



**THE  
WAY OF  
JESUS**

A Study in the Gospel of Mark



## ABOUT THIS STUDY

Dear Cherry Hills family,

This study is an attempt for us to move deeper into our vision as a church, which is: To see people of every generation giving themselves fully to the way of Jesus and His mission. Our strategy for accomplishing this vision is by pursuing life together in community, in formation, and on mission. So, while this study can certainly be used individually to grow in your relationship with Jesus personally, my prayer is that you might go one step further and use this tool to grow with others, specifically in a life group. We truly believe that we cannot grow as disciples of Jesus without doing it together.

So, a word about how to use this study. Each week includes five days of studying the passage of Mark that we will be preaching on Sunday morning. Our suggestion is that you do the study before that Sunday and then use both the study and the message as your discussion guide in your life group. More than anything, I hope your discussions are less about filling out answers and repeating them and more about paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you as you study the passage that week.

Foundationally we believe that the Bible is our source of authority in life, and in order to grow deeper with the LORD, studying the Bible is a necessary discipline. Our hope as we study the Gospel of Mark is that as we learn about Jesus, we can learn from Jesus, how to be like Jesus in our own lives.

In Christ,  
Pastor Steve

## AUTHOR

Although there is no direct internal evidence of authorship, it was the unanimous testimony of the early church that this Gospel was written by John Mark (“John, also called Mark,” Acts 12:12,25; 15:37). His mother was a Christian woman named Mary, who lived in Jerusalem and was well-acquainted with the Apostle Peter. John Mark was also a cousin to Barnabas, Paul’s earliest missionary companion (Colossians 4:10). It is believed that he was a Roman citizen.

It is believed that John Mark was a close associate of Peter, from whom he received the tradition of the things said and done by the Lord; though some wonder if he didn’t have first-hand experience with Jesus too (see Mark 14:51-52). Most believe Mark arranged and shaped his gospel based on the preaching of Peter.

## JOHN MARK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from Jerusalem after the famine visit, Mark accompanied them (Acts 12:25). Mark next appears as a “helper” to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but he deserted them at Perga in Pamphylia to return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Paul must have been deeply disappointed with Mark’s actions on this occasion, because when Barnabas proposed taking Mark on the second journey, Paul flatly refused, a refusal that broke up their working relationship (Acts 15:36–39). Barnabas took Mark and departed for Cyprus. No further mention is made of either of them in the book of Acts. Mark reappears in Paul’s letter to the Colossians written from Rome. Paul sends a greeting from Mark and adds: “You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him” (Colossians 4:10; see Philemon 24, written about the same time). At this point Mark was apparently beginning to win his way back into Paul’s confidence. By the end of Paul’s life, Mark had fully regained Paul’s favor (see 2 Timothy 4:11).

## DATE OF COMPOSITION

Almost all scholars agree that Mark is the earliest of the four Gospels written. Some, who hold that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a major source, have suggested that Mark may have been composed in the 50s or early 60s. Others have felt that the content of the Gospel and statements made about Mark by the early church fathers indicate that the book was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, most likely between 64-70 A.D.

## RECIPIENTS

The evidence points to the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42), translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 15:22,34) and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13)—subjects of special concern to Roman believers (and to Peter as well; cf. 1 Peter). A Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid spread.

## PURPOSE

Since Mark's Gospel is traditionally associated with Rome, it may have been written during the persecutions of the Roman church in the period of A.D. 64-67. The famous fire of Rome in 64—probably set by Nero himself but blamed on Christians—resulted in widespread persecution. Even martyrdom was not unknown among Roman believers. Mark may be writing to prepare his readers for such suffering by placing before them the life of our Lord. There are many references, both explicit and veiled, to suffering and discipleship throughout his Gospel (see 1:12-13; 3:22,30; 8:34-38; 10:30,33-34,45; 13:8-13). Mark also emphasizes how the Jewish Messiah was rejected by His own people because He came in a way they did not expect: not as a glorious warrior-king, but as a suffering servant.

## MAJOR THEMES

1. ***The Kingdom of God (KOG)***. Mark's entire purpose for writing is that God's Kingdom has come and is available in the person of Jesus Christ (1:15). It is a different Kingdom than the people expected however, and much of Mark is directed at revealing that.
2. ***The cross***. Both the human cause (12:12; 14:1–2; 15:10) and the divine necessity (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34) of the cross are emphasized by Mark.
3. ***Discipleship***. Special attention should be paid to the passages on discipleship that arise from Jesus' predictions of His passion (8:34—9:1; 9:35—10:31; 10:42–45).
4. ***The Teachings of Jesus***. Although Mark records far fewer actual teachings of Jesus than the other Gospel writers, there is a remarkable emphasis on Jesus as teacher. The words “teacher,” “teach” or “teaching,” and “Rabbi” are applied to Jesus in Mark 39 times.
5. ***The Miracles of Jesus***. Mark records more of Jesus' miracles than sermons. Jesus is revealed as a man of power and action, not just words.
6. ***The Messianic secret***. On several occasions Jesus warns his disciples or others to keep silent about who He is or what He has done (see 1:34,44 and notes; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9).
7. ***Son of God***. Although Mark emphasizes the humanity of Jesus (see 3:5; 6:6,31,34; 7:34; 8:12; 10:14; 11:12), he does not neglect His deity (see 1:1,11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:1–11; 13:32; 15:39).
8. ***Spreading the Gospel***. Jesus first goes to the Jews with the news of the coming Kingdom, but then goes into the Gentile world with His preaching and healing. His final message for His disciples is to go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole world.

## SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Mark's Gospel is simple, succinct, and fast moving. It emphasizes more what Jesus did than what He said. Mark moves quickly from one episode in Jesus' life and ministry to another, often using the adverb "immediately". The book as a whole is characterized as "The beginning of the gospel" (1:1). The life, death and resurrection of Christ comprise the "beginning," of which the apostolic preaching in Acts is the continuation and the church continues it today.

### MAP OF 1ST CENTURY JUDEA



### MAP OF JERUSALEM







# **WEEK FORTY**

Mark 14:1-26

## DAY ONE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 14:1-26 at least three times. Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words below to get a better sense of it.

**2.** What is initially standing out to you in this section? What questions does it raise? What words or phrases seem most significant?

3. What do you think the main theme of this section is? What is it calling us to do?

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

*Passover (14:1)* K. Lee Thorpe notes, “The Jewish festival commemorating the night when the angel of the Lord “passed over” the homes of the Israelites dwelling in Egypt and killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (see Exodus 12:1–30). In first-century Jerusalem the lambs used in the feast were killed on the fourteenth of Nisan (March/April). The meal was then eaten that evening after sundown, which by Jewish reckoning would be the fifteenth of Nisan, because the Jewish day begins at sundown.”

*Festival of Unleavened Bread (14:1)* This feast followed Passover and lasted seven days. Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

*A year’s wages (14:5)* Literally, “three hundred denarii.”

1. Read Mark 14:1-9. How would you have felt had you witnessed this woman pouring out a full year's worth of wages of perfume on someone's head? What is the most costly gift you have ever made to Jesus?

**2.** Mary did not care about social taboos or personal embarrassment when she worshiped Jesus. How can we follow her example today? What might keep you from following her example?

**3.** What is the value of honoring Jesus in public? How do we avoid doing so with wrong motives?

## DAY THREE

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*Judas Iscariot (14:10)* Matthew 26:15 tells us Judas received thirty pieces of silver (a very small amount) for betraying Jesus, while John notes that he was the one who carried the money bag for the Twelve (see John 12:6; 13:29).

*First day of the Festival (14:12)* The phrase “when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb” makes it clear that Mark is talking about Nisan 14, or the day of Passover itself, and not the day following. The Last Supper was therefore a Passover meal.

*A man carrying a jar of water (14:13)* As one commentator notes, “Such a sight would be unusual, because women normally carried the water jars.”

*A large room upstairs, furnished and ready (14:15)* As with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus had made advance preparations for this event. This indicates that He had a circle of disciples in the Jerusalem area in addition to the Twelve.

**1.** Read Mark 14:10-16. Neither Mark nor any of the other gospel writers tells us just why Judas betrayed Jesus. What do you think might have motivated Judas to do this? (Nobody knows the “right” answer, but try to reason out some possibilities.)

2. What are some ways someone might “betray” Jesus today?

3. How does the way Jesus sent the disciples to find the upper room give evidence that Jesus was in charge of the whole situation? What does this reveal about what is about to take place?

4. How does Jesus’ control of events surrounding His crucifixion encourage you when you face difficulties? What are some specific Bible verses that help you in this?

## DAY FOUR

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***Jesus took bread (14:22)*** Unleavened bread, or matzoth, was eaten at Passover together with the roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and wine. Following the meal, the head of the household would break the remaining matzoth and distribute it. Mark is probably referring to this distribution, which followed the main meal itself (compare Luke 22:19–20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–25, where the words “in the same way, after supper” may indicate that both the bread and the cup of the New Covenant were distributed following the main Passover meal).

***He took a cup (14:23)*** Four cups of wine, symbolic of God’s four promises to Israel on the first Passover (see Exodus 6:6–7), were shared at different stages of the meal. The cup of which Mark speaks was the third cup, “the cup of redemption,” symbolic of the promise “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”

***Blood of the covenant (14:24)*** The Old Covenant was made possible by the blood of the Passover Lamb, which freed the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Forgiveness of sins under the Old Covenant also required blood sacrifice (see Leviticus 16 for a description of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement). As another New Testament writer put it, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22) and therefore no possibility of a covenant between God and humankind.

**1.** Read Mark 14:17-25. Is it any accident that Jesus spoke the way He did about His body and blood on Passover? How would you explain the connection between these two events to someone new with the Bible? What passages might you point to for reference? Hint: Compare Exodus 12:1-30 with Hebrews 8:1-10:18.



2. Judas was held accountable for Jesus' death even though Jesus Himself declared it was foreordained that He should die this way (see 14:21). What does this say about God's sovereignty and human free will?

3. Has the Lord's Supper sometimes become so familiar for you that it is no longer amazing? What did Jesus mean by saying, "This is My body" and "This is My blood"? What can we do to make sure we never lose our wonder?

4. What promise was Jesus making to His disciples in 14:25? How does this make you feel?

## DAY FIVE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** What most stood out to you as you studied Mark 14:1-26 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

**2.** What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

**3. *Optional Application:*** Arrange to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a group. Afterward, talk about what that experience means to you in light of Mark 14:1-26.





# **WEEK FORTY-ONE**

Mark 14:27-52

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 14:27-31. What do you think motivated Peter to insist that he would not disown Jesus (see 14:29, 31)? In what areas of temptation might you be susceptible to pride and say, “I would never do that”? How do Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 10:12 address this attitude?

**2.** In what circumstances are you most tempted to fall away? How can you best prepare to stay true to God?

**3.** How did Jesus give a word of hope to His followers even as He foretold their failure (see 14:27–28)? How might this be a word of hope for us still today?

## DAY TWO

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**1.** Read Mark 14:27-31. What do you think motivated Peter to insist that he would not disown Jesus (see 14:29, 31)? In what areas of temptation might you be susceptible to pride and say, “I would never do that”? How do Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 10:12 address this attitude?

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## DAY THREE

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***Abba (14:36)*** An Aramaic intimate form for father (“Daddy”). The Jews did not use this word to address God, thinking it too familiar and therefore disrespectful. Jesus not only used it Himself but encouraged His disciples to do so (see Romans 8:15).

***Flesh (14:38)*** As K. Lee-Thorp explains, “Paul often used “flesh” as a theological term to designate sinful human nature (in Romans 7:5, 25, the NIV translates “flesh” as “sinful nature”), but here “flesh” is more likely meant to emphasize human weakness than human sin. The notion of the human body being sinful is foreign to biblical thought; Greeks believed matter was evil, but Hebrews did not. And while it is true that the disciples were suffering from bodily fatigue, Jesus pinpoints their real problem as a lack of prayer.”

1. Read Mark 14:32-40. What was Jesus’ request? Did His Father grant it? What does this tell us about prayer?

2. What are some other lessons we can learn about prayer from Jesus’ example here?

**3.** How would you explain to a non-Christian what caused Jesus such agony as He prayed in the garden?

**4.** With the definition of “flesh” in mind (see above), where is your “spirit willing but flesh is weak”? What might you need to place in your life to “stay awake” in these areas?

## DAY FOUR

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**1.** Read Mark 14:41-51. Why do you suppose Judas chose a kiss as the sign identifying Jesus to the leaders? Why did the Jewish leaders not arrest Jesus in the temple in the daylight?

**2.** Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend? When? How did it make you feel?

3. Why did the religious leaders bring such a crowd to arrest Jesus? What does Jesus say about this in v. 48? How has this misunderstanding or expectations of Jesus' purpose been seen in other places in Mark's gospel (cf. 9:33-34; 10:35-37; 11:1-11)? Can it still be seen in the Church today? If so, how?

4. *Extra Credit:* When Jesus says, "the Scriptures must be fulfilled," what Scripture(s) do you think He is referring to? On what evidence would you base your answer?

## DAY FIVE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** What most stood out to you as you studied Mark 14:27-52 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

**2.** What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!







# **WEEK FORTY-TWO**

Mark 14:53-72

## DAY ONE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 14:53-72 at least three times. Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words below to get a better sense of it.

**2.** What is initially standing out to you in this section? What questions does it raise? What words or phrases seem most significant?

3. What do you think the main theme of this section is? What is it calling us to do?

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

*Sanhedrin (14:55)*. The NavPress study writes, “The high court of Judaism, composed of the chief priests and other prominent religious leaders of Jerusalem. If all the members were present, there would have been seventy of them. (See also Acts 4:5–22; 23:1–10.)

This nighttime gathering of the Sanhedrin was highly unusual and perhaps illegal. At the same time, we must keep in mind that certain “loopholes” may have existed in Sanhedrin procedures that would permit this sort of speedy nocturnal trial under extreme circumstances. As Jesus Himself noted, the Pharisees and teachers of the law were famous for creating exceptions to established rules in order to justify their deeds (see Mark 7:9–13). So most, if not all, of the procedures at the trial of Jesus may have been legal, if not usual.

Be that as it may, Mark’s account portrays the trial of Jesus as a sort of “kangaroo court,” with a parade of prearranged false witnesses and no real opportunity for a defense on Jesus’ part. Whether or not strictly legal, it was certainly not fair.”

**1.** Read Mark 14:53-65. What was the Sanhedrin looking for in the witnesses who were called? In what situations do we sometimes look for evidence to support preconceived conclusions? How do we avoid this error?

**2.** Why did the Sanhedrin have such a hard time convicting Jesus of any crime? Why do you think Jesus stays silent about the charges brought against Him? Can we learn anything from Him in this? If so, what?

**3.** Why do you think Jesus chose to answer the high priest's question (see 14:61–62) after refusing to respond to the false charges brought against Him? What can this teach us about times when we should not be silent?

## DAY THREE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

1. Read Mark 14:53-65. What was the significance of Jesus' using the phrases "I am" and "Son of Man" in His answer to the high priest's question (v. 52)?

2. What was Jesus claiming about Himself in 14:62? What do the following verses add to this:

Daniel 7:13-14

Revelation 1:4-8

Psalm 110:1

Revelation 20:11-15

**3.** Why does the high priest tear his robes (see Genesis 37:29; 2 Kings 18:37)? Why do they condemn Jesus to death (Read Leviticus 24:16)?

## DAY FOUR

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 14:66-72. What do you learn about Peter from his presence in the courtyard outside where Jesus was being tried and from his subsequent behavior? How does reading about Peter's denial make you feel? Why?

**2.** In what situations are you tempted to make excuses in order to avoid being identified as a Christian? Are there other situations where you tend to simply lie low and avoid the subject? Why?



**3.** Have you ever been betrayed or abandoned by a friend? How did it feel? Does it make any difference to you that Jesus knows what that feels like? Why?

**4.** Have you ever done something you thought God could not forgive? Consider Peter's threefold denial of Jesus (see 14:66–72), and then read John 21: 15-19. How did Peter respond to this later in his life (see Acts)? What can Peter's example teach us about our failures?

## DAY FIVE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** What most stood out to you as you studied Mark 14:53-72 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

**2.** What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!





# **WEEK FORTY-THREE**

Mark 15:1-20

## DAY ONE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 15:1-20 at least three times. Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words below to get a better sense of it.

**2.** What is initially standing out to you in this section? What questions does it raise? What words or phrases seem most significant?

3. What do you think the main theme of this section is? What is it calling us to do?

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

***Pilate (15:1)*** Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26 to 36. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, he had no hesitation quelling rebellion with a strong force. The Jews brought Jesus to Pilate because under the Roman occupation they could not legally put someone to death (see John 18:31), except in cases where the sanctity of the temple had been violated (see, for example, Acts 7:59; 21:27–32).

***King of the Jews (15:2)*** When Jesus acknowledged the title “Son of David” (see 10:47–48) and rode into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (see Mark 11:1–11), He was in fact proclaiming Himself “King of the Jews.” The Jews brought this charge not for religious reasons, however, but for political reasons, hoping Pilate would condemn Jesus as one who desired to usurp the authority of the Roman emperor.

1. Mark 15:1-15. What other charges did the Sanhedrin accuse Jesus of once they came to Pilate? Why these particular charges?

2. If Jesus had been primarily interested in avoiding execution, what defense might He have offered before Pilate? Why did He remain silent?



**3.** What role did the Sanhedrin's instigation of the crowds play? Have you ever been in a situation where a group did something the individuals in it later regretted? How did this get started? How could it be avoided?

## DAY THREE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 15:1-15. In your own words, why did Pilate do something he didn't want to do? Have you ever felt that way? What did you do?

**2.** Explain Barabbas' part in this story. In what way are we like Barabbas?

**3.** What is “Substitutionary atonement”? How would you explain it to a children’s Sunday school class? What do the following verses add to our understanding of it

Isaiah 53:4-6–

Romans 3:21–26–

1 Peter 2:23-25–

1 Peter 3:18–

Mark 10:45–

Galatians 3:10-13–

Hebrews 2:9–

2 Corinthians 5:21–

**4.** Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for taking your place.

## DAY FOUR

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*Flogged (15:15)* This was no mere punitive beating. The whip used in flogging a prisoner consisted of several pieces of leather, onto which were tied pieces of metal and bone. The Jews mercifully limited flogging to a maximum of forty stripes; the Romans had no such limitation. In many cases the victims of Roman floggings did not survive. According to John 19:1–5, Pilate apparently had Jesus flogged in a last ditch attempt to elicit mercy from the crowd so that they would consent to his freeing Jesus.

1. Read Mark 15:15-20. Jesus was (1) psychologically ridiculed, (2) physically beaten, (3) spiritually abandoned by the Father, and (4) mortally executed. How do these torments compare? How does this put what Jesus did into greater perspective for you?

2. What is the value in contemplating Jesus' suffering? How does it make you feel?

**3.** What do you learn about Jesus from the way He handled His arrest and trial? Write down any further questions you have about the events surrounding the arrest and trial of Jesus.

## DAY FIVE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** What most stood out to you as you studied Mark 15:1-20 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

**2.** What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!







# **WEEK FORTY-FOUR**

Mark 15:21-47

## DAY ONE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 15:21-47 at least three times. Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words below to get a better sense of it.

**2.** What is initially standing out to you in this section? What questions does it raise? What words or phrases seem most significant?

3. What do you think the main theme of this section is? What is it calling us to do?

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

*Simon ... carry the cross (15:21).* According to International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, “Simon was from Cyrene, capital city of Rome’s North African province of Cyrenaica (Libya). It contained a large colony of Jews. Because Simon is a common Jewish name, this man was either a pilgrim in Jerusalem for Passover or a Jewish native of Cyrene who had moved to Jerusalem (Acts 6:9 mentions a synagogue “of the Cyrenians” in Jerusalem [kjv], indicating that not a few of Simon’s countrymen had moved to the Holy City). Mark probably mentions Simon’s two sons because they were known to the Roman church (note Paul’s mention of a man named Rufus in Romans 16:13).”

The “cross” Simon was forced to carry was the heavy wooden horizontal beam on which the victim was to be nailed. It weighed thirty to forty pounds and was strapped to the victim’s shoulders. Jesus was apparently so weak from the flogging He had received that the soldiers had to press Simon into service.

*Wine mixed with myrrh (15:23).* Such a mixture was used as a narcotic, to help lessen the victim’s pain. Because consideration of the victim seems out of character for Roman soldiers as Mark depicts them, perhaps local Jews prepared the mixture whenever Rome crucified one of their people.

**1.** Read Mark 15:21-24. Simon was randomly picked out of the crowd. Yet in the sovereignty of God, he and his sons later became followers of Jesus. Can you point to one or more apparently “random” events in your life that, upon further reflection, show God’s sovereign will being worked out in your life? What does this teach us about the way God works?

**2.** Read Mark 15:25-32. Could Jesus have avoided going to the cross? Was He capable of coming down from the cross? What kept Him there?

*And they crucified him (15:24).* Mark doesn't give much specific detail in recounting what Cicero called "the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible." Jesus, already half-dead from a flogging, was stripped naked of His clothing and laid upon the ground, His arms spread atop the beam. A soldier then drove a large iron nail through each of Jesus' wrists into the horizontal beam. The beam was then lifted into place atop the vertical beam already placed in the ground. Finally, Jesus' legs were either nailed or tied to the vertical beam. A slow, agonizing death by asphyxiation awaited Him.

*The written notice (15:26).* All criminals sentenced to death by crucifixion were paraded through the streets of the city with a written notice proclaiming their crime in large letters. Once outside the city at the site of the execution, the soldiers attached the notice to the victim's cross. The notice served as a warning to any who would repeat the crime. In this case, it is no doubt meant to be a mockery of Jesus, but also to the Jewish leaders.

*Two rebels (15:27).* As K. Lee-Thorp explains, "The Greek word literally means "insurrectionists." So far as Rome was concerned, Jesus was attempting to make Himself a king and thereby displace the authority of Caesar. Thus they crucified Him between two men (probably Zealots) who sought to overthrow Roman rule in Judea."

**3.** In your own words, explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Why did God the Father ordain that this would be done to His Son?

**4.** Jesus was crucified between two criminals. What significance does this have for your life?

## DAY THREE

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*He's calling Elijah (15:35).* Walter Wessel notes, “Jews regarded Elijah as a deliverer of those in trouble. The people either misunderstood Jesus’ call of “My God” (Hebrew Eli; Aramaic Eloi) as referring to Elijah or were being sarcastic.”

*The curtain of the temple (15:38).* The Old Testament tabernacle, which symbolized God’s dwelling place with Israel, had two principal areas: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. There were curtains, one separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, and the other separating both from the outer area (see Exodus 26:30–37; Hebrews 9:2–4).

The priests entered the Holy Place daily to offer incense and bread, but the Most Holy Place was reserved for one yearly sacrifice only: that of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of the animal sacrificed for the sins of all Israel. He sprinkled this blood on the ark of the covenant as an atonement for the sins of all the people. Only the high priest could do this, and only once a year (see Leviticus 16:17; Hebrews 9:7).

When Israel built the temple to replace the tabernacle, the same pattern was followed. Thus in Jesus’ day there were two curtains in the temple. Mark is almost certainly referring to the inner curtain, which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. This curtain was made of very heavy material, tightly woven and virtually impossible to tear. The fact that it was torn from top to bottom suggests the imagery of an invisible sword cutting it in two. Mark is clearly talking about a supernatural event.

**1.** Read Mark 15:35-41 and then read Psalm 22. What is the significance of the fact that David wrote Psalm 22 hundreds of years before the Jews knew anything about crucifixion (a Roman form of execution)?

- 2.** Why did Jesus quote Psalm 22:1? What does it mean? How does the rest of the Psalm further explain it?
- 3.** How might the Jews have responded to the tearing of the curtain in the sanctuary? What does it mean for Gentiles? Read Hebrews 10:19–25 to gain further perspective.
- 4.** How does the Roman centurion respond to Jesus' death? What made him say this? Spend time praising Jesus for what He did for you by His death on the cross.

## DAY FOUR

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

*Joseph of Arimathea (15:43).* Once again, K-Lee Thorp is helpful, “Mark called Joseph a “prominent member of the Council,” that is, the Sanhedrin. The word translated “prominent” by the NIV may also be rendered “of good repute,” referring not to Joseph’s rank in the Sanhedrin but rather to his reputation as a just man. Luke has evidently interpreted it in this way, adding that Joseph did not consent to the Sanhedrin’s condemnation of Jesus (see Luke 23:50–51). Joseph was “waiting for the kingdom of God” of which Jesus spoke, though John 19:38 tells us he kept his allegiance to Jesus secret for fear of the Jewish authorities. Matthew notes that Joseph was wealthy, perhaps because Matthew was emphasizing the fulfillment of prophecy (see Isaiah 53:9).”

1. What is the significance in Mark reporting that, of all Jesus’ followers, only a few of the women were there during the crucifixion, and only they and two converted Jewish leaders were there at His burial?

2. Mark emphasizes that Joseph showed courage in asking for Jesus’ body (see 15:43). What risks was Joseph taking in approaching Pilate with this request?



3. What inhibits you from acting boldly on Christ's behalf, as Joseph did?

4. How do you feel after studying the account of Jesus' death?

## DAY FIVE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** What most stood out to you as you studied Mark 15:21-47 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

**2.** What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!





# **WEEK FORTY-FIVE**

Mark 16:1-8

## DAY ONE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**NOTE:** Because the oldest manuscripts are considered to be the most accurate, and because they are the closest in time to the original text, and do not contain vv. 9-20 it is reasonable to conclude these verses were added later by scribes. It is also evident that the writing style of vv. 9-20 is not consistent with the rest of Mark's gospel. Newer translations have included these verses with this caveat, and they are still worth studying in my opinion, but should not be viewed with the same authority.. My theory as to why these verses were added is the early scribes wanted to have a "better" ending. But, personally, I think Mark is brilliant by ending it the way he does, because it suggests it's just the beginning! Jesus has risen, and a whole new era has been ushered in and we get to experience the rest of the story!

**1.** Read Mark 16:1-8 at least three times. Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words below to get a better sense of it.

**2.** What is initially standing out to you in this section? What questions does it raise? What words or phrases seem most significant?

3. What do you think the main theme of this section is? What is it calling us to do?

## DAY TWO

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

*Anoint Jesus' body (16:1).* The women were unable to anoint Jesus' body on the day of His death because He was buried shortly before sundown on Friday, the beginning of the Sabbath, and they still had to buy and prepare the spices (see Luke 23:56). The women's act was a gesture of love (compare Mark 14:3–9).

*Young man dressed in a white robe (16:5).* No doubt an angel.

1. Read Mark 16:1-8. What are some of the other explanations given for Jesus' resurrection by those who deny it happened? Why do people create alternative explanations for Jesus' resurrection? Give two or three reasons.

2. Why do you suppose Jesus' female followers were at the crucifixion (see 15:40–41), followed Joseph to see where Jesus was buried (see 15:47), and went to anoint the body, while most of His male followers remained in hiding? Do you think you would have had the courage to do what the women did? Explain.



**3.** Describe what you would have thought and felt had you entered the tomb with the three women (see 16:5).

**4.** Why do you think the angel instructed the women to tell his message to “his disciples and Peter”?

## DAY THREE

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

**1.** Read Mark 16:1-20. What do you notice about v. 9-20 that would cause most scholars not to consider it original? Do you think they are still worth studying?

**2.** Compare Mark 16:1-20 to Matthew 28:1-7; Luke 24:1-23 and John 20:1-10. Make a list of the similarities and differences below :

Similarities

Differences

3. What most stands out to you when doing this comparison? Why?

## DAY FOUR

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

1. Read Mark 16:1-8. In your own words, explain why the resurrection is important.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15 and answer the following questions:

Why does Paul say the resurrection is essential to our faith?

What will our resurrection be like?

**3.** Based on the truth of the resurrection, how should we live today?









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