



COMMUNITY
BIBLE CHURCH

FOLLOW ME

6 Studies From
Mark 11–16



Lesson 1: When the King Comes Marching In Mark 11:1-11

With this chapter, we arrive at a turning point in the book of Mark. Chapter 11 ushers in a new section of narrative that sweeps us through the final week of Jesus' life before His death on the cross. Although the material in chapters 11 through 16 covers only a relatively short span of time, these chapters comprise about a third of Mark's Gospel. Evidently Mark, as he crafted the book under the inspiration of God's Spirit, considered these events and records of Jesus' teaching to be of enormous significance. And, indeed, what transpired in the "Passion" or "Easter" week did change the course of human history. As we accompany Jesus and His followers through these momentous days, let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, our Saviour. May our time in these final chapters of Mark alter the course of our own lives too.

1. Read Mark 11:1-11. Jesus and the disciples are just arriving at the setting for the remainder of Mark. Where are they (v. 1)? Why are they there (See John 12:1)?

2. As they drew near to Jerusalem, Jesus dispatches two (unnamed) disciples to a small village. What were they instructed to fetch from there (v. 2)? What was unique about this creature? What other instructions were they given (v. 3)?

Pause and consider Jesus' specific directives to His followers. What do these instructions reveal about His knowledge? His control of the events which are about to unfold? His authority? Do we recognise this level of foreknowledge, sovereign control, and authority in our own lives? How would remembering this transform the way we move through our days?

3. How do we see the disciples' trusting obedience to their Lord?
 - v. 4
 - v. 6

Lesson 1

Place yourselves in the disciples' sandals. As you commandeered a stranger's young donkey, would you have felt sheepish? nervous? awkward? Imagine the relief when all went to plan! "Naturally [the disciples'] faith for the future would be immeasurable strengthened by finding that every detail was as the Lord had said" (A. Cole). Has there been a time when you have obeyed the Lord even when it didn't make sense at that time? How did this strengthen your confidence in Him?

4. Read Zechariah 9.9. In light of this messianic prophecy, what intentional statement is Jesus making by His mode of transportation when entering Jerusalem?

What attributes of the Messianic king are emphasised in Zechariah's prophecy?

OPTION: See also Genesis 49:10-11

5. Re-read v. 7 (and v. 2). What minor miracle might we easily overlook?
6. Although Mark withholds interpretive comments on this compelling scene, he does describe it in graphic detail. As Jesus begins the approach to Jerusalem, who accompanies Him (vv. 8-9)?
7. How does the crowd of Passover pilgrims honour Jesus?
 - v. 8a (see 2 Kings 9:13)
 - v. 8b
 - vv. 9-10

8. When the crowds cry, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” they are quoting from Psalm 118, part of a collection of hymns sung at Passover. “Hosanna” came from “Save us now” or “Save us please” in Hebrew. And Psalm 118 was considered to be a messianic psalm. What other clues indicate that the crowds were recognising Jesus as a messianic deliverer (v. 10)?

As residents of a country under enemy (Roman) occupation, what kind of salvation and deliverance were Jerusalem’s pilgrims likely anticipating? “They never dreamed of the kind of conqueror that Jesus wished to be” (W. Barclay). From what did they (and we!) truly need deliverance? Read:

Romans 6:14, 16, 18a

1 Corinthians 15:26

Colossians 1:13

1 Peter 5:8

9. By orchestrating His arrival on a donkey (and thus deliberately fulfilling OT prophecy) and then by allowing the messianic cries of the pilgrims, what is Jesus intentionally setting in motion? What will be the inevitable response of His opponents?
10. Review v. 11. If you were reading this story for the first time, what would you expect to happen now? How does Mark subtly contrast the crowd’s adoration with the silence at the temple, that place intended to be the meeting place of God with humanity?

How does v. 11 anticipate Jesus’ next big move? Skim over the title and content of vv. 12ff.

This passage is disturbing. At first glance, those present at Jesus' entry to Jerusalem seem to have it all together! They treat Jesus like a king! They praise Him with gusto! Hey, they even quote the Old Testament! But as has happened throughout Mark's Gospel, there is the terrible irony that those who should see Jesus best, are the very ones who miss Him, misunderstand Him, or misinterpret His words. Their expectations tragically blind them to Jesus' true identity and purposes. What a wake-up call for us! Is our praise firmly rooted in Jesus' true identity and mission? Are we in danger of missing or misunderstanding Him?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10). Today's passage conveyed the priority of understanding Jesus—Who He is and what His purposes are. Copy out and display "that I may know Him" so it can remind you to pray for growth in your understanding and experience of Jesus Christ. Let this trigger prayer for your family members too.
2. Reflecting on exuberant yet empty praise, one commentator writes, *The Israelite worship was enthusiastic and lavish, yet [it was] labelled as sinful because it was self-centred It is not that [extravagant] worship is wrong in itself, but that "worship" means giving God his due, his "worth-ship"* (E. Lucas). How are the adoring cries of Mark 11 lavish, yet self-centred? How did they fail to acknowledge Jesus' "worthship?" How can we adore and proclaim His worthship in our own worship?
3. Jesus and the disciples entered Jerusalem that day with words from Psalm 118 in the air. He would then embed a quotation from it in a parable (12:10). Later, the disciples would leave the Passover meal with the words of Psalm 118 (likely) ringing in their ears (14:26). Set aside some time to savour this powerful psalm. Read through it, alert for the ways it anticipates the cross-ward events of Mark 11-16. Then re-read it, using it as a springboard for prayer and praise. Enjoy!



Lesson 2: Questions Jesus Mark 12:13-34

The tension has never been thicker in Mark. Hostility, hatred, even homicidal rage towards Jesus are seething just beneath the surface as various representatives of Jewish leadership challenge Jesus' authority. Three times within our passage, they will seek to entrap Him with their trick questions. And three times, Jesus will prove Himself to be the very Wisdom of God, as He brilliantly answers their conundrums, evades their traps, and then confronts and challenges the questioners themselves, on their own terms, by His penetrating replies. Jesus' words are packed with eternally relevant insight and luminous truth. Let's listen in, and learn from Jesus once again.

Setting the scene. Before approaching today's passage, refresh your appreciation of the context. Review Mark 11:18; 12:12. What are the undercurrents of these encounters between Jesus and the Jewish leaders?

Now read Mark 12:13-34. Record the three testing questions asked of Jesus.

Question # 1 (v. 14-15a):

Question # 2 (v. 23):

Question # 3 (v. 28):

Throughout the Bible, we find numerous times when God has graciously reassured and responded to those who—from a relational, reverent, and seeking posture—asked questions of Him. Here, however, we find in the first two questioners, people who are motivated by malice and a desire to trip Jesus up! Have you encountered either kind of questioner? How do we respond to those who question Christianity seemingly in order to discredit or belittle it?

Question # 1. A political question

1. The Pharisees and Herodians likely were congratulating themselves on crafting a question that was guaranteed to embroil Jesus in the hot political topic of His time (v. 14). If Jesus advocates paying the Romans' heavy and unpopular taxes, how will "the crowd" respond? But if He suggests dodging that tax, how will the governing authorities respond to such insurrection?

2. How does Jesus' request that His opponents supply Him with a coin quietly implicate the Jewish leaders (v.15-16)?

3. How does Jesus' marvellous reply in v. 17:
 - a. Avoid implicating Himself?

 - b. Deflect attention away from the peripheral matter (of taxation), and skillfully focus it on the far graver issue confronting His questioners?

Jesus' teaching prompts us to consider what it means to live as loyal citizens of Canada, while anchoring our surpassing loyalty and sense of belonging in God's kingdom. How does our ultimate duty to God affect our roles as members of society? Does civil government ever intrude on what is God's? (For further study, cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:1-2)

Question #2. A legal question

4. How are the Sadducees described (v. 18) and how does this shape the way we perceive their question (vv.19-23)?

5. The exaggerated, artificial situation presented in their question hints at the Sadducees' false motives. What two reasons does Jesus identify for their false thinking (v. 24)?

6. 6. As He often does, Jesus answers the questioners “*on their own terms*” (A. Cole). Since they reject the rest of the Old Testament, and claim to be devotees of only the Torah (=Law, or Genesis to Deuteronomy), His argument is based on a text from the Law. How does Jesus argue for resurrection here? How would He later offer the final word on the question of resurrection? How does He, once again, go beyond the superficial to address fundamental issues?

A disturbing aspect of this short scene is the fact that the Sadducees were “vulnerable, not at their weak points, but at their strong points” (J. Edwards). Are we? Are the things we secretly feel secure in, or proud of, actually our points of vulnerability? How do we, like the Sadducees, fall into error because we don't know / experience the Scriptures or God's power?

Question # 3. A theological question

7. Yet again, Jesus is set a seemingly insolvable conundrum. This time, He is asked to choose one commandment, out of all 613, as being the most important. How does Jesus describe the essence of all the Law's requirements (vv. 30-31)? What one word encapsulates the action required by this new two-fold law?
8. In what fundamental doctrine is this two-part Law of Love (or “Great Commandment”) rooted (v. 29)?

Jesus quotes here from a passage in Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:4-9). Called the *Shema*, it was recited daily by faithful Jews. How does its truth motivate us also to love God and others?

9. How are these two inseparable commands related? How does part 2 (v. 31) logically flow out of part 1 (v. 30)? Why must part one have priority?

10. How would Jesus Himself perfectly fulfill this law of Love through His death on the cross?
Consider John 5:30; 8:29 and John 15:13.

The scribe presumes he can judge Jesus' reply, completely oblivious to the reality that he is the one being evaluated! How tragic that the "expert" on the word of God doesn't recognise the authority of the enfleshed Word of God, Jesus. As God the Son, Jesus "lays rightful claim to every facet of [our] personality: emotions . . . spirit . . . intelligence . . . and will" (J. Edwards). How has this week's study prodded you to consider Jesus' place in your life?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).* We praise Christ for His sacrificial love and perfect holiness. We also can praise Him for His insight, perception of humanity, and masterly teaching. Today's text reminds us that even Jesus' opponents were overcome by His skillful reasoning and marvelled at His brilliance. Praise Christ, Who is our wisdom.
2. *Because the whole [person] is the object of God's covenant love, the whole [person] is claimed by God for Himself. To love God in the way identified by the great commandment is to seek God for His own sake, to have pleasure in Him, and to strive impulsively after Him (W. Lane).* Pray that God would stir in your heart such desire for and pleasure in Him.
3. Even when approached in hostility or scepticism, Jesus met people on their own ground. He asked the Pharisees to look at the coin in their own pockets; He reasoned with the Sadducees from the only portion of the Bible they acknowledged; He conversed with the Torah scribe about details of the Torah. How can you follow His example this week—meeting with people where they are, then directing their attention to Jesus?



Lesson 3: The Temple and the Coming Son of Man Mark 13:1-37

Welcome to Mark 13. Here we discover Jesus' gripping farewell address to His followers, His last (and longest) extended teaching in Mark before He enters into His Passion. Christ's tone is serious as He instructs us how to live in light of His Second Coming. These words are intense, disturbing even, and they contain startling revelations which force us to surrender the future's mystery to God's sovereignty. Jesus' instructions have global and history-spanning relevance. They also have penetrating application for us.

Let's learn from a Christ-centered posture of humility. "Often there is more heat than light when Christians discuss the doctrine of the last things" (J. Lamb). Let's remember that even Jesus, God the Son, acknowledged that He didn't have all the answers (cf. v. 32)! Let's resist our inclinations towards dogmatism and details. Instead, may we seek and study His Word in order to worship and obey.

1. Our approach this week will be to survey the chapter to determine its fundamental teaching and to discover how that teaching, can transform our daily living. Prayerfully, read Mark 13:1-37. What are the key ideas of Jesus' teaching?

2. Jesus' teaching begins and ends with practical application (vv. 5, 37). Did you notice all the other imperatives ("to do" words) in this chapter? What a happy corrective for those who label end times teaching as too theoretical or vague! How does Jesus instruct us to:
 - Be prepared (vv. 7, 23, 33-35)?
 - Be perceptive (vv. 5, 21, 28)?
 - Be passionate (vv. 10-11)?
 - Be persevering (vv. 13, 29)?
 - Be prayerful (v. 18)?

Were you surprised by how pointed and practical this end time teaching actually is? Michael Card writes, "Jesus' final words on the subject aren't about specific signs, but rather obedience." How would focusing on our present response, rather than speculating about the future, allow biblical prophecy to change our lives?

3. Re-read vv. 24-26. What is *the* defining event of the future? (cf. 14.62) Notice that although all of the universe is engaged, and believers will be gathered from every corner of the globe, all of the cosmos and all of history will focus on one individual. On whom is that focus? Why?

RESPONSE #1: BE PREPARED

4. For what are we to prepare ourselves? How can we live in constant, vigilant readiness?

vv. 7-8

vv. 9-13

vv. 33-36

“The point is to rid believers of utopian fantasies and remind them that adversity and persecution are not aberrations of Christian life, but rather the norm” (J. Edwards). How prepared are we, the Canadian church, for suffering and persecution? What can we be doing, or asking God to do, to prepare for the days ahead?

RESPONSE #2: BE PERCEPTIVE

5. Jesus instructs, *“See that no one leads you astray!”* (v. 5) Mark pleads, *“Let the reader understand!”* (v. 14) Why do we need to be discerning?

vv. 5-6

vv. 21-22

Why will these false teachers be so convincing?

RESPONSE #3: BE PASSIONATE**6. Be PASSIONATE . . . for CHRIST**

What phrase in verses 9 and 13 identifies what motivates Jesus' disciples to serve radically, not counting the cost? Do you see such passion in the Canadian church? Why or why not?

7. Be PASSIONATE . . . for His WORD

In times of trauma and suffering, when our world is engulfed in cataclysmic turmoil, what is a source of unchanging security (v. 31)? What are the implications of this for how we live?

8. Be PASSIONATE . . . for His MISSION

And the gospel _____ first be proclaimed to all nations (v. 10).

Read Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 1:6-8; and Revelation 7:9-10. When we are given insight into God's great purposes and plan of salvation, what do we learn about His heart for the world?

"The proclamation of the Gospel to all is an absolute priority in the divine plan of salvation, and . . . an integral element in God's purposes" (W. Lane). What are some specific ways we can mirror God's mission priorities? How integral to our lives is the spread of the Gospel to every people group?

RESPONSE #4: BE PERSEVERING

9. Faced by overwhelming malice and opposition, what are we as Christ-followers to do (v. 13)? For how long?

The Christian must hold fast right to the end; but if he be truly Christian, he will so hold fast, because God holds him fast (A. Cole).

10. How does remembering the ministry of all the Godhead motivate us to endure?

How do we see God the Father's compassion (v. 19-20)? His wise sovereignty (v. 32)?

How is Jesus', the Son's, example of endurance motivate us (cf. 10:33-34)?

How does the Spirit enable and empower us (v. 11)?

RESPONSE #5: **BE PRAYERFUL**

Tucked into His prediction of the fall of Jerusalem is Jesus' brief command: "Pray!" (v. 18). How does the imminence of Jesus' return fuel our prayer lives? How does Mark 13 convince us of our need to depend on God in prayer? Pray as a group. Let the priorities revealed in Mark 13 shape your prayer.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE Mark 13:26: *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory!*
2. Reread Jesus' final words of instruction about watchful waiting in vv. 33-37. What does this look like in your own life, as you stay vigilant and do your own assigned work (v. 34)?
3. What are some steps you could take this week to nourish and express your passion for our returning King Jesus, for His enduring word, and for His mission to all peoples?



Lesson 4: The Last Supper Mark 14:12-26

Beginning in chapter 14, the tension of Mark's Gospel increases as the events maneuver towards a climax. It moves urgently and inevitably toward Jesus' death on the cross. Each section has been crafted to connect tightly with the following passage, so as we begin to read these final chapters, we'll find ourselves being drawn from one event to the next. This week's study begins with the celebration of Passover week. Through these verses, we are offered the inestimable privilege of joining Jesus and His disciples as they eat together one last time, and as Jesus shows them, and us, how He Himself will be the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

1. Begin by reading the chapter's opening verses, Mark 14:1-2. What background information is disclosed? How does this shape the way we approach the rest of the chapter? Now read Mark 14:12-26.
2. What part of the week-long Passover feast is emphasized in our passage's opening words (v. 12)? How does this create a frame of reference for interpreting the rest of Mark?

Let's refresh our memories about Passover, an important, annual, week-long festival. Read Exodus 12:3, 6-7, 11-14 (OPTION: cf. also Deut. 16:1-8). What historical event did the Passover meal (which began the Feast of Unleavened Bread) commemorate?

What attributes of God did the Passover celebrate? See Ex. 6:6-7; Ps. 77:14-15.

"Jesus sees the Passover as a basis for understanding the meaning of His forthcoming death" (D. English). Read 1 Corinthians 5:7b. How was Jesus' death the ultimate Passover sacrifice? Understanding Passover helps us to view Jesus' death as not merely a tragic execution but as an intentional sacrifice. How often do we think of the cross in this way?

Lesson 4

Why do many contemporary Christians neglect the sacrificial aspect of the cross? Why does it even matter?

3. Review vv. 13-16. How does this little section resemble the events of 11:1-6? How do these verses remind us that “*Jesus came to the city fully aware that He was to accomplish the Passover in his own person*” (W. Lane)?
4. Verses 17-21 are tragic. As the Passover meal progresses, Jesus breaks the news of His betrayal to the disciples. What details make this treachery all the more heart-breaking?

v. 18

v. 20

What echo of Psalm 41:9 can you detect in Jesus’ somber words?

5. The disciples’ reaction to Jesus’ announcement is unsettling. How does each man (“one after another” [v. 19]) respond to Jesus’ allegation? What does this question (asked over and over around the table) reveal to us about what the disciples are starting to realise about themselves?

Although only Judas had technically betrayed Jesus (cf. vv. 10-11), before the sun rose again at next day’s dawn, each of the other disciples would have betrayed and abandoned Him also (v. 50). One commentator warns us, “We are not called to an abstract condemnation . . . of Judas. Instead, we are called to the solemn heart-searching of v. 19, ‘Is it I?’” (A. Cole). How are our hearts treacherous also? What comfort does this passage (and others) offer us betrayers?

6. Review Jesus’ words in v. 21. They are simple and succinct, yet they contain essential insight into the nature of reality. How do these words balance truth about both our human responsibility and God’s divine sovereignty? See also Acts 2:23.

Read *Genesis 50:20* to learn of another time when Scripture demonstrates that “even betrayal is not outside God’s plans” (D. English), for God can use anything for His saving plans and purposes. Testify to how you have seen Him do this in your own life.

7. List the actions of Jesus as He distributed the bread (v. 22). Why do these sound familiar? Review *Mark 6:41* and *8:6*. What point might Mark be making by using the same wording?

What does the bread, which Jesus *broke* and *gave* to the disciples, represent (v. 22)?

8. In some ways, v. 24 is the climax of the whole meal. What did the cup (of wine) symbolise?

The old covenant had been sealed by “*the blood of the covenant*” (*Ex. 24:8*) Look carefully. How is the blood which will inaugurate the new covenant described?

“This is _____ blood of the covenant. . .” (v. 24).

9. For whom would Jesus’ life-blood, His very self, be poured out (v. 24)? Read *Mark 10:45* and *Isaiah 53:12*. Who are “the many” for whom Jesus suffered and died as their Passover sacrifice?

Peter would later reflect on these events and write, “You were ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish” (*1 Pet. 1:18, 19*). How can we cultivate our gratitude for the blood of Christ?

10. Jesus' last supper with the disciples looked back to the Passover, commemorating God's saving deliverance and celebrating His redemptive might. It also looked ahead, both to His ultimate Passover sacrifice on the cross, and to the great messianic feast when Jesus would feast again with His followers. As we celebrate the Lord's Table (communion) how do we too look back, celebrating God's deliverance, and also look ahead? See 1 Cor. 11.26.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11.26).*
2. Jot down a few of the key truths which impressed themselves upon your heart this week. Refer to these reminders to refresh your gratitude for Christ's sacrifice and to prepare for the next time we celebrate the Lord's Table together.
3. Use your Bible and a concordance to explore some of the theological richness associated with the mighty work of Jesus' shed blood.
4. *"God desires to enter into covenant fellowship with His people on a new and enduring basis"* (W. Lane). Meditate on the blessings of the New Covenant as outlined in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Seal your time by thanking God for His covenant kindness and faithfulness.



Lesson 5: Pierced for Our Transgressions Mark 15:16-39

Today's passage depicts the final hours of Jesus' suffering and agony on the cross. By now He is exhausted, battered, and bleeding. After being betrayed and arrested in Gethsemane, Jesus has been whisked away to stand trial before the Jewish religious leaders on the false charge of blasphemy. Following their unanimous condemnation, as well as physical and verbal assaults, He has stood before the Roman governor, Pilate, on the charge of treason. And Pilate, knowing of Jesus' innocence yet choosing political expediency, has had Jesus scourged (an unspeakably cruel flogging) and has *delivered Him to be crucified* (v. 15). We may be unsettled and challenged as we accompany Jesus through His final hours. *"It is difficult for us to engage fully with such unimaginable cruelty and pain. Yet engage we must if we are to begin to appreciate the price Jesus paid to purchase us"* (M. Card). Our loving adoration of Jesus surely will deepen. And we will gain fresh insight into what discipleship means as we follow such a loving, self-sacrificing, and obedient Saviour.

1. Read Mark 15:16-39. How is Jesus portrayed in this passage?

2. Before moving further into our text, let's consider the various parties opposing Jesus. How has Mark depicted the hearts of:
 - The Jewish leaders (vv. 9-10; OPTION: 14:63-65)?
 - The crowd (vv. 11-14)?
 - Pilate (v.15)?

3. Now we read about more brutality and derision, this time from the Roman soldiers. Mark refers to no mere handful, but to, incredibly, a *whole battalion* (600 soldiers if at full strength). Jesus has been accused of claiming to be King of the Jews (vv. 2, 9, 12)—now He is ridiculed by a twisted parody of "royal treatment." How is His Kingship mocked in:
 - v. 17a, 17b?
 - v. 18a, 18b?
 - v. 19c?

Lesson 5

Isaiah described the Suffering Servant as “despised and rejected by men . . . despised and we esteemed Him not” (53.3). Although they surface in a brutally graphic way in Mark 15, scorn and mockery have always expressed humanity’s resistance to Jesus’ kingship. Do you see such derision in our day? As Jesus’ disciples, what should be our expectations? What should be our response?

4. Jesus already has been flogged, a savage whipping that shredded skin, destroyed muscle, usually damaged internal organs, and often caused death. How does such background knowledge explain v. 21?

OPTIONAL QUESTION: What was Jesus offered for His pain (v. 23)?

Why does He refuse this (HINT: see Prov. 31:6-7; Mk. 10:38; 14:36; Heb. 5:8-9)?

Mark simply records “They crucified Him” (vv. 24, 25). Our casual, overly familiar attitudes can blind us to the tortuous nature of crucifixion, which was “a ghastly form of death: excruciatingly painful, prolonged, and socially degrading” (J. Edwards). How does contemplating the full horror of the cross enlarge our thinking about Jesus?

5. Jesus’ last recorded words in the garden are “But let the Scriptures be fulfilled” (14:50). Now Mark’s narrative contains a stunning display of fulfilled prophecy. How is each Old Testament Scripture fulfilled within Mark 15:23-32? (Note: Mk. 10:33-34 also is fulfilled!)

Psalm 69:21 & v. 23 (cf. v. 36)

Psalm 22:16 & v. 24

Psalm 22:18a & v. 24

Psalm 22:18b & v. 24

Isaiah 53:12 & v. 27

Psalm 22:7b & v. 29

Psalm 22:7a & v. 31

Psalm 22:1 & v.34

6. What three groups hurl further disdain and derision at Jesus as He is on the cross? See vv. 29, 31, 32.

7. From noon until 3 pm, it grew as black as night (v. 33). With what is such terrifying darkness associated in the Bible? See Isa. 13:9-11; Amos 8:9-10.

8. Within this darkness, we are privileged to hear some of Jesus' final words, words cried out in an agony of abandonment. What does Jesus actually say (v. 34)?

Why was He alienated from the “favour and fellowship” of His Father (*ESV Study Bible*)?

See:

Isaiah 53:12e

Isaiah 59:1-2

OPTION: cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

“The horror of the cross was not mainly its physical torture . . . but the greatest pain Christ underwent was his sense of divine abandonment . . . Jesus was forsaken so that you and I never have to be!” (D. Ortland). In what sense is Jesus' abandonment by His Father the reason we need never fear being forsaken?

9. Mark records that *Jesus uttered a loud cry (cf. Jn.19:30) and breathed His last (v. 37)*. What immediately happens in the temple, the place appointed by God to meet with us?

How does the commentary of Hebrews 10.19-20 help us grasp the significance of this? What does this gift of the torn curtain embolden believers to do? See Heb. 10:22.

10. Following the death of Jesus on the cross comes the climax to the entire Gospel. What is the spontaneous cry of Jesus' executioner, the Roman centurion (v. 39)?

Return to Mark's opening verse (1:1) and re-read it. What was Mark's purpose in writing this Gospel? How is the centurion's testimony a glorious Gospel (good news) statement? We've travelled with the disciples along the way, following Jesus to the cross. How can we too celebrate and communicate the life-changing reality that Jesus truly is the Son of God?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. **MEMORISE:** *He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities (Isa. 53:5).*

2. Place yourself, by a biblically energised imagination, at the base of that crude instrument of Roman torture, the cross. There the centurion proclaimed his belief that Jesus truly is the Son of God. What about you? What is your heart-felt response to the death of Jesus?

11. 3. Pause in Mark 15. Amidst the blood and flies, the hostility and injustice, gaze at Jesus. See how His suffering showcases His marvellous love for. At any point, He could have resisted or sought revenge. He was no victim, but rather the obedient Son fulfilling each detail of His Father's magnificent plan of salvation. Rehearse the details. Say "Thank you."

3. Psalm 22 was a key for Mark, and Jesus, in interpreting the events of Jesus' passion. Devote some time to dwelling in the Christ-anticipating riches of Psalm 22. Linger in v. 27. What is your part in telling Jesus' story to "all the families of the nations?" Pray through vv. 30-31. With what young person can you share—with passion!—the shocking and saving story of Jesus' sacrifice for him or her on the cross?



Lesson 6: From Death to Life... and to the Ends of the World Mark 15:37-16:8

We concluded last study at the pivotal event in human history—the sacrificial death of Jesus, God the Son and the Anointed One. This week we return to the cross, once again keeping company with the centurion. We will discover a handful of others who, in addition to this Roman soldier, are identified by name in Mark’s record of how individuals respond to the death of Jesus. As we explore these compelling verses, arriving finally at the excitement of the empty tomb and the stunning angelic announcement, we will be moved to ask ourselves: “And what about me? How do I respond to this earth-shaking, history-shaping truth that God’s Son Jesus had died and been raised to unending life?”

1. Read Mark 15:37-16:8. When Mark recorded the events of Jesus’ arrest, trials and crucifixion (14:43-15:36), he nearly always portrayed Jesus’ opponents within general groupings: the company who find and arrest Him in the garden, the members of the Jewish council, the crowd who shriek for His crucifixion, and the many Roman soldiers who mock and torment Him. But now Mark centres in on specific, even *named*, individuals. List the individuals who must respond to Christ crucified:

15:37-39

15:40-41

15:42-46

(15:47; 16:1ff.)

2. Consider the company of individuals you’ve listed above. How do they represent a cross-section of humanity? (Hint: consider religion, nationality, gender, occupation, etc.)

Read Revelation 7:9-10. How does this vision confirm Mark’s message that the crucified and risen Jesus is to be encountered by every individual? How does this shape and energise our efforts to share Jesus with others . . . in our neighbourhoods? Workplaces? City?

3. The last grim news we'd heard about Jesus' followers, beyond Peter's bitter betrayal, was that *they all left him and fled* (14:50). Now we learn that there were some followers who witnessed the crucifixion "from a distance" (v. 40). What do we learn about these watchers? (vv. 40, 41; cf. Lk. 8:1-3 for details about this unique and often overlooked ministry.)

OPTION: Given prevailing attitudes towards women in his day, Mark's portrayal of women as generous and self-sacrificing disciples is extraordinary. Reflect on the lavish giving of the "poor widow" in 12:41-44. Consider also the anointing of Jesus by the unnamed woman in 14:3-9, an act Jesus called "beautiful." How are these women portrayed as exemplary?

4. Mark now focuses our attention on Joseph of Arimathea. Review vv. 42-43 and list three things we learn about this formerly undercover (Jn. 19:38) follower of Jesus?

Why would making this request to Pilate have required courage?

5. Jesus died around 3 pm on the Friday, or "Preparation Day." If sundown occurred at approximately 6 pm (thus marking the start of the next day by Jewish reckoning), then Joseph had only 3 hours to bury Jesus before the Sabbath began. Read Deuteronomy 21:22-23a. As a devout Jew, what else may have been prompting his sense of urgency?

Read Galatians 3:13. Take a moment to absorb the chilling sense of Jesus "becoming a curse for us." What did Jesus accomplish by becoming our curse? (Gal. 3:13) What do we, who are in Christ Jesus, receive from this? (Gal. 3:14) Let this magnificent exchange ignite your praise for the crucified Christ!

6. What details support the Christian claim that Jesus truly died?

vv. 44-45

v. 45 (How is Jesus described?)

v. 46

7. The spotlight turns back to the women. They've observed Jesus' death on the cross; now what do they witness (v. 47)? For what great task are they being equipped (16:7a)?

8. The faithful trio sets out early on what we would call "Sunday" morning to minister once again to Jesus, who as Messiah truly was the "Anointed One." What evidence is there that they fully expected to find Jesus dead, and harboured no expectation of His resurrection?

v. 1

v. 2

v. 3

9. Consider the angel's astounding, yet exceedingly good, news (v.6). How does it further the purpose of Mark's Gospel? (cf. 1:1; Rom. 1:4) How does each phrase of the angelic announcement still compellingly address individuals in our own broken world?

"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."

What can we learn about the art of witnessing from this (angelic) gospel presentation? (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-5) Do we perceive sharing the Good News as being "entrusted with the most momentous message . . . ever [to] be spoken" (M. Card)? Or as a guilt-ridden, stress-laden duty? How can Mark 16 help?

10. The most reliable, as well as early, manuscripts record Mark ending at v. 8, with the honest accounting of the women's initial, paralysing fear (Later they would indeed testify to Jesus' resurrection; see the other Gospels). Because Mark is concluded in this abrupt way, Jesus' followers--represented here by the women--are called to believe in Him and proclaim His gospel without seeing Him. What lessons can we learn from this open-ended Gospel?

Mark 16 invites Jesus' followers to walk by faith and not by sight, to believe that Jesus has gone before us (v. 7), and to follow Him in faith, as faithful witnesses. Despairing, the women came to the tomb, believing it spelled the death of all hope and joy. But it actually marked a new beginning. As we conclude our journey with Jesus through Mark, what are our next steps? How has the resurrection of Jesus further defined discipleship for us?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 15:20).*
2. The women fretted en route to the tomb about how to dislodge its heavy stone. However, *the resurrection had made all their cares and anxieties unnecessary. That which they themselves could never do, God had already done!* (A. Cole). Meditate on the miracle of Jesus' resurrection. How does it address your cares and anxieties today? What are you helpless to do for yourself, but know God has already done for you in Christ?
3. Did you notice the detail (unique to Mark) of special mention for Peter (v. 7)? Let your heart be encouraged by this restoring gesture of forgiveness. Rejoice in resurrection grace!