:35 “He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.”

The first person to whom we should turn in our trouble is God. The first complaint we should make should be in the form of a prayer. The reply may not be given immediately. The relief we want may not be granted at once. The thing that tries us may never be removed and taken away. But the mere act of pouring out our hearts,

and unbosoming ourselves at a throne of grace will do us good. The advice of St. James is wise and weighty: "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." (James 5:13.) Ryle, J.C. (1859) Expository Thoughts on Mark.

London: William Hunt, pp. 317–318.

In John's gospel Jesus often talks of 'hour' - but this is unusual in Mark, it just means that his time has come.

Mark 14:36 "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.""

2. What do we learn about Jesus from this prayer?

The use of the Syrian (or Aramaic) 'abba' is a sign here of Jesus' divinity, that he addresses God with 'Father'. 'Abba' wasn't used as a form of address to God, but Jesus seems to have used it regularly. It only appears here in Mark's gospel, and in none of the other gospels.

| Romans 8:15 (NKJV)

| ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

| Galatians 4:6 (NKJV)

| ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

'all is possible' echoes what he says to the man with the son with a demon back in Mark 9.23

'Jesus willingness to obey is more impressive because he walks this path constantly and deliberately.' Schweizer, E. *The Good News according to Mark*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1971, p. 315.

He does have free will, and this prayer shows that he has free will.

In the book of Hebrews we get a couple of insights into how Jesus really was human:

Hebrews 4:15–16 "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

When Christians show conviction because of their sin - it's a very real godly sorrow. It shouldn't be brushed off. We can't neglect what Jesus did for us at Gethsemane. It was part of his suffering - part of redemption. Don't forget, he shed blood as he prayed. Dutch Sheets makes this point:

Without any question, Christ's redemption of humanity—the work of intercession—began with His travail in the Garden. 1 Sheets, D. (1996) *Intercessory Prayer: How*

God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth. Ventura, CA: Regal; Gospel Light, pp. 136–137.

"...when Christ was distressed by grief and fear, he did not rise against God, but continued to be regulated by the true rule of moderation." Calvin, J. and Pringle, W. (2010) *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke.* Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, pp. 227–228.

To question the Father's will - there was no sin in this attitude, and his heart was to DO the Father's will all the time.

Hebrews 5:7–8 "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

The language is deliberately strong and leaves no room for a "docetic" Jesus whose humanity was only skin-deep. His "prayers and petitions" were no sham. He prayed because he needed God to help him, and he prayed in anguish. France, R.T. (2006) "Hebrews," in Longman, T., III and Garland, D.E. (eds.) *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation (Revised Edition).* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, p. 76.

It shows us that docetism was a lie - that Jesus was FULLY human, needing the Father to help him.

Mark 14:37 "Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?"

Here we see Jesus at his lowest, with his three closest friends who fail him in his hour of need - they're asleep. That question: Could you not watch one hour? A dominical saying - it has that immediacy of being spoken by God, addressed to us. God asks each of us: Could you not watch one hour?

Mark 14:38 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.""

It should be the Christian's daily motto from the time of his conversion to the hour of his death.¹¹ Ryle, J.C. (1859) *Expository Thoughts on Mark.* London: William Hunt, p. 320.

What is acceptable prayer?

Acceptable prayer must be sincere (Heb. 10:22), offered with reverence and godly fear, with a humble sense of our own insignificance as creatures and of our own unworthiness as sinners, with earnest importunity, and with unhesitating submission to the divine will. Prayer must also be offered in the faith that God is, and is the hearer and answerer of prayer, and that he will fulfil his word, "Ask, and ye shall receive" (Matt. 7:7, 8; 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13, 14), and in the name of Christ (16:23, 24; 15:16; Eph. 2:18; 5:20; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:5).¹¹ Easton, M.G. (1893)

Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Jesus had already told his disciples to watch and pray in the Olivet discourse, Mark 13:33.

1 Peter 4:7 "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."

Revelation 3:2 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God."

We are all told to be on guard. This is also another echo of the Lord's Prayer: 'Lead us not into temptation.'

What does temptation mean in this context? Is it the temptation to flee? To abandon Jesus?

Jesus has already prophesied:

Mark 14:27 "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.'"

Mark 14:39 "Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words."

Or in NIV 'the same thing.'

What do we learn here? If Jesus has to repeat a prayer, maybe we do as well. What was it Jesus needed? Did he need more time with his Father, because he knew he would be abandoned.

| Luke 18:1 (NKJV)

| ¹ Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

To take patiently whatever God sends,—to like nothing but what God likes,—to wish nothing but what God approves,—to prefer pain, if it please God to send it, to ease, if God does not think fit to bestow it...of this our Lord's conduct in Gethsemane is a perfect pattern. Ryle, J.C. (1859) *Expository Thoughts on Mark*.

London: William Hunt, p. 319.

Victory Prayers

When we claim God's triumph over any internal or external conflicts in our life. Towns, E.L. (2006) *How to Pray: When You Don't Know What to Say*. Ventura, CA: Regal; Gospel Light, p. 245.

| Easton's Bible Dictionary (Prayer)

| "Prayer is like the dove that Noah sent forth, which blessed him not only when it returned with an olive-leaf in its mouth, but when it never returned at all.",

John 12:27–28 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.""

The gospel of John was written a generation later than the synoptic gospels.

Mark 14:40 "And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him."

For though he did not need the assistance of any one... we need not wonder if the indifference of those whom he had selected to be his companions added a heavy and distressing burden to his grief. Calvin, J. and Pringle, W. (2010) *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, p. 235.

Mark 14:41 "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."

He refers to himself here as the Son of Man. We've already had him say 'Abba Father', and here he uses this 'code name' used 15 times in Mark (twice as many times in Matthew!) - and he repeats the words of the prediction he gave about himself.

Mark 9:31 " For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men"

Mark 14:42 "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.""

Mark 14:43 " 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."

Mark 14:44 "Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.""

"...though wicked men fulfil what was predicted in the Scriptures, yet, since God does not employ them as his lawful ministers, but directs them, by a secret movement, to that which was farthest from their wish, they are not excusable; and that, while God makes a righteous use of their malice, blame still attaches to them."11 Calvin, J. and Pringle, W. (2010) *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, p. 249.

Mark 14:45 "As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him."

Luke 22:48 " But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?""

The compound verb καταφιλεω used in v. 45 means to kiss with every show of affection, thus making the betrayal even worse. It is striking that after the betrayal by the kiss, Judas completely disappears into the night, never to appear again in Mark's narrative. Witherington, B., III (2001) *The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*.

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 381.

Psalm 41:9 "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me."

As I've been studying this, having discovered the Christian rock band Petra in my youth, Greg X Volz' piercing vocal has been accompanying me with these lyrics:

I wonder what it's like for you when your children disobey: 'It must be like another thorn stuck in your brow. It must be like another close friend's broken vow. It must be like another nail banged through your wrist. It must be just like Judas' kiss.'

Mark 14:46 "Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him."

Mark 14:47 "And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear."

John 18:10 " Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus."

Luke 22:51 " But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him."

Mark 14:48–49 " 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.""

Which scriptures must be fulfilled? If we look at Isaiah 53 we see a lot of them. Paul puts it very powerfully:

2 Corinthians 5:21 " For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

One of the vital things to remember is that the cross was a scandalous way to die - we're not quite at the cross, but Peter and Mark would have been thinking: we need to explain this ignominious death, this traitor's death. So they've gone back into the OT and explained the verses that interpret Jesus' death and make sense of it for a Jewish culture who knew 'cursed is everyone who dies on a tree.' And why would the Messiah need to die?

Alec Motyer in Isaiah 53 says even if you had added Jesus' name in here, it couldn't have been clearer that it's referring to Jesus:

Isaiah 53:4 "Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted."

This is the suffering servant, who Jesus is. We might read even Jesus' suffering in

Gethsemane and glance at the Cross, and think that Jesus is 'stricken', that a bit like Job, he is mysteriously suffering judgment from God. But read on in this astonishing chapter:

Isaiah 53:5 "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

And how can we view this verse as anything other than a prediction of Jesus' death? And also we see clearly here that Jesus is dying for us, or for His people.

Isaiah 53:12 "Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors."

This is indeed the passage that Philip explains to the Ethiopian eunuch as he goes along the road - this is Jesus incredibly fulfilling Isaiah 53. If we want to share the gospel with the Jews it's a great passage to use.

Mark 14:50 "Then they all forsook Him and fled."

Let us learn from the flight of these eleven disciples, not to be over confident in our own strength. The fear of man does indeed bring a snare. We never know what we may do, if we are tempted, or to what extent our faith may give way. Let us be clothed with humility. Ryle.

Luke 22:28 "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials."

Paul speaks about a very similar experience to Jesus:

2 Timothy 4:16 " At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them."

Mark 14:51–52 "Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked."

3. Why do was this short account was included in Mark?

This is not included in any of the other gospel accounts. It's probably a reference to Mark himself. Why he only wore an outer garment isn't mentioned. In Lane's commentary he says this was included probably to make it clear that all fled - there were no hangers-on.

It's also worth noting that Witherington says: Judas had possibly led the posse of armed men to John Mark's house to start with, where the Passover took place, and then to Gethsemane - and John Mark probably trailed them, having hastily flung on some clothes, which seems quite a convincing hypothesis.

It's important for us to be thankful that Jesus came through this moment in the

garden: we see Jesus' humanity at the lowest point: fearful of what is to come, but also experiencing abandonment by His friends, those who love him. Now in the hands of sinners: the spotless Lamb of God in the hands of sinners.