

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 20: The Cross, the Empty Tomb, and the Call to Go -- Mark 14:53–16:20

Picture the courtyard of the high priest. The fire is burning low. Peter is warming his hands while Jesus stands inside being interrogated. The questions inside escalate. False witnesses contradict one another. Finally the high priest asks plainly, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus answers, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (14:61–62). The priests tear their robes. The trial is over. Outside, Peter denies Christ three times before the rooster crows. The promised faithful disciple becomes the man who weeps in the dark.

At dawn Jesus is bound and led to Pilate. The crowd that had cried “Hosanna” on Sunday now cries “Crucify Him” on Friday. Barabbas, a real murderer, is released. Jesus is flogged and handed over. The soldiers crown Him with thorns and mock Him as king. They lead Him out to Golgotha, the Place of a Skull, and crucify Him between two robbers. At noon darkness covers the land for three hours. At the ninth hour Jesus cries, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (15:34), and a little later He breathes His last. The curtain of the temple is torn from top to bottom. A Roman centurion, watching Him die, says, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:39).

By Friday evening Joseph of Arimathea has taken the body, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb cut out of rock. A great stone is rolled across the entrance. Two Marys watch where He is laid. Saturday passes. Early on the first day of the week the women come to anoint the body. The stone is rolled away. A young man in white tells them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him” (16:6). The tomb is empty. Christ is risen. Death itself has been defeated.

The Gospel of Mark ends with the risen Christ commissioning His disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (16:16). Mark 14:53–16:20 is the heart of the gospel and the call to every disciple. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ is reigning. And He has sent His people to go. This final week, we sit with the cross, the empty tomb, and the call to go, and we ask the Lord what He wants to do in us and through us in the next chapter of our lives.

Group Discussion: Mark 14:53–16:20 contains the trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and Great Commission of Christ. Each scene speaks something different to the heart: the cost of Christ’s confession, the depth of His suffering, the wonder of the empty tomb, the personal

restoration of failed disciples, and the call to take this gospel into all the world. As we conclude this 20-week study, what is the Lord most pressing on your heart from these closing chapters, and what does it mean for you to walk forward into the next season as someone whose life has been shaped by this gospel?

Personal Reflection: At Christ's most exposed moment, He confessed plainly to the high priest, "I am" (14:62), even though He knew the cost. At the same hour, Peter, beside a charcoal fire, denied that he even knew Him. As you close this study, in what specific setting (family, workplace, neighborhood, community, online) has fear been keeping you from confessing Christ as you should, and what would Christ-shaped confession look like for you in that setting in the coming season?

Read Mark 14:53–16:20

Study Questions

1. Before the Sanhedrin Jesus is asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" He answers, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:61–62). What is Jesus claiming about Himself in this answer, why does the high priest treat it as blasphemy, and how does this confession ground the Christian's own confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the present King at God's right hand (compare Daniel 7:13–14; Psalm 110:1; Acts 7:55–56)?
2. At the very moment Christ is confessing the truth at the cost of His life, Peter in the courtyard outside is denying that he even knows Him. Where in your own walk has fear silenced you when Christ called for confession, and as you close this study, what specific setting in your life is Christ asking you to begin confessing Him in more openly going forward?
3. Mark 15 records the crucifixion of Christ with deliberate restraint: the mocking by soldiers and bystanders, the darkness over the land, the cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34), His death, and the tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom. Connecting these details with Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Hebrews 9–10, and 2 Corinthians 5:21, what is Mark teaching about the meaning of the cross, the substitutionary work of Christ, the bearing of God's wrath against sin, and the new access to God opened by His death (Hebrews 10:19–22)?
4. At the heart of Christian assurance is the truth that Christ has borne the wrath against our sin, fully and once for all, in His own body on the cross. Where in your daily walk has this truth grown dim, allowing guilt, shame, or earning-thinking to take its place, and how would daily living in the full reality of Christ's finished work change your inner conversation this week?
5. As Jesus dies, a Roman centurion standing facing Him says, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39). What is striking about who is making this confession, where in the Gospel of Mark this confession had been previously hinted at (Mark 1:1, 11; 3:11; 9:7), and how does

the centurion's confession show that the gospel is for the nations and for the unlikely from the very moment of Christ's death?

6. The first human after Christ's death to confess Him as Son of God is a Roman soldier who had just helped kill Him. Where in your own life are you most prone to write off someone as unlikely to come to Christ (a particular family member, coworker, neighbor, public figure, or social group), and how does the centurion at the cross challenge that assumption and call you to renewed witness?
7. Early on the first day of the week, the women come to anoint Jesus and find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. A young man in white says, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here" (16:6). Connecting this scene with 1 Corinthians 15:1–28, Romans 4:25, Acts 2:32–36, and 1 Peter 1:3–9, what is the resurrection of Christ, why is it essential to the gospel and to the believer's hope, and how does the resurrection ground the Christian's present life and future hope in Christ?
8. The resurrection is not merely a doctrine to be believed but the present reality in which the disciple lives. Where in your own thinking, fearing, and acting are you most prone to live as if Christ had not been raised, and what would the daily, conscious reality of the resurrection change for you in this next season of life?
9. The risen Christ sends His disciples into all the world. "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (16:15–16). Connecting this with Matthew 28:18–20, Acts 2:38, Acts 8:35–38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:3–5, Galatians 3:26–27, and 1 Peter 3:21, what is the New Testament plan of salvation in clear summary, how does baptism into Christ relate to belief, repentance, and confession of Him as Lord, and how should the church faithfully proclaim this gospel to the whole creation today?
10. The Gospel of Mark ends with the Lord working with His disciples as they go everywhere preaching, the Lord confirming the message by signs that accompanied it (16:20). As you finish this twenty-week study, who is the "whole creation" in your reach (your family, your neighbors, your workplace, your community, the people God has placed in your path), and what is one specific step of obedient witness and faithful Christian life you will take in the coming season because of what you have heard from the Lord through this study?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 22, the Messianic Psalm that opens with the very cry of Christ on the cross; Isaiah 53, the Servant pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities; 1 Corinthians 15:1–28, the gospel summarized and the meaning of the resurrection of Christ; Acts 2:22–41, Peter's first sermon, ending with hearers responding to the gospel by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism; Matthew 28:16–20, the Great Commission given by the risen Christ to His church.