

Week 8: The Cross and the Empty Tomb – It is Finished

Overview: Mark 14 – 16 is the climax of everything. The Last Supper, Gethsemane, betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and empty tomb – Mark reports it all with his characteristic restraint. No editorializing. Just the weight of what happens. Week 8 slows everything down. Students have been asking ‘who is Jesus?’ for eight weeks. The cross and the empty tomb are the answer.

Passages covered this week: Mark 14-16

Key Scripture: Mark 15:33-39; Mark 16:1-8

CONTENT

Key Takeaway: The cross is not a tragedy with a happy ending. It is the most intentional act in history. And the empty tomb is not the end of Mark’s story – it’s the beginning of yours.

Key Points

- The Last Supper, Gethsemane, betrayal (Mark 14:1–52)
 - Anointing at Bethany: the woman who pours perfume on Jesus is the only person in the gospel narrative who might fully grasp what is about to happen
 - The Last Supper: this is my body, this is my blood – Jesus reframes Passover around himself
 - Gethsemane: ‘Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup.’ He asked if there was another way. There wasn’t. He chose the cross willingly.
 - Betrayal and arrest: the one who dipped bread with him betrayed him. The disciples flee. Peter follows at a distance.
- Trial and denial (Mark 14:53–72)
 - Jesus before the Sanhedrin: Are you the Messiah? I am. And you will see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Father.
 - Peter denies three times. Then the rooster crows and he breaks down. Note: the resurrection specifically names Peter.
- Crucifixion (Mark 15:1–39)
 - Pilate finds no fault. The crowd chooses Barabbas. We are all Barabbas – the guilty one who goes free.
 - Simon of Cyrene carries the cross: the first person to literally take up a cross in Mark’s Gospel
 - Darkness at noon: creation responding to the death of its Creator
 - My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? – Psalm 22:1 from the cross. Jesus bears the full weight of separation from God that sin produces. He experienced what we deserve.

- The curtain tears from top to bottom – God tore it. Access to God is now open for everyone.
- The centurion's confession: a Roman soldier is the first human in Mark to call Jesus the Son of God after seeing him die. The confession comes at the cross.
- **Burial and resurrection (Mark 15:40–16:8)**
 - The women watch where he is laid. They came back to anoint a dead body.
 - The stone is already rolled away – not for Jesus to get out, but for them to see in
 - Go and tell – and Peter is specifically named. The one who denied him is specifically invited back.
 - They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid – Mark's abrupt ending is not a mistake. Maybe it's an invitation. The ball is in the reader's court...

Gospel Application: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. 2 Corinthians 5:21: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The cross is the exchange – our sin for his righteousness. The resurrection is the vindication of everything Jesus claimed. This is not a metaphor. He is not here. He is risen.

Key Question: Mark ends without resolution – the tomb is empty and the women are afraid. At the beginning of the series, we said “drop everything”. The tomb is empty. Now, are you going to drop everything?

APPLICATION

Activity Suggestions

- Revisit the Drop it card. Has anything changed? What does the empty tomb mean for us?
- Go and tell: as the series closes, every student should write the name of one person they want to tell about Jesus before the end of the year.

Community Group Questions

- What stands out most to you in Mark's crucifixion account? What feels heaviest?
- Jesus cried ‘my God, why have you forsaken me?’ What was happening in that moment? Why does it matter that Jesus experienced that?
- The curtain tore from top to bottom. What does that mean for how you come to God today?
- Peter is specifically named in the resurrection invitation. Is there something you feel like you've failed Jesus with? What does it mean that he specifically calls you back?
- Mark ends with the women afraid and saying nothing. Will you say nothing? Or will you go and tell?