

**Series:** Christmas and the Cross  
**Title:** Lessons from A Holiday Meal  
**Text:** Mark 14:12-21  
**Date:** December 13, 2020

### **Verse 12**

In verse 12, Mark transitioned to talk about Jesus' preparations for the Passover. The verse says, "On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrifice the Passover lamb, his disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare the Passover so that you may eat it?" The disciples' question was an extremely practical one. In their minds, they had travelled (Mark 10:32-11:8) with our Lord to Jerusalem for the express purpose of keeping the Passover traditions. Considering the immense crowd of people who had descended upon Jerusalem for the Holy Week (Mark 11:8), it was necessary to secure accommodations for observing the most sacred feast.

The "Passover" was a distinctively Jewish observance. It was intended to commemorate the Jew's release from Egyptian slavery, being instituted by God in Exodus 12:43-13:2. During the meal, an unblemished lamb was sacrificed on behalf of the Jewish firstborn. If you remember, when the Lord delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, He performed several signs and wonders to demonstrate that Moses was His true prophet. Such miracles were also intended to prove He was performing a great work amongst Jews in order to deliver them from slavery (Exodus 4:1-5). The majority of Moses' prophet-confirming miracles appeared in the form of plagues. The final of the plagues was a curse that involved the death of all the firstborn males in Egypt (Exodus 11:1-10). To be rescued from that curse, the Jews were required to offer an unblemished animal that was the firstborn of their flocks. In offering such a sacrifice, the people enlisted a substitute or scapegoat on behalf of their firstborn sons. Their commitment to trust in God's ordained means of sacrifice rescued them from the wrath of God.

According to Jewish tradition, Passover lambs were slaughtered on 14 Nisan.<sup>1</sup> They were typically prepared on the afternoon that concluded that day.<sup>2</sup> The Passover meal, however, was normally not consumed until Friday evening, the evening that began 15 Nisan. Some see a conflict with our current verse and John's chronology of the Holy Week. John tells us that Jesus was sacrificed on the day in which the Passover lambs were sacrificed (John 13:1 and 29; 18:28; 19:14 and 31). How can we reconcile his account with Mark's? Remember the Jewish reckoning of days. They regarded a day as starting at sundown on the previous day. As a result, we can regard Mark as speaking of Thursday evening of the Holy Week, while regarding John as speaking of Friday morning. Both periods of time would fit within the Jewish day of the Passover. While 15 Nisan would have begun on Friday night and continued into Saturday, 14 Nisan began on Thursday night and continued into Friday.

The disciples would have observed their Passover meal with Jesus on the evening that began 14 Nisan — Thursday evening. This was not totally in keeping with Jewish tradition. Usually the lambs were slaughtered on the afternoon of that day, but they were not consumed until the next day. Did Jesus violate Mosaic requirements? It is worth noting that worshippers in Jerusalem partook of the Passover at different times during the week. History verifies that first-century Jews exercised great flexibility in their observances of the meal. The requirement to eat it within the confines of Jerusalem, along with the large crowds that inhabited the city during the season of Passover, made it necessary for faithful Jews to sometimes take of the meal at times other than the actually day appointed for the custom.<sup>3</sup> With these realities in

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, 224.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, 353.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, 225-226.

mind, we can see the meal in our text as a Passover-like meal that Jesus observed with His disciples during the Holy Week. He shared it with His disciples on Thursday night instead of Friday night, and He did so for good reason.

He wanted to demonstrate that He was starting something new. He introduced an intentional change. It was His intent to radically renovate the Passover and to make a new observance that would commemorate His sacrifice on behalf of sin.<sup>4</sup> One should not try to force our Lord's observance of the meal strictly into the mold of the ancient Passover. Some make too much of the elements and traditions used by first-century Jews, assuming that Jesus used the exact spices, cups, and utensils that would have been used. The gospels give evidence that Jesus drastically simplified the meal, and He did so on purpose. He intended to create something new. He aimed to institute a new ordinance for the Church — the Lord's Supper. Our next passage in Mark's gospel will show this to be true (Mark 14:22-26).

However, there is still great meaning in the way in which the Lord used the occasion of the Passover to instruct His disciples. It is not by happenstance that He was crucified on the holy day. His sacrifice was divinely orchestrated to take place in congruence with the occasion. Both the sovereignty and providence of God worked such things together. Through heavenly timing, the Lord demonstrated that His Son was the ultimate Passover lamb. The words of John the Baptist were shown to be true — Jesus was “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). One has commented on the significance of the timing of Jesus' death, saying, “Every sacrifice, no doubt, was intended to point the Jew onward to the one great sacrifice for sin which Christ offered. But none, certainly, was so striking a figure and type of our Lord's sacrifice, as the slaying of the Passover lamb. It was pre-eminently an ordinance which was a ‘schoolmaster unto Christ’ (Galatians 3:24).” In Christ, we personally have a substitute on our behalf. Jesus was the unblemished Lamb of God who died in our place. Because He died in our place, we don't have to experience the punishment our sin deserves — spiritual death and eternal separation from God!

There is another tidbit of glorious truth found in the disciples' interrogative in our verse. Notice Jesus intended to eat the Passover meal with the Twelve. Normally in first-century Canaan, the meal was customarily celebrated amongst families. The Law of Moses had actually mandated such a practice (Exodus 12:1-3). Jesus strategically broke with the custom to convey important gospel truth. He celebrated the meal with His followers, individuals who were not a part of His physical family, in order to demonstrate that He provides a new type of family to all who are born of Him.<sup>5</sup> In Christ, Christians have a spiritual family that brings encouragement, support, edification, and strength throughout life (Hebrews 10:24-25). Mark referenced the realities associated with this family earlier in his gospel (Mark 3:34-35). When Christians share the Lord's Supper with their church family, they should always be mindful of the fact that they belong to a new community.

### **Verse 13**

In verse 13, Jesus responded to His disciples' request by sending them to make preparations for the Passover meal. Mark recorded, “So he sent two of his disciples and told them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him’” (Mark 14:13). Luke tells us that Peter and John were the two disciples Jesus sent (Luke 22:8).<sup>6</sup> In Mark's gospel, we have already seen that Jesus had established the precedent of sending His disciples out in pairs for special purposes (Mark 6:7). In preparation for His triumphal entry, He had sent two disciples ahead of Him into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1).

On this occasion, He sent Peter and John and told them to look for “a man carrying a jar of water.” The “jar” should not be regarded as ceremonial in any sense. The two were to

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<sup>4</sup> Schnabel, 350.

<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, 350.

<sup>6</sup> Robertson, 381.

look for what would have been a man with a normal, household piece of pottery.<sup>7</sup> The “man” for whom they were to look was probably a household slave. Perhaps he worked for a disciple of Jesus who lived in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

The instructions were quite strange by first-century standards. Typically, transportation of water jars was a job reserved for women. Men usually were entrusted with carrying wineskins.<sup>9</sup> It seems Jesus had prearranged an out-of-the-ordinary sign with one of His followers in Jerusalem so His disciples would be able to easily spot the person who would give them assistance.

Our Lord’s intent was to keep a low profile. He had secretly made the necessary arrangements for the Passover in a way that would guarantee His safety. Remember from Mark 3:6 that the religious and political elite had been plotting for some time to have Jesus put to death. During the Holy Week, such threats had escalated (Mark 11:18). The gears of Judas’ scheme to betray Jesus were turning (Mark 14:10-11).

Our Lord faced an eminent threat of death; however, He wanted to keep things in line with the Heavenly Father’s timetable. He demonstrated a similar carefulness elsewhere in Mark’s gospel (Mark 5:43 and 11:33). Jesus wanted to die as the Passover Lamb on the day the Lord had ordained. Before dying, He also wanted to institute a special new meal for the Church (1 Corinthians 11:23). He was secret in making His arrangements for the Passover for these reasons. His stealth activity should not be regarded as if it was driven by fear. Our Lord demonstrated wisdom and passion through the way in which He kept Himself secure.<sup>10</sup> He protected Himself because He had a great desire to enjoy the Passover meal with His disciples before He died (Luke 22:15). His deliberate and calculated actions are telling. They prove to us how important the Lord’s Supper is for the body of Christ.

#### **Verse 14**

Jesus continued His instructions to Peter and John in verse 14, telling them to tell the master of the man they met: “The Teacher says, ‘Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” (Mark 14:14). The servant with the jar in the street would have worked for a master, one who owned a house and land.<sup>11</sup> We saw the same type of individual mentioned earlier in Mark 13 when Jesus gave a mini parable to speak about the end of time (Mark 13:34-35). In referring to this individual, Jesus showed that He had made arrangements for the Passover meal with someone He knew.<sup>12</sup> Again, the master of the household was likely a disciple of Jesus. The scene is similar to the one associated with our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Remember the way in which He sent two of His disciples ahead of Him into Jerusalem from Bethany. On that occasion, they were similarly instructed to secure pre-arranged accommodations (Mark 11:4).

Some would assume there was some sort of mystical and magical, Jedi-like mind tricks at play in our narrative. It seems, instead, that Jesus had devoted followers in the areas surrounding Bethany and Jerusalem. In the first century, the citizens of Jerusalem were accustomed to providing rooms for rent to pilgrims who travelled into the capital city for holy

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<sup>7</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 98.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 352.

<sup>9</sup> Ferguson, 227.

<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, 227.

<sup>11</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 98.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, 226.

observances.<sup>13</sup> Our text simply conveys Jesus securing such accommodations for Himself and the Twelve. He wanted to observe the customary Passover with them in order to establish the New Testament meal we call the Lord's Supper.

### **Verses 15 and 16**

In verse 15, Jesus continued to give His disciples directives about the preparations, saying, "He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there" (Mark 14:15). In the first century, most homes consisted of one to four rooms on one level.<sup>14</sup> Jerusalem undoubtedly had a good number of larger homes, since it probably had more wealthy residents than those found in the average villages throughout Canaan. A home like the one in view, containing a large upper room, would have belonged to a person of means. Most likely Jesus had a relatively rich follower with whom he had made accommodations for His Passover meal.

Jesus told His disciples the man would have the room "furnished and ready." This would have meant the room was outfitted with the necessary carpets, cushions, and dishware required for observing the famous meal.<sup>15</sup> Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting gives us a misleading representation of what the Last Supper really looked like. Worshipers didn't normally sit around a table when they took of the Passover. Instead, they typically shared the meal as they sat on pillows atop a carpeted floor.<sup>16</sup>

Once they gained access to the room, the disciples would need to "make the preparations." Though it would be outfitted with all that was needed for the occasion, the disciples would need to prepare the customary food and beverages for consumption. Maybe they needed to buy all of the necessary items for the meal. They likely had to bake unleavened bread and mix a transitional sauce that was used for dipping. They may have had to buy a roasted lamb. Perhaps they even cooked one themselves.<sup>17</sup>

After hearing Jesus' instructions, the disciples took action. They obeyed. Verse 16 says, "So the disciples went out, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover" (Mark 14:16). The disciples made contact with the man with the water jar and he took them to his master. Then the master showed them the room that had been reserved. The disciples then made preparations for the Passover meal. The scene was set for the Last Supper.

### **Verse 17**

Verse 17 took Mark's readers into the upper room, giving them a glimpse of Jesus' last supper with His disciples. It read, "When evening came, he arrived with the Twelve." The mention of "evening" indicates that Jesus' arrival took place in the late afternoon. While twenty-first century readers may think of "evening" as being after dark, first-century minds tabulated time differently. Most folks back then did not travel after twilight. Evening would have included what we regard as late afternoon. As a result, Jesus and His disciples probably met to observe the Passover at about 5:00 pm.

Some seek to find controversy with the mention of "the Twelve" arriving with Jesus to the upper room. Hadn't Jesus already sent two ahead of the other ten to make preparations? Why are they now portrayed as arriving with Jesus at the house? Is there a mistake in the Bible?

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<sup>13</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Brooks, 227.

<sup>15</sup> Brooks, 227.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 98.

<sup>17</sup> Brooks, 226.

A simple explanation is available. The mention of “the Twelve” involves an official designation for the band of disciples. It was often used in this regard in Mark’s gospel (Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; and 14:10). Paul used the moniker in this way in 1 Corinthians 15:5, even after Judas’ betrayal and death.<sup>18</sup> The moniker was a label for the disciples as a collective group. What we see in our text is Jesus arriving with ten of His disciples to meet the other two, Peter and John, who had gone ahead to make preparations for the Passover. Many believe that Jesus and the ten joined the two disciples about an hour after He had sent the two away for preparations.<sup>19</sup>

### **Verse 18**

Verse 18 introduced the actual Passover meal. As Jesus and His disciples ate, He made a startling announcement: “While they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with me’” (Mark 14:18). In the first-century world, the posture of “reclining” was customary for formal meals.<sup>20</sup> Again, Leonardo da Vinci’s scene is inaccurate. Jesus and His disciples did not sit upright on one side of a table. According to custom, they reclined on pillows scattered on top of a carpet on the floor.<sup>21</sup>

The picture in the text is one of relaxation and enjoyment mixed with intimate fellowship and holy reverence. We should keep the picture in mind when we observe the Lord’s Supper. The meal should never be too formal, but we shouldn’t be flippant about it either. We should avoid a spirit of legalistic formality and staunch religiosity, but we should also spurn a calloused shallowness in which there is no sacred caution. The Lord’s Supper beckons us to reverential worship, but it also reminds us that we have been freely invited to enjoy close fellowship with the God who loves us.

In the midst of the most special meal, Jesus blurted out a shocking revelation. He said, “One of you will betray me — one who is eating with me.” By depicting Judas as actually eating with Jesus, Mark showed the hideous nature of the man’s betrayal.<sup>22</sup> In the ancient world, sharing a meal was a sign of deep loyalty and kinship. Typically, only closest friends and family members shared meals together.<sup>23</sup> Judas’ sin was indeed deep. He was gripped by total depravity. He betrayed the One who deeply loved Him. May we ever stand on guard against the hideous deception of sin.

Judas’ presence at the Lord’s Supper seems strange to say the least. One can almost feel the tension in the air as he or she reads Mark’s account. The gospel writer did not shy away from telling of Judas’ participation in the meal. In fact, it seems he intentionally placed his narrative immediately after his account of Judas’ secret betrayal (Mark 14:10-11) for a reason. Judas’ presence at the meal had great meaning for the Church. It taught that not all who take of the bread and cup may be worthy of it.

Believers should exercise holy vigilance when they approach the Lord’s Supper. If even the Lord’s first observance of the meal was marked by a hypocrite, don’t we stand in danger of vain worship? There is great need for spiritual examination before coming to the Lord’s table. In giving apostolic instruction to first-century churches, Paul said, “So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and

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<sup>18</sup> Brooks, 227.

<sup>19</sup> Schnabel, 353.

<sup>20</sup> Schnabel, 353.

<sup>21</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 382.

<sup>22</sup> Brooks, 227.

<sup>23</sup> Schnabel, 353.

drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

When you take of the Lord’s Supper, engage in personal evaluation. For some, there may be a need for some soul-searching in regard to salvation. Maybe one should question whether or not he or she is really in Christ before taking of the cup and the bread. It’s telling that in a letter to the same church that received his instruction regarding the Lord’s Supper Paul also said, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Are you saved? Are you in Christ? Make sure you stand in Him before observing His sacred ordinance. Don’t miss the meaning of the bread and the cup.

For others, the Lord’s Supper may be an occasion for personal evaluations regarding sanctification. When one handles the elements, he or she is reminded of the price Christ paid for sin. Believers should be fearful of the condition which some first-century Christians found themselves. The author of Hebrews rebuked some who he said “trampled on the Son of God” and “regarded as profane the blood of the covenant by” (Hebrews 10:29).

There are indeed times in our lives in which we need cleansing from the defilement of indwelling sin. Remember the teaching of John’s first epistle. He told his readers, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). There will be no perfection until the resurrection. As long as we live within our earthly tents, we will struggle with faults, failures, and our fallen nature. Regular reminders regarding Christ’s body and blood give us an opportune time to “lay aside every hindrance and sin that so easily ensnares us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Too many believers aren’t aware of the need for regular examination. They don’t use the Lord’s Supper for its intended purpose. Deep soul-searching never takes place. They glibly take of the elements like Judas of old. As a result, some stay in a lost condition, believing religious activity, church involvement, a mere profession of faith, or a sacred observance has secured their salvation. It will be a sad day when such individuals realize their folly. Their end will be as tragic as the one Judas experienced. May we allow Judas’ sinister presence at the Lord’s Table to startle us to our spiritual senses. May we use the Lord’s beautiful ordinance for purposeful self-examination. When we take the ordinance seriously, as our Lord intends, we will derive great benefit for our souls!

### **Verse 19**

In verse 19, the disciples responded to Jesus’ pronouncement concerning denial. Mark said, “They began to be distressed and to say to him one by one, ‘Surely not I?’” (Mark 14:19). The original language of the text is interesting. It places emphasis on the first-person pronoun. One could literally translate the question as asking, “Surely I not?” In addition, the disciples used a question that expected a negative answer.<sup>24</sup> It seems they tried to quickly negate the possibility they could have denied Jesus.

Perhaps Mark meant to encourage a healthy degree of self-concern on the part of his readers. Overconfidence was portrayed earlier in Mark’s gospel in the lives of the Twelve (Mark 9:34 and 10:37). Remember that Peter will eventually deny Jesus (Mark 14:27-31 and 66-72). Maybe Mark wanted his readers to be on guard against an unhealthy and unhelpful form of spiritual conceit. If Peter would have remained vigilant, he might not have stumbled. First-century readers needed to pay attention. They were under threats from Nero. Temptations to deny Jesus were ever present. Mark probably wanted them to examine themselves.

The disciples’ petulance reminds us of our own need to be on guard. Because of our fallen nature, we are all insecure and defensive to one degree or another. Such is the result of Adam and Eve’s original sin. Think back to the Garden of Eden. Recall the way in which they sensed a need cover themselves and hide from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 3:7-8). Don’t you sometimes feel such insecurity? Do your shortcomings sometimes overwhelm you? Does your sinfulness frustrate you?

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<sup>24</sup> Brooks, 227.

We must be honest about our condition. We are all like Adam and Eve in a way, trying to hide our imperfection with fig leaves, all the while boasting, “Surely not I?” The scene from the Upper Room reminds us that we are all broken and imperfect people. The Lord is infinite, but we are finite. He is holy, but we are unholy. He is perfect; we are imperfect. He is strong and secure, but we are all insecure. We stand in constant need of His grace and help. May the insecurity of the disciples in our text make us see our need for real redemption. May we be on guard against self-righteous self-justification. Humility and vigilance are ever-present needs in the Christian life. The results of the Fall, and the warnings of our Lord, remind us of these truths. May we listen to Him and pursue a lowly frame of mind, looking to His strength and sufficiency for help.

### **Verse 20**

Mark continued the narrative with further explanation from Jesus regarding His betrayal. Verse 20 reads, “He said to them, ‘It is one of the Twelve—the one who is dipping bread in the bowl with me’” (Mark 14:20). When a formal meal was shared between friends in the first century, participants would dip pieces of bread into a common bowl that contained some sort of sauce or resist.<sup>25</sup> The custom was adopted from Greco-Roman dining practices. In time, it actually made its way into the Jewish customs associated with the Passover observance.<sup>26</sup>

Historians tell us that the shared bowl probably contained dried fruit, spices, and some type of wine or vinegar mixed with bitter herbs.<sup>27</sup> Today, many would worry about double dipping and the effects of poor hygiene from such eating customs. In Jesus’ day, there was no such anxiety. The practice was normal and it was regarded as a sign of kinship and intimacy.

Jesus’ pronouncement concerning His betrayer was surely startling for His disciples. In a first-century world it was unthinkable that an enemy would share a sauce bowl with his foe. The scene highlights the deep depravity of Judas. In addition, it provides a picture of the way in which man’s sin leads to a break in fellowship with God. Judas previously enjoyed intimate meals with the Lord. Because of his sin, he lost the privilege of such personal connection.

The story before us reminds us of sin’s greatest consequence — alienation and separation from God. Such was the result of Adam and Eve’s first transgression (Genesis 3:22-24). As human history has raged on since the Garden of Eden, those who live outside of Christ are cut off from their Creator. They live without purpose, not experiencing the very reason they are alive — fellowship with God. The good news of the Bible is that such fellowship can be restored (John 3:16). However, if one does not repent of sin and believe in Jesus for salvation (Mark 1:15), he or she will one day experience something the Bible calls “the second death” (Revelation 20:14). Such death involves eternal separation from God in a place the Bible calls hell. All those who are still in their sin at the end of time will not be allowed to live in God’s renewed creation (Revelation 21:1-4). Judas stands as a reminder to us concerning the fearful nature of such separation from God.

### **Verse 21**

Verse 21 concluded the scene from the Last Supper with the following words from Jesus: “For the Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born” (Mark 14:21). Our Lord’s words referenced His pending death. Notice His use of the phrase “it is written.” The verbiage involved first-century technical terms used in rabbinical debates to appeal to the authority of sacred writings. Previously in Mark’s gospel, our Lord used the same phraseology to advocate for the Scriptural basis of His ministry (Mark 7:6; 9:12 and 13; and 11:17).

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<sup>25</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.

<sup>26</sup> Schnabel, 354.

<sup>27</sup> Brooks, 228.

Within our current verse, the Lord's appeal to the authority of Scripture highlighted several realities about His pending death. First, it highlighted God's foreordination of His plan for redemption (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4; and Revelation 13:8). Before time began, the Lord designed and established His plan to redeem man unto Himself. Nothing could ever stop or prevent that plan. As Jesus said, it had been "written" that He would be betrayed. One has commented on this reality, saying, "Jesus' death which results from the betrayal is not a tragedy that should never have taken place: it fulfilled God's purposes."<sup>28</sup> As believers, we can have strong confidence in our salvation, knowing that it was secured in eternity past.

Second, the phrase "it is written" made reference to the way in which Jesus' death was the fulfillment of prophecy. Hundreds of years in advance, the prophets of Israel foretold of the way in which Messiah would suffer and die for sin. See Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 11:12-13; and John 13:18. When Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled numerous prophecies. His death was not an accident. It was rooted and grounded in the Word of God.

Third, in appealing to the writings of Scripture, Jesus demonstrated a submission to the Word of God. He hardly delighted in Judas' betrayal. He deeply dreaded the agony of the cross (Mark 14:35-36). Despite all of this, He reverentially resigned Himself to the decreed will of the Father (Matthew 26:39) and the revealed Word of God (Isaiah 53:3-6).

Fourth, Jesus' reference to "it is written" was proof He found strength and sustenance from Bible truth. As He faced the horrors of Golgotha, He did the same thing He did during His wilderness temptations. He clung to Scripture as a source of sufficiency and empowerment. It is telling that Jesus placed emphasis on the written Word of God during His darkest hours. One has commented, "At no point in Jesus' ministry is his submission to Scripture more frequently mentioned than in these last hours of his life. This is one of the clearest indications that He recognized it to be God's living Word."<sup>29</sup> May we learn a lesson from our Lord and His sufferings. In His darkest days, He made God's truth the object of His focus.

Jesus demonstrated that the Bible is our primary means of getting the spiritual encouragement, fortification, and direction we need (John 17:17). May we be like the Psalmist of old, keeping (Psalm 119:9), treasuring (Psalm 119:11), and meditating on (Psalm 119:15) God's Word. May we be ones who can honestly say, "Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction" (Psalm 119:18), "I rise at midnight to thank you for your righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:62), "Instruction from your lips is better for me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Psalm 119:72), "How I love your instruction! It is my meditation all day long" (Psalm 119:97), "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105), and "I rise before dawn and cry out for help; I put my hope in your word" (Psalm 119:147).

Lastly, Jesus' use of the phrase "it is written" reminds us of the certain condemnation that awaits sinners who are outside of Christ. He followed His reference to the authority of Scripture by saying, "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born" (Mark 14:21). The word translated "woe" is one that indicated pending judgment. One has said "it indicates disaster result from God's judgment."<sup>30</sup> Jesus intended to guarantee the horrible fate that awaited Judas.<sup>31</sup> The man would later be overcome by earthly remorse and hang himself (Matthew 27:3-5). What's worse, he would face eternal separation from God. It would have been better for the man to have never been born than to face such a fate.

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<sup>28</sup> Schnabel, 354.

<sup>29</sup> Ferguson, 228.

<sup>30</sup> Schnabel, 354.

<sup>31</sup> Brooks, 228.