

The Gospel Of Mark

7 more studies from the Book of Mark (Part 7)

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to answer the Bible Study Questions before meeting together for the Bible Study. Some people like to prepare beforehand whereas others like to think through the Bible Passages in a group setting. It is also not compulsory to answer ALL the questions.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

Study 1 – Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Mark 14:1-11

(Geoff Davidson Sermon on 1st March 2026)

Read Mark 14:1-11

1. What major Jewish festival is approaching, and why is that significant in Mark's Gospel? (v1)

The major festival was Passover. Passover was a remembrance of the lamb's blood being smeared on the door frames and door posts of the homes of the Israelites preventing the death of the first-born in house, when the angel of death passed over their homes, when they were held captive as slaves in Israel. This festival pointed to the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus, shed for us, for the forgiveness of sins. The feast of Unleavened Bread, accompanied Passover and the bread was unleavened – that is made without yeast. Yeast in the Old Testament (OT) was often symbolic of sin – which points to Jesus – who was without sin – and died for our sins!

2. What are the chief priests and scribes trying to do — and what are they afraid of? (vv1-2)

To arrest and kill Jesus. They don't want to carry this out during the festival because many people are following Jesus and the religious leaders were afraid it might start a fight!

3. How does their secret plotting contrast with what the woman with the alabaster jar does?

They reject Jesus as King whereas the woman worships Him as King. Ironically He IS King of Heaven and Earth!

4. What details does Mark give to highlight the cost and intentionality of the woman's action?

The perfume is worth year's wages – 300 denarii. The woman is anointing Jesus for burial whether she realizes it or not (most likely she does realise it)

5. Why do some of those present react so strongly? Is there anything that sounds reasonable about their objection?

Because the money spent on the perfume could have been used to help the poor. Yes, it does sound like a reasonable objection because they are thinking of the poor. But the woman's actions are an act of worship of God Himself, in human form!

6. What does this moment reveal about how people can use good causes (like helping the poor) to resist wholehearted devotion?

People could say to themselves: "I don't have to come to worship because I fed the homeless this week or I evangelized this week or I ran the youth group on Friday"

7. **Reflection:** What does "**waste**" look like when measured by human standards and by God's standards?

We cannot "waste" anything if it is on God!

His standards are way higher than my/our standards!

8. How does Jesus describe the woman's action? Why is that description important?

A beautiful thing! If Jesus says it's a beautiful thing then it is. She did what she could. And she recognized His Divinity and Sovereignty!

9. What does Jesus mean by "**the poor you will always have with you**"?

Basic human nature/culture means that there will always be "have's" and "have nots" Also, those watching can help the poor if they wish – not just the woman with the expensive perfume!

10. According to Jesus, what has the woman actually understood about Him that others have missed?

She has understood that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Divine King, and He is fully God and deserves honour and worship. AND she understands He will die soon. She knew she only had Him for a short amount of time.

11. Why do you think Jesus promises that her story will be remembered wherever the gospel is preached?

Because of a) the significance of this story spiritually; b) He knew this story would be included in the Gospels and we would read it.

12. How do both the woman and Judas respond to Jesus emotionally and spiritually — and what do you think motivates their responses?

The woman – gave worship and devotion willingly

Judas – Rejected Jesus’ authority and divinity and he used money as his god, rather than worshipping the one true God!

13. **Ponder:** In what subtle ways might we be tempted to resemble Judas more than the woman?

- *Feeling uneasy when ministry is “too costly”*
- *Measuring church decisions primarily in dollar terms*
- *Quietly resenting sacrificial giving – whereas God loves cheerful giver*
- *When our objections are not concerns for God’s glory but for our own comfort or for our own glory or so we are in control*
- *Quietly judging others for being “too devoted” to Jesus – when we can never be*
- *Giving Jesus our leftovers or contributions – and not our whole lives*

14. What does this passage teach us about the difference between religious activity and true worship?

Religious activity says – ‘is this efficient?’ ‘is Jesus worth it?’

True worship says “Jesus is worthy!”

Religious activity stays within social/cultural boundaries.

True worship overflows and goes beyond what seems sensible.

Religious activity can be exterior without being heartfelt, serving without loving but to look good!

15. **Reflection:** Is there something valuable — reputation, comfort, resources, control — that Jesus may be inviting you to pour out? How can you give Him your best?

Share the Gospel message without fear of criticism/rejection.

Continue serving even if people a) get your motives wrong; b) falsely accuse; c) criticize; d) treat you unfairly – see Galatians 6:9

16. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 14:1-11**?

2 Samuel 24:18-25

The sacrifice and worship of God MUST cost us something. David refuses to accept the threshing floor from Araunah without paying for it. V24 – “I will not sacrifice to the Lord my burnt offerings that cost me nothing”. The woman’s worship cost her an immense amount but she was more than willing.

Isaiah 53:3-9

*These verses from Isaiah show how Jesus will suffer. V3- despised, rejected, suffering, pain, people can’t look at him. V4 – He bore our suffering, punished by God for us. V7 – oppressed, afflicted, like a lamb to the slaughter. V8 – cut off from the land of the living. V9 – Assigned a grave with the wicked.
The woman anointed Jesus for that grave!*

Deuteronomy 15:7–11

This passage says how the Israelites were to look after the poor and less fortunate people. V11 says “there will always be poor people in the land”; Jesus quotes this verse in Mark 14:7. But V11 also commands to be open-handed toward fellow Israelites. Devotion to Jesus and helping the poor are not either/or but both/and!

Psalms 2:1–2

Psalms 2:1-2 explain that nations/peoples will plot in vain; Kings and rulers will plot against the Lord’s anointed. In Mark 14:2, the religious leaders were plotting to arrest and kill Jesus (God’s anointed). In Mark 14:10, Judas betrays Jesus and in Mark 14:11, the chief priests are delighted with this!

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 14:1-11**

What proper devotion and worship of Jesus looks like!



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V6 – “She has done a beautiful thing” – Jesus says.

Finish in prayer: Lord Jesus, You are worthy of our very best. Thank You for loving us enough to go to the cross. Forgive us when our hearts are cautious, calculating, or distracted. Give us the courage to love You openly. Teach us to offer our time, our resources, and our lives as a beautiful thing in Your sight.

Guard us from cold hearts and divided loyalties. Help us to follow You faithfully, remembering that You first gave everything for us. In Your precious name, Amen.

Study 2 – The Last Supper [A Meal Unlike Any Other]

Mark 14:12-26

(Ian Warrell Sermon on 8th March 2026)

Read Mark 14:12-26

1. What is the significance of this being the Festival of Unleavened Bread / Passover?
Unleavened Bread is symbolic of the removal of yeast from the dough, and yeast equates to sin. Jesus is the only ONE without sin. Passover reminds the Jews that the angel of death passed over the houses and the lamb's blood on the doorframes and doorposts preserved (and yeast is also a preservative) them from the wrath of God, just as Jesus, our Passover Lamb, and His blood preserves us from the wrath of God.

2. What does the detailed preparation (*the man carrying a jar, the furnished upper room*) reveal about Jesus?
It reveals Jesus' omniscience. He truly does know everything. He is truly God and knows the big picture as well as the tiny details. He is in sovereign control of ALL things.

3. How does this passage show both divine sovereignty and ordinary obedience?
On the one hand Jesus knows those details but at the same time He knows His body will be broken and His blood shed. He knows He MUST obey His Father's plan that Jesus must die for the punishment for the sins of the world. So that, sin is paid for and so that forgiveness is available to all who believe in Him.

4. Why is it important that Jesus celebrates Passover before His death?
 - a) *To show He is the fulfilment of the original Passover and the Passover Festival*
 - b) *To introduce the commemorative meal (sacrament) to the disciples and us!*

5. **Ponder:** What Old Testament meal are they remembering? How does this OT event relate to Jesus?
The Passover meal when the Israelites left Egypt in a hurry after the 10th plague (death to the firstborn). The unleavened bread was convenient because they did not have to wait for the bread dough to rise (in case they left in a hurry). Jesus is the Passover Lamb. His blood saves lives just like the original Passover lamb's blood did.

6. Why do you think Jesus announces the betrayal during the meal?
- To show His foreknowledge of all things, even His pending arrest is all part of God's plan*
 - To fulfil scripture Psalm 41:9*
 - To highlight the seriousness of betrayal*
 - To promote self-examination amongst the disciples*
7. What stands out about the disciples' response: **"Surely you don't mean me?"**
- Each one looks at themselves and does not accuse the other*
 - They recognize that they might have weaknesses*
 - They were genuinely sad (horrified) by Jesus' announcement*
 - Ironically in Matthew's Gospel (26:25) the real betrayer, Judas, asks the same questions, showing the death of His deception*
8. What does this response reveal about self-awareness and humility?
- It is very important we examine our hearts. As Psalm 139:23-24 says: "search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me"*
9. **Reflection:** How do verses 18–21 balance God's Divine plan ("as it is written") and human responsibility ("woe to that man")?
- God's sovereignty and responsibility run in parallel*
God's plan is accomplished through human actions, but those actions are still freely chosen and accountable, even though God knows what those actions will be.
Divine sovereignty does not cancel human responsibility. We are not robots!
10. **Ponder:** What words or actions of Jesus would have shocked the disciples?
- "One of you will betray me" – especially in this close group*
 - "One who is eating with me" – sharing a meal with friends when this bombshell is announced!*
 - "The Son of Man will go" – Jesus calmly announces His death*
 - "It would be better for him not to be born" – extremely severe warning that highlights the seriousness of this betrayal*

11. What does **“This is my body”** communicate?

The Bread = Jesus = The Bread of Life

We are to remember the bread represents His body broken for us, broken fallen human beings.

12. What does **“This is my blood of the covenant”** echo from the Old Testament?
(see Exodus 24:8)

The Blood = Jesus’ blood on the Cross poured out so that the punishment for sin is paid for and forgiveness can be offered.

The sacrifices of animals with blood sprinkled on the people was a covenant with God and the Israelites to say that that blood sacrifice forgave people their sins. Now Jesus introduces a NEW COVENANT which is His blood sacrifice!

13. Why does Jesus say His blood is **“poured out for many”**? (cf. Isaiah 53:12)

This fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah that the promised Suffering Servant (Jesus) to come would pour out His life (and blood) for the iniquities of people. Not ALL people, but MANY – the MANY being the ones who believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection for forgiveness and eternal life.

14. What future hope is expressed in verse 25?

- *Jesus’ resurrection and ultimate victory*
- *The coming of the Kingdom of God in its fulness*
- *A future Messianic Banquet – Revelation 19:9 – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb of God*

15. Why is it significant that they sing a hymn before going out to the Mount of Olives?

There was a Passover tradition that the Hallel Psalms (113-118) were sung at Passover. See Psalm 118:22 – “the stone the builders have rejected has become the cornerstone” – this stone is Jesus – the foundation stone of our life.

Singing hymns is a solemn transition to Jesus’ arrest, trial and the Cross.

16. What psalms were traditionally sung at Passover? (cf. Psalms 113–118 — the Hallel)

The Hallel Psalms – Psalms 113-118 were traditionally sung!

17. **Reflection:** Does this passage explain why we celebrate the Lord's Supper? *Yes, to commemorate: a) His last meal; b) His Body/Blood shed for us; and c) Lest we forget what Jesus has done for us*

18. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 14:12-26**?

Exodus 12:1-14

The Passover – the blood on the door frames prevent death and wrath of God. Jesus' blood prevents death and wrath of God for all who believe in Him. Jesus fulfills this event at the Last Supper!

Exodus 24:1-8

The covenant of blood for the forgiveness of sins through annual sacrifices points to the New Covenant of Jesus' blood and His once and for all sacrifice for all who repent. Jesus' sacrifice is the ultimate sacrifice.

Isaiah 53:10-12

This is a prophecy of the suffering servant. He will be crushed as a guilt offering, but He will see His offspring (resurrection). He will also bear our iniquities. All this prophecy is fulfilled by Jesus' suffering and sacrifice.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jeremiah speaks of a New Covenant which Jesus introduces at the Last Supper. God will put His Law in people's minds and write it on their hearts. This New Covenant is inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2) and completely fulfilled when God's Kingdom is fully established at Jesus' return.

Psalms 116 and Psalm 118 – Hallel Psalms (optional)

Psalm 116 – speaks of deliverance and thanksgiving. It speaks of being rescued from death and being offered a "cup of salvation". This cup that Jesus gives is the

Lord's Supper (Mark 14:23-24) pointing to His coming death that will bring salvation.

Psalm 118 – Rejection/Vindication. V22 – the stone the builders reject foreshadows Jesus' rejection. And the fact that the stone is the cornerstone, vindicates Jesus.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 14:12-26**

Jesus initiates the Lord's Supper, reveals His betrayal and points to His salvation and God's coming Kingdom



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V22 – Taks it, this is my body.

V24 – This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many!

Finish in prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for being our Passover Lamb. Thank You for giving Your body and pouring out Your blood so that we might be forgiven and brought into a new covenant with God. As we remember this meal, help us never to treat Your sacrifice lightly. Give us grateful hearts, humble faith, and a deeper love for You. Strengthen us to trust You, even when the road ahead is difficult. Help us to fix our eyes on the promise of Your coming kingdom. In Your precious name, Amen.

Study 3 – Failure and Faithfulness at Gethsemane

Mark 14:27-52

(Sermon on 15th March 2026)

Read Mark 14:27-31

1. What does Jesus say the disciples will do and where is He quoting from?

Jesus says that all the disciples will fall away because of Him.

He quotes from Zechariah 13:7:

“I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”

Jesus identifies Himself as the Shepherd, and the disciples as the sheep who will scatter when He is struck.

But note: There is some hope in verse 28: “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” This shows that Jesus was already looking beyond the cross. He had His eyes fixed on the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

2. What bold claim does Peter make? **What** does Jesus predict Peter will do?

Peter claims that even if everyone else falls away, he never will.

Jesus predicts that Peter will deny Him three times before the rooster crows twice that very night.

3. What bold claim do all the disciples make, including Peter in verse 31?

They all insist:

“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”

Every disciple makes the same confident claim of loyalty.

“It is sometimes easier to bear a great load for Christ than a small one. Some of us could be martyrs at the stake more easily than confessors among sneering neighbors.” (Maclaren)

Read Mark 14:32-42

4. What instructions does Jesus give the disciples in Gethsemane? (verses 32-34)

Jesus tells them to:

- *Sit and pray while He prays*
- *Stay here and keep watch*

He also reveals His deep anguish:

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”

Gethsemane: *This was a place just east of the temple mount area in Jerusalem, across the ravine of the Brook Kidron, and on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Surrounded by ancient olive trees, **Gethsemane** means “olive press.” It was a place where olives from the neighborhood were **crushed** for their oil. So too, the Son of God would be **crushed** here.*

5. What’s impressive about Jesus’ prayer in verses 35 to 36?

Several things stand out:

- *Jesus speaks honestly about His distress.*
- *He asks if the “**cup**” of suffering can be taken away.*
- *Yet He submits completely to the Father’s will: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

It shows both true humanity and perfect obedience. Note: He calls His Father, Abba, which is equivalent to “Daddy”

6. What are the disciples doing each time Jesus returns to them? Why 3 times?

Each time Jesus returns, they are sleeping.

The repetition (three times):

- *Highlights their weakness and failure*
- *Parallels Peter’s later three denials*
- *Emphasizes the contrast between Jesus’ faithfulness and their weakness*

Peter must have been a bit startled to hear Jesus call him Simon. This was the old sleeping Simon, not the new man Peter. Peter was ready to resist any attack, except the attack of the Sandman.

Note: Jesus repeated the same prayer! (Mark 14:39). Jesus repeated the prayer outlined in Mark 14:34-36. Some say it is unspiritual, or reflects a lack of faith, to repeat prayers, yet we could never accuse Jesus of being unspiritual or of lacking faith.

7. What reason does Jesus give for the disciples' need to pray and what is their problem? (verse 38)

Jesus says they must pray: "so that you will not fall into temptation."

Their problem is: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

They have good intentions but lack spiritual strength.

*It was bad enough that the disciples didn't **watch and pray** for themselves, but they should have been willing to **watch and pray** simply for the sake of Jesus. Through prayer and companionship, we must stand beside others in their time of need.*

8. What does verse 42 reveal about Jesus?

Jesus shows resolve and readiness. He willingly moves toward His arrest, saying:

"Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

He is not a victim of circumstances—He knowingly and willingly walks toward the cross. It's like Jesus says "let's get it over and done with!"

Read Mark 14:43-52

9. Who is in the arresting party in verse 43? And who leads it?

The arresting group includes:

- *Chief priests*
- *Teachers of the law*
- *Elders*
- *A crowd armed with swords and clubs [The Temple Guard]*

They are led by Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples.

10. How is the betrayal carried out? (verses 44 to 46)

It happens in secret at night.

Judas gives a prearranged signal:

- *The man he kisses is Jesus.*
- *He greets Him with “Rabbi!” and kisses Him.*

A gesture of affection becomes an act of betrayal.

11. What happened to one of the servants and how did Jesus respond? (verses 47 to 49)

One disciple draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s servant.

Jesus responds by:

- *Stopping the violence*
- *Pointing out the irony that they arrest Him like a criminal*
- *Submitting because Scripture must be fulfilled*

Luke tells us that Jesus healed the damage done by Peter (Luke 22:51; John 18:10). It isn’t the last time Jesus has had to leave behind a mess left by one of His followers.

“Had Jesus not healed Malchus, Peter would have been arrested as well; and there might have been four crosses at Calvary.” (Barclay)

12. How do the disciples respond to Jesus’ arrest in verse 50? Is this surprising? (see Mark 14:27).

They all flee and abandon Him.

This is not surprising, because Jesus had already predicted it in Mark 14:27.

13. What unusual detail does Mark mention in verses 51 to 52? Why?

A young man wearing only a linen garment follows Jesus.

When seized, he runs away naked, leaving the garment behind.

Possible reasons Mark includes this:

- *A vivid eyewitness detail*
- *Illustrates the complete panic and abandonment*
- *Possibly a subtle reference to Mark himself. Acts 12:12 says the disciples used to meet at the home of Mark’s mother!*

“The modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, ‘Friend Peter, while the Holy Ghost moves me to, tell thy fault, and let it stand on record, he also constrains me to write my own as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hare-brained folly, would have run,

unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master; yet, at the first sight, of the rough legionaries, at the first gleam of their swords, away I fled, timid, faint-hearted, and afraid that I should be too roughly handled.” (Spurgeon)

14. **Ponder:** Compare the response of Jesus with the response of the disciples?
What do you think makes the difference?

Jesus' Response:

- *Prays*
- *Submits to God's will*
- *Faces suffering courageously*
- *Trusts the Father*

Disciples' response:

- *Sleep instead of praying*
- *Overestimate their strength*
- *Panic and flee*

The difference is Jesus' dependence on the Father through prayer and obedience.

15. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 14:27-52**?

Zechariah 13:7

This verse predicts the shepherd being struck and the sheep scattered, fulfilled when the disciples flee.

Isaiah 53:3-12

These verses describe the Suffering Servant that God will send:

- *Rejected*
- *Bearing sins*
- *Silent before His accusers*

Jesus' arrest and suffering begin the fulfillment.

Psalm 41:9

*This verse says: “Even my close friend... has turned against me.”
Foreshadows Judas’ betrayal.*

Psalm 42:5-11 and Psalm 43:1-5

*These verses express deep sorrow but continued trust in God.
They mirror Jesus’ anguish in Gethsemane yet His hope in the Father.*

Genesis 22:1-18

Genesis 22 describes Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God and this foreshadows what happens to Jesus:

- *Jesus is God’s beloved son – like Isaac is Abraham’s beloved son*
- *Jesus is the sacrifice – just like Isaac was the intended sacrifice. Except God spared Isaac but not His only Son, Jesus!*
- *Abraham and Jesus both trust in God’s plan*

Ultimately the sacrifice of Genesis 22 is completely fulfilled in Jesus.

Psalm 75:7-8

*Psalm 75:7-8 speak of the **cup of God’s wrath**.
Jesus refers to this **cup** [of God’s wrath] in Gethsemane.*

Jeremiah 25:15-17 (Optional)

*Jeremiah also describes the **cup of God’s wrath** given to the nations—pointing to the judgment Jesus will bear.*

Psalm 88 (Optional)

*Psalm 88 is a psalm of **deep suffering and darkness**, echoing the emotional weight of Jesus’ experience.*

What’s the *BIG IDEA* of Mark 14:27-52

Jesus faithfully submits to the Father’s plan to suffer and die, while His closest followers fail and abandon Him—showing that our salvation depends on Christ’s faithfulness, not ours.

OR
Jesus remains faithful while His disciples fail—our salvation rests on His faithfulness, not ours.



What light globe moment did you have?

If Mark is the naked young man, he must have heard Jesus' praying in the Garden, because the other three disciples were asleep!

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Finish in prayer: Gracious Father, thank You for showing us the faithfulness of Your Son when others failed. Forgive us for the times we are sleepy, fearful, or overconfident. Teach us to watch and pray, and to trust Your will even when the path is hard. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to stand firm, and fill us with gratitude that Jesus stood alone for us. In His precious name we pray, Amen.

Study 4 – The Courage of Christ and the Collapse of Peter

Mark 14:53-72

(Sermon on 22nd March 2026)

Read Mark 14:53-72

1. Where is Jesus taken, and who gathers there? (verse 53)

*Jesus is taken to the gathering of the High Priest, chief priests, elders and teachers of the Law. This formal gathering is called the Jewish Council (the **Sanhedrin**)*

The Sanhedrin was a Jewish council of seventy-one members. They were patterned after the seventy elders that God established through Moses. In the gospels they are called, "the council of the elders." In Judea, they were under Roman authority and could not carry out capital punishment. This is why we find them sending Jesus to Pilate after they had condemned Him to death. They acknowledged to Pilate that they did not have the authority to execute anyone. When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 the Sanhedrin ceased to exist.

In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and on the Sabbath. The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have. As such, they were the only ones who could try the king or extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put. In the New Testament, the Sanhedrin is best known for their part in the series of mock trials that resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus. The Sanhedrin began with an informal examination of Jesus before Annas, the acting high priest (John 18:12-14, 19-23), followed by a formal session before the entire Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57-68). There the decision was made to turn Jesus over to the Roman authorities to be tried and crucified.

2. What is Peter doing while Jesus is on trial? (verses 54, 66)

Peter is following at a safe distance

V54 - Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

V66 - While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by.

3. What problem do the council members have with the witnesses? (verses 55 to 59)

The council members were looking for evidence against Jesus so they could put Him to death. However, they struggled to get reliable witnesses who could give accurate testimony against Jesus. Many of the witnesses testified falsely and their statements did not agree with each other (v56). Some gave false testimony that Jesus stated He would destroy the temple in three days and build another, not made from human hands (vv57-59)

4. What key question does the high priest finally ask Jesus? (verse 61)

*The High Priest asked the question: “**Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?**”. Remember the Messiah (the Christ in Greek) means God’s chosen anointed One, whom He promised to send in the Old Testament to save His people.*

5. How does Jesus respond to? (verse 62)

Jesus response: “I am,” “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

6. What is the council’s reaction to Jesus’ statement? (verses 63 to 65)

They tore their clothes – a sign of grief, anger and outrage.

They say they don’t need any more witness because Jesus has basically incriminated Himself. According to the Council, Jesus is blaspheming because the Hebrew Word for YHWH translates to “I AM”; so Jesus is claiming to be God! Which of course He is, but they don’t believe He is!

As a result, they condemn Jesus to death (v64). Some blindfolded Jesus and spat on Him and struck Him with their fists; demanding Him to prophesy. Then the guards too Him and beat Him!

7. How many times does Peter deny Jesus? (verses 68, 70, 71)

Peter denied Jesus three times as Jesus had previously predicted (Mark 14:30)

8. What triggers Peter to realize what he’s done? How does he feel? (verse 72)

When the rooster crowed for the second time; Peter then remembered Jesus’ words and he broke down and wept!

9. Why is the trial considered unjust or irregular?

The trial is considered unjust or irregular because:

- *It **takes place at night** - Jewish legal tradition generally required trials, especially capital cases, to be held during the day. But Jesus is tried in the middle of the night (14:53), suggesting secrecy and haste.*
- *There was a **predetermined outcome** - The leaders are not seeking truth but a conviction: “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death...” (v.55)
The verdict is effectively decided before the trial begins.*
- *There were many false and conflicting testimonies (vv56-59) whereas the Old Testament Law required consistent testimony from reliable witnesses (Deut 19:15)*
- *Jesus is condemned on His own testimony rather than on corroborated evidence*
- *Charge of blasphemy is misapplied – Jesus spoke the truth about His identity. He was declared guilty on the basis that they rejected His truth*
- *They **used abuse in the trial** – Jesus was mocked, blindfolded, beaten and struck (v65)*
- ***No proper defence or due process** – Jesus is not given a fair opportunity to defend Himself, nor is there any sign of impartiality amongst the council members*

10. What Old Testament imagery is Jesus using in verse 62?

He uses the imagery from Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man (the Messiah) coming on clouds!

11. Why is Jesus’ simple statement “**I am**” so significant?

“I am” echoes the divine name revealed in Book of Exodus 3:14 to Moses (when God tells Moses “I AM WHO I AM”). While Jesus says it simply, it carries strong overtones of divine identity—especially in this supercharged court room scene.

12. What contrast does Mark want us to see between Jesus and Peter?

- **-Faithfulness versus Failure** - **Jesus** stands firm, speaks truth, and remains faithful under pressure. **Peter** collapses under pressure and denies even knowing Jesus.
- **Courage versus Fear** – **Jesus** boldly says “I am” whereas **Peter** is afraid of the servant girl and bystanders’ questions
- **Truth versus Lies** – **Jesus** always tells the truth – **Peter** tells lies to avoid being identified with Jesus
- **Submission versus self-preservation** – **Jesus** submits to the Father’s will. **Peter** denies knowing Jesus to save himself. **Jesus** publicly confesses and **Peter** publicly denies!
- **Vindication versus shame/tears** – **Jesus** is condemned but vindicated ultimately by choosing the path of the Cross whereas **Peter** is full of shame and weeps!

13. Why is Peter’s denial especially tragic in context? (cf. Mark 14:29-31)

Peter’s denial is especially tragic because:

- *He had confidently promised he would not deny Jesus*
- *He was specifically warned by Jesus*
- *He even claimed greater loyalty than the other disciples*
- *He failed Jesus at the worst possible moment when Jesus was faithfully standing trial*
- *The grief he felt when he realized what he had done, when the rooster crowed*

14. **Reflection:** In what situations are Christians tempted to follow Jesus “**at a distance**”?

Christians may be tempted to follow Jesus “at a distance”:

- *When there is pressure from work colleagues, family and friends which may lead to being ridiculed or excluded*
- *When faith becomes costly*
- *When we fear people more than we fear God*
- *When in the company of people exhibiting ungodly behaviour*
- *When we rely on our past commitment, not on our commitment right now*
- *In our private spiritual life – we might neglect prayer, reading God’s Word and keep Jesus at the perimeter of our lives – rather than deeply in our lives daily*

15. What fears most commonly lead believers to compromise or stay silent about Jesus?

Fear of rejection, ridicule, conflict, consequences, inadequacy, standing out!

16. What encourages you most about Jesus' faithfulness in this passage?

- *He stands firm when others fail*
- *He speaks the truth without fear*
- *He willingly submits to the Father's will and trusts the Father's plan*
- *He stays committed to saving sinners through the Cross – even saving the people who deny Him, like Peter; and saving the people who desert Him, like the other disciples!*

17. How does Peter's failure give hope to struggling believers today?

- *Failure is not the end, Peter falls badly, but he is not rejected*
- *Jesus restores the fallen – showing that His grace is greater than our sin*
- *Real believers can stumble and yet still belong to Jesus*
- *Repentance really matters – Peter's tears show a heart of remorse*

If Peter can fail, and then be restored; then there is hope for us too!

18. What practical steps help us remain faithful under pressure?

Here are some practical steps:

- *Constant prayer – asking God to strengthen us and protect us from temptation*
- *Constantly read and meditate on God's Word*
- *Be careful of our surroundings and what we watch*
- *Don't make little compromises; they will lead to bigger ones!*
- *Rely on the strength of the Holy Spirit – not our own strength*
- *Spend time with other believers – encouragement and accountability really matter*

19. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 14:53-72**?

Daniel 7:13-14

Jesus refers to Himself as the **“Son of Man coming with the clouds”** in verse 62. By doing so, He is fulfilling the vision Daniel sees in Daniel 7:13-14. Even when facing an unfair trial, Jesus claims the ultimate kingdom and divine authority promised in Daniel’s vision.

Psalm 110:1

Psalm 110:1 says: “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand...’” In Mark 14:62, Jesus says He will be sitting at God’s right hand. Even though Jesus is condemned by the human court He faces, Jesus already holds the position of glory, honour, power and authority with God, at His right hand.

Isaiah 53:7-9

This passage from Isaiah describes a **Suffering Servant** to come, namely Jesus. Isaiah says the suffering servant will be oppressed and afflicted but “not open His mouth” and even though there was not “any deceit in His mouth”, He was unfairly and cruelly condemned. Jesus fulfils the picture of the **Suffering Servant** completely!

Jesus could have mounted a magnificent defense here, calling forth all the various witnesses to His deity, power and character. The people He taught, the people He healed, the dead risen, the blind who see, even the demons themselves testified to His deity. But Jesus opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53:7).

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of Mark 14:53-72

Jesus stands faithful under pressure; our security is in Him, even when we fail.



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

62 “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the faithfulness of Your Son, Jesus, who stood firm even when all else failed. Forgive us for the times we deny or follow Him at a distance. Strengthen our hearts to trust and obey You, and help us rely on Your grace when we fall. Restore us, guide us, and keep us faithful to the end. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Study 5 – The Innocent King Condemned

Mark 15:1-20

(Sermon on 29th March 2026)

Read Mark 15:1-20

1. What do the religious leaders do? (verse 1)

The religious leaders meet early in the morning, hold a consultation, bind Jesus, take Him to Pilate, and hand Him over to the Roman authorities.

This shows they are determined to have Jesus executed and they need the Romans [ruling power] to do it, since the Jews were not allowed to carry out crucifixion or any other capital punishment!

“The detail that Jesus was delivered to Pilate’s forum early in the morning is a significant index of the historical accuracy of the tradition. It was necessary for the Sanhedrin to bring its business to Pilate as soon after dawn as possible because the working day of a Roman official began at the earliest hour of daylight. Legal trials in the Roman forum were customarily held shortly after sunrise.” (Lane)

There were times when the Jews disregarded this prohibition of the Romans and executed those they considered criminals, such as at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:57-60). Yet they did not take things into their own hands regarding Jesus because they knew the multitudes had a favorable opinion of Jesus and if Pilate executed Him, they could distance themselves from the political fallout.

2. What question does Pilate ask and what do you make of Jesus’ reply? (verse 2)

*Pilate asks: “**Are you the King of the Jews?**”*

*Jesus replies: “**You have said so.**”*

Jesus does not deny being king, but He also does not explain further. Jesus’ reply suggests there is more to it. It is a restrained, controlled answer — He is king, but not the kind of political revolutionary Pilate or the Jews think.

*The Jewish rulers knew that if they brought Jesus before Pilate on the charge of claiming to be God, Pilate would merely yawn. He would say, “We Romans have hundreds of gods. What is the harm with one more?” Yet, if they brought Jesus before Pilate as **the King of the Jews**, Pilate would have to take Jesus seriously as a*

potential political threat, because there could be no king except Caesar, and Pilate was Caesar's representative.

3. How does Jesus respond to the accusations? Why does he reply in this way? Why is Jesus' silence significant? (verses 2 to 5)

Jesus mostly remains silent and does not defend Himself.

Why?

He knows the trial is unjust.

He willingly submits to the Father's plan.

He is not trying to escape the cross.

His silence fulfills prophecy [Isaiah 53:7]

As we learnt last week – He only replies when the truth is stated!

His silence is significant because it fulfills Isaiah 53:7 — the suffering servant who does not open his mouth. His silence shows: His innocence; self-control; willing sacrifice; trust in God rather than self-defence or self-preservation.

V4 is very interesting in Greek. The Greek is οὐκ ἀποκρίνη οὐδέν – which is “you do not answer nothing”. In English this is a double negative – which means you do answer”, whereas in Greek a double negative doesn't cancel itself out, it emphasizes or intensifies the negative – so it would be “Are you not answering anything at all?” or “have you no reply whatsoever?”

4. Who is Barabbas, and why is he imprisoned? (verse 7)

Barabbas is: a rebel; an insurrectionist and a murderer involved in a rebellion

Ironically, Barabbas is guilty of the very kind of crime Jesus is falsely accused of (rebellion/king).

5. What custom does Pilate follow? What does Pilate realise about the chief priests? (verses 6 and 8 to 11)

V6 – there is a custom at the time of this Passover festival to release one prisoner whom the crowd/people choose. This was a way to keep the people happy and compliant with Roman rule.

Pilate realized that the chief priests handed Jesus over out of ‘self-interest’ and not for a genuine offence! So Pilate knows Jesus is innocent and that this is a religious/political setup

6. Ponder: Why do you think the crowd want to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus? (verses 11 to 13)

For the following reasons:

- *The chief priests stirred them up (v11)*
- *Barabbas was a rebel against Rome — a political hero to some – so they get one up on the Romans!*
- *Jesus disappointed people’s expectations (because He is not a military Messiah).*
- *The crowd’s ‘sheep’ mentality — people often follow the loudest voices.*
- *The people wanted to choose the kind of king they wanted, not the kind of King that God sent.*

7. Why is Pilate hesitant to condemn Jesus? (verses 10 and 14)

Because:

- *Pilate knows the leaders are motivated by envy and self-interest.*
- *Pilate can find **no crime** in Jesus.*
- *Pilate knows Jesus is clearly innocent.*
- *Pilate is amazed at Jesus’ silence and composure.*
- *Pilate knows condemning Jesus is unjust.*

8. What do we discover about Pilate’s character in verse 15?

*Verse 15 says he wanted **to satisfy the crowd.***

This shows Pilate is:

- *Politically motivated*
- *Very weak*
- *A people-pleaser*

- *Willing to do wrong to avoid trouble*
- *More concerned about popularity than justice*
- *He knows what is right but does not do it.*

9. What do the soldiers do after Jesus is sentenced? What irony is there in their mocking of Jesus? (verses 16 to 20)

They put a purple robe on Jesus (purple is a sign of royalty); they twist a crown of thorns on His head; they mock Him calling Him “the King of the Jews”; they beat Him; they spit on Him; they pretend to bow down and worship Him; they led Him away to be crucified. What dreadful treatment of the Son of God!

The irony is: Jesus IS actually a King! And no ordinary King; the King of Heaven and Earth. He will wear a proper crown; ALL people will bow down to Him one day! And He will rule all Heaven and Earth!

They think they are joking/mocking but they are unknowingly telling the truth!

10. **Reflection:** What irony is present in the choice of Barabbas over Jesus?

This is one of the greatest ironies in the Bible:

- *The guilty man goes free*
- *The innocent man is condemned*
- *The violent rebel is released*
- *The Prince of Peace is executed*
- *The true Son is rejected*
- *The false rebel is chosen*

This is actually a picture of the gospel:

Jesus takes the place of the guilty. We are Barabbas.

*Yet if anyone was able to say, “Jesus died for me,” it was **Barabbas**. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf, the innocent in the place of the guilty.*

11. **Reflection:** What role do envy and crowd pressure play in this passage?

In Mark 15, the crowd is given a choice between:

- ***Barabbas*** — *a guilty rebel, murderer, “son of the father”*

- **Jesus Christ** — the innocent **Son of the Father**

So the crowd chooses:

The false son of the father instead of the true Son of the Father.

- The religious leaders act out of **envy/self interest**
- The crowd acts out of **pressure and influence** from the chief priests
- Pilate gives in to **fear of the crowd**

So we see:

- **Envy**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Fear of people**
- **Political convenience**

These all combine to crucify Jesus.

12. Where do we see “**Barabbas choices**” today — choosing what is wrong over what is right?

Examples of “**Barabbas choices**”:

- **Choosing our popularity over God’s truth**
- **Choosing sin over obedience to God**
- **Choosing comfort over following Christ**
- **Choosing what feels good over what is right**
- **Choosing the world’s way over Jesus’ way**
- **Choosing silence rather than standing up for Jesus Christ**

Any time we choose sin over Christ, we are making a **Barabbas choice**.

13. What pressures might tempt Christians to stay silent about Jesus like Pilate did?

Here are some pressures that might tempt us as Christians to stay silent about Jesus like Pilate did:

- **Fear of rejection**
- **Fear of losing friendships**
- **Workplace pressure**
- **Social media culture**
- **Fear of being called intolerant**

- *Wanting to keep the peace*
- *Not wanting conflict*
- *Wanting to be liked*

All of that amounts to making people BIG and God small

14. How does Jesus' willing suffering strengthen your trust in Him?

Because it shows:

- *Jesus knew what lay ahead but He suffered willingly*
- *He did it for sinners including us*
- *He remained in control of the situation despite the fear/punishment*
- *He was faithfully obedient to the Father*
- *He loves us enough to suffer injustice for us*

His suffering was not an accident — it was deliberate love — and God's plan.

15. In what ways is Jesus still mocked or rejected in our culture today?

- *People blaspheme and say OMG and use Jesus' name as a swear word/curse*
- *People reduce Jesus to just a "good teacher"*
- *People reject the Bible as God's Word*
- *People just want to be forgiven without repenting or submitting to God*
- *Christians are mocked, ridiculed, persecuted and killed for following Jesus; the severity of this depends on which country one lives in!*

16. How should believers respond when following Jesus brings opposition or ridicule?

Believers should respond to opposition and ridicule by:

- *Praying for those who oppose them*
- *Remain faithful to God and His Word and His Son*
- *Trust God — and walk by faith and not by sight*
- *Remember that Jesus suffered and we are in some small way carrying our cross and participating in His suffering*
- *Always stand up for the truth*
- *Continue to spread the Gospel of our Lord Jesus*

17. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 15:1-20**?

Isaiah 53:3-7, 12

The passage (vv3-7) from Isaiah is a prophecy that God will send His suffering servant, which finds its fulfilment in our Lord Jesus. This prophecy is 700 years before Jesus.

The passage describes someone who is rejected, suffers, despised, took our pain, bore our suffering, was pierced for our transgressions (sins), was oppressed and afflicted; yet He did not open His mouth but went to the cross like a lamb led to the slaughter.

V12 – He poured out His life unto death for us and was numbered with the transgressors (two criminals on either side – yet He was innocent) and He bore our sins and our punishment!

Psalm 2:1-6

Psalm 2 talks about nations and rulers conspiring against and opposing God's king — which is exactly what happens with Pontius Pilate, the chief priests, and the crowd in Mark 15. Psalm 2:4 says this opposition is laughable to God and He merely scoffs because nothing is going to stop God from installing His King (Psalm 2:6)

Isaiah 50:6

The verse says: I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting

This verse is also describing the obedience of God's servant and is fulfilled by Jesus who is beaten, mocked and spat at by the Roman soldiers!

Psalm 22:6-8

This Psalm is the "Psalm of the Cross" and although it is written by King David and describes how he felt when he was rejected and suffered; yet it ultimately finds its fulfilment in Jesus on the Cross. Even the first verse has the words "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" which Jesus uttered from the Cross. Verses 6 to 8 of the Psalm describe a man scorned by everyone, despised by people,

mocked, had insults hurled at him. All fulfilled by Jesus in His suffering and crucifixion.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 15:1-20**

Jesus, the innocent King, is rejected, mocked, and condemned so that the guilty can go free.

OR

The innocent King is condemned so the guilty can be saved.

OR

Jesus takes our place!



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V2 - "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "You have said so," Jesus replied.

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for our Lord Jesus, the innocent King who was mocked and condemned in our place. Forgive us for the times we have followed the crowd or stayed silent when we should stand for Him. Fill us with gratitude for His saving love and give us courage to honour Christ as our true King. In His precious name we pray, Amen.

Study 6 – Surely this man is the Son of God!

Mark 15:21-47

(Sermon on 3rd April 2026 – Good Friday)

Read Mark 15:21-47

1. Who was forced to carry Jesus' cross? Why? Is there a teaching here? (verse 21)
A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus was forced to carry Jesus' cross.

In Paul's letter to Rome – Romans 16:13 – “Greet Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also His mother and mine”. Something powerful must have happened to Simon that day, which led his son Rufus, to become “eminent in the Lord”.

Why? Because Jesus had been flogged, beaten, and was physically exhausted, and could not carry the cross Himself.

*The Teaching: This is a picture of discipleship that Jesus had spoken about: “**Whoever wants to be my disciple must take up their cross and follow me.**” (Matt 16:24)*

Simon physically carried the cross behind Jesus — which is what disciples were called to do spiritually.

*It was the custom of the Romans to make the condemned criminal bear the cross, but in this case, Jesus was simply too weak to carry it. They preferred to keep the victim alive until he was crucified, because a public crucifixion was good advertisement for Rome. When Jesus fell under the weight of the cross, no Roman would help Him carry it. The centurion had the right to compel a local Jew to help carry it, but such an outrage might lead to uproar or riot. The best solution was to make a stranger carry the cross, so they found a foreigner (**Simon** from Cyrene in North Africa) to help Him.*

*We are often blessed by the things we are **compelled** to do. Simon did not want to carry this cross and probably resented it terribly when he was asked. Nevertheless, it probably became the most special and memorable moment of his life.*

“His name was Simon: and where was that other Simon? What a silent, but strong rebuke this would be to him. Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, where wast thou? Another Simon has taken thy place. Sometimes the Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward, and he finds other servitors for the time. If this has ever happened to us it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live.

Brothers and sisters, keep your places, and let not another Simon occupy your room.” (Spurgeon)

2. What do they offer Jesus to drink, and what does He do? Why? (verse 23)

They offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, a mild painkiller.

Jesus refused it because He chose to face the suffering fully and consciously.

He was deliberately drinking the “cup” [He mentioned in Gethsemane] the Father had given him — the cup of God’s wrath for sin.

Was it out of any love to suffering that he thus refused the wine-cup? Ah, no; Christ had no love of suffering. He had a love of souls, but like us he turned away from suffering, he never loved it... Why, then, did he suffer? For two reasons: because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the atonement, which saves to the utmost; and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect his character as ‘a merciful High Priest’ who has to compassionate souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves; that he might know how to succor them that are tempted.” (Spurgeon)

3. Why is “**dividing up his clothes**” significant? (verse 24)

This was in fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 22 [The Psalm of the Cross]: They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots (Psalm 22:18).

This shows: Jesus’ death was all part of God’s plan and that the soldiers were indifferent while Jesus was dying.

4. What title is written above Jesus? What’s the irony here? (verse 26)

The title written was “KING OF THE JEWS”

The irony is – although written in mockery – it’s actually true!

Jesus really is the King, but not the kind of king they expected. They were expecting a military king but Jesus is a servant king who will lay down His life for His subjects!

5. Who is crucified alongside Jesus? (verse 27). **Optional: Read Genesis 40.** What is the connection to Jesus and the two criminals?

In verse 27 - two rebels/criminals were crucified with him — one on his right and one on his left.

The connection with Genesis 40: Joseph is a “type” of Jesus – Joseph is a saviour figure in the Old Testament. When Joseph was in prison - he was between two prisoners [like Jesus] — one prisoner lived, one prisoner died [like the thieves next to Jesus on the Cross; one thief believed in Jesus and lives in paradise with Jesus; and one thief did not believe and died from crucifixion without seeing paradise! Jesus is the true and better Joseph — the innocent sufferer who saves others.

6. What kind of mocking does Jesus endure and from whom? How does that make you feel? (verses 29 to 32)

Passers-by hurled insults, shaking their heads, mocking Jesus and saying ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!’

The chief priests and teachers of the law also joined in saying ‘He saved others but He can’t save Himself’. The irony is He will rebuild His temple (His body) when He rises from the dead in three days and by not saving Himself, He saves all believers!

Some told Jesus to ‘come down from the cross, that they may see and believe. But the irony is, by staying on the cross and not saving Himself; He was saving people from their sin!

Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says mocking in Mark 15:31 describes “Acting like silly children who love to mock one another.” It was bad enough that the Son of God came to earth and man murdered Him in the most tortured way possible. Worst of all, sinful men enjoyed doing it.

7. What unusual event happened in verse 33? (cf. Amos 8:9) Why do you think that happened?

Darkness covered the land from noon to 3pm.

This represents: God’s judgment; grieving/mourning at the death of Jesus; and it’s also like Creation reacting to the death of the Son of God

Amos 8:9 speaks of the sun going dark at noon as a sign of judgment.

The remarkable darkness showed **the agony of creation itself in the Creator's suffering**. "Origen (Contra Celsus, ii, 33) and Eusebius (Chron.) quote the writing of Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he makes mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion." (Geldenhuys)
 i. Luke tells us that the sun was darkened (Luke 23:45), but Mark makes it clear that it stayed dark for three hours (**there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour**).

ii. Phlegon, Roman historian: "In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake." (cited in Clarke)

iii. **This is especially remarkable because during a full moon — which Passover was always held at — a natural eclipse of the sun is impossible. This was an extraordinary miracle in the heavens.**

8. What words does Jesus cry out in verse 34? Where are these words from? What would be going on for Jesus at that moment?

Jesus cried out "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")

These words are from Psalm 22 [the Psalm of the Cross] and from verse 1.

At that moment, Jesus was:

- Bearing sin
- Experiencing judgment
- Experiencing separation from the Father
- Taking our punishment

This is **the moment of substitution**.

Jesus knew great pain and suffering (both physical and emotional) in His life but never knew separation from His Father. Now He knew it. There was a significant sense in which Jesus rightly felt **forsaken** by God the Father at this moment.

This happened in the sense that **God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus

not only endured the withdrawal of the Father's fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father's wrath upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity.

ii. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God's good and loving plan of redemption.

Therefore, Isaiah could say Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him (Isaiah 53:10).

iii. At the same time, we cannot say that the separation between the Father and the Son at the cross was complete, because as 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself at the cross.

iv. From Throned Upon the Awful Tree (John Ellerton, 1875)

*Throned upon the awful tree,
King of grief, I watch with Thee.
Darkness veils Thine anguished face:
None its lines of woe can trace:
None can tell what pangs unknown
Hold Thee silent and alone*

*Silent through those three dread hours,
Wrestling with the evil powers,
Left alone with human sin,
Gloom around Thee and within,
Till the appointed time is nigh,
Till the Lamb of God may die.*

9. What misunderstanding is going on in verses 35 to 36?

Some people standing there, think Jesus is calling Elijah, not saying "Eloi" (My God).

They think Elijah might come to rescue him.

They still do not understand what is happening

10. What happens at the moment of Jesus' death? (verse 38) Why is that significant?

The curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The tearing of the curtain signified that now man had free access to the throne of grace by the cross and that no one should ever think again that God dwells in temples made with hands.

To Summarise the significance:

- *Separation between God and people removed*
- *Access to God is now open*
- *The sacrificial system fulfilled and obsolete and replaced by Jesus once and for all sacrifice!*
- *God tore the curtain, not people*

Significantly, as the wall of separation between God and man was removed, the veil was torn from top to bottom. God tore it from heaven instead of man tearing it from earth.

11. What great confession is there in verse 39? Why is that significant?

A watching centurion confesses: "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

This is hugely significant because:

- *A Gentile says it*
- *A soldier at the cross says it*
- *The confession is made after seeing Jesus die, not after His miracles*
- *Mark's Gospel begins and ends with this statement*

12. Why is it significant that the ladies are present? (verses 40 to 41)

The are eye-witnesses to Jesus' death, burial and the empty tomb later.

In the culture of the day, women weren't credible witnesses; so the fact that the Gospel writers include their witness/testimony adds weight to the truth. The writers wouldn't include their witness/testimony unless it was actually true.

13. Who ensures that Jesus receives a proper burial? (verses 43 to 46) Why is this risky?

***Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent council member:** This Joseph was apparently silent when the council sentenced Jesus to death (Mark 15:1). He shrunk back then but was not ashamed to identify with Jesus in His death.*

It was risky because:

- *Joseph was a member of the council that condemned Jesus and publicly associating with Jesus could damage his reputation. Also, he had to approach Pilate to release Jesus' body. And he could be seen as siding with a condemned criminal. Joseph shows courage and devotion.*

i. "In the hours of crisis it is often the Peters who have sworn loyalty to Jesus with big gestures and fullness of self-confidence, that disappoint, and it is the secret and quiet followers of the Master (like Joseph, Nicodemus and the women) that do not hesitate to serve Him in love — at whatever the cost." (Geldenhuys)

ii. Joseph did not serve Jesus in many ways, but he did serve Him in ways no one else did or could. It was not possible for Peter, James, John, or even the many women who served Jesus to provide a tomb, but Joseph could and did. We must serve God in whatever way we can.

14. Why is verse 47 important?

*Verse 47 is important because the two Mary's **saw where Jesus' body was laid**. Therefore, they knew the correct tomb and the resurrection cannot be explained away by a "wrong tomb theory". It also sets up the resurrection account to follow in Mark 16*

15. **Reflection:** How does Jesus crucifixion affect you?

- **1st – sorry that my sin was put on Him**
- **2nd – gratitude that He died for my sins to be forgiven**
- **3rd – humbled that He has given me a second chance**
- **4th – immense love for Jesus**
- **5th – A desire to follow Jesus and to tell others what He has done for me**

16. What does the cross teach us about the seriousness of sin?

The Cross shows us

- *Sin separates us from God*
- *Sin must be judged*
- *Sin has to be punished with death*

- *Only perfect Jesus could make the perfect sacrifice for sins to be forgiven*
- *The Cross shows the immense love of God and His Son for people to be saved*

17. Do the actions of Simon Cyrene, the Centurion and Joseph of Arimathea give you your response to Jesus' death on a cruel cross?

These three responses give us our response:

- **Simon** – *Carry the cross and follow Jesus*
- **Centurion** – *Believe and confess who Jesus is*
- **Joseph** – *Publicly stand with Jesus and publicly stand up for Jesus!*

These are still the right responses today:

Follow Him, Believe in Him, Stand for Him.

18. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 15:21-47**?

Numbers 21:4-9

In Numbers 21:4-9, the Israelites are travelling through the wilderness having been rescued by God from slavery in Egypt. But they became impatient; they spoke against God and against Moses. They complained “why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There’s no bread! There’s no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

So God sent venomous snakes among them, the snakes bit the people and many Israelites died!

God told Moses to build a bronze snake on a pole – and if the Israelites looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

Jesus referred to this remarkable event in John 3:14-15: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus clearly said there is a similarity between what Moses did here, and what Jesus did on the cross.

*i. But how can a serpent have a similarity to Jesus? **Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible** (Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9). However, **bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible** because bronze must be made by passing through the “fires” of judgment.*

ii. So, **a bronze serpent does speak of evil; but evil having been judged** — just as Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Jesus. **A bronze serpent is a picture of evil judged and dealt with.**

iii. We would have wanted to diminish our sense of sin and put the image of a man up on the pole; a man, we might say, is some good and some bad. But a serpent we can more easily see the badness of!

iv. In addition, **if the serpent lay horizontally on the vertical pole, it is easy to see how this was a visual representation of the cross as well.** However, many traditions show the serpent being wrapped around the pole, and this is the source for the ancient figure of healing and medicine — a serpent, wrapped around a pole.

The people were saved not by doing anything, but by simply looking to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at a serpent on a pole was enough to save them. Surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do that.

i. As it says in Isaiah 45:22: **Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.** We might be willing to do a hundred things to earn our salvation, but God commands us to only trust in Him — **to look to Him.**

ii. **Charles Spurgeon gave his life to Jesus Christ after hearing a message on Isaiah 45:22, and hearing that text applied to this account of Moses lifting the serpent in the wilderness, and the people looking and living. Spurgeon was so impressed by this picture of the gospel and salvation in the Book of Numbers that he chose an engraving of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness as a logo for his publications.**

iii. **When Israel was complaining against the Lord and against Moses, they were not looking to the Lord the way they should. They were looking at themselves, they were looking at the hard circumstances — but they were not looking to the Lord. What will it take to get you to look to the Lord?**

Connection to Mark 15:

- *Jesus is lifted up on a cross.*
- *People look to him and are saved.*
- *The people were dying because of sin → we are dying because of sin.*
- *The serpent was lifted up → Jesus was lifted up.*
- *Look and live → Believe and live.*

Leviticus 16:1-19 (especially vv15-22)

This chapter describes the Day of Atonement when the high priest acts on behalf of the people and makes an annual sacrifice for the sin of the world:

- *One goat is killed for sin.*
- *Another goat (the scapegoat) has the sins placed on it and is sent away.*

The connection to Mark 15 is that Jesus fulfills both goats:

- *Jesus dies like the sacrifice goat.*
- *Jesus carries sin away like the scapegoat.*
- *Jesus is the substitute who takes sin away from the people.*
- *The temple curtain tearing (Mark 15:38) shows the sacrificial system is now fulfilled and obsolete because of Jesus' once and for all sacrifice.*

Psalm 22

This Psalm, written by King David, is often referred to as the Psalm of the Cross. Although originally written to describe David's suffering – it finds its complete fulfilment in Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

Psalm 22 is almost like a prophecy describing the crucifixion 1000 years before it happened!

Some of the connections to Mark:

- *Psalm 22:1 - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" → Mark 15:34*
- *Psalm 22: 7 - People mock him → Mark 15:29–32*
- *Psalm 22:16 - Hands and feet pierced – that's part of the crucifixion*
- *Psalm 22: 14 - Bones out of joint – that's what a person looks like as they hold themselves up to breath on the cross*

- *Psalm 22: 18 - “They divide my clothes” → Mark 15:24*
- *Psalm 22:17 - People stare and gloat – many people looked at Jesus and hurled insults when He was on the Cross!*

Isaiah 53:1-12

700 years before Jesus, Isaiah wrote this passage describing God’s Suffering Servant, which finds its fulfilment in Jesus!

This passage describes what happened to Jesus in His suffering and at the Cross. Here are the main connections:

- *He was despised and rejected*
- *He took our pain*
- *He was pierced for our transgressions*
- *The punishment that brought us peace was on him*
- *The Lord laid on him the sin of us all*
- *He was led like a lamb to the slaughter*
- *He was assigned a grave with the rich → Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 15:21-47**

Jesus dies in place of sinners



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

³⁴ **And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**”).**

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the great love shown to us in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that through His suffering and death the way to you has been opened. Help us to trust Jesus more deeply, to live gratefully under His kingship, and to follow Him with courage and faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Study 7 – He is Risen! He is not here.**Mark 16:1-8*****(Sermon on 5th April 2026 – Easter Sunday)*****Before we begin:** Why is Easter a special time for you?

Easter is a special time for me because it reminds me of God's love, grace and mercy. His love in sending His only Son to die for my sin on a cruel cross. His grace because it I do not deserve it; and His mercy that He has given me a second chance. Easter reminds me that death is not the end; and that Jesus is alive because He rose from the dead and defeated death. This gives me the certain hope of Heaven. As the old hymn says: Because He lives, I can face tomorrow – knowing that Jesus has purchase a free ticket to Heaven for me!

Read Mark 16:1-8

1. Who comes to the tomb? Why is that significant? What actual day of the week is it and why is that significant? (verses 1 & 2)

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome come to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. This is significance because a) women were considered to be unreliable witnesses in the culture of the day; b) If the resurrection was invented, men would have been written about as the first witnesses

"Spices were not used for mummification, which was not a Jewish custom, but to offset the odors from decomposition." (Lane)

The actual day is the first day of week – the day after the sabbath – that is our Sunday. Therefore Sunday is when most Christians worship together because Sunday was the resurrection day and it also marks a distinction between the day Christians worship and the day that Jews worship!

Because Jesus rose the day after the Sabbath rest – it is like a new creation or new beginning

The earliest the women could go to the tomb and properly embalm the body of Jesus was on Sunday morning. Sabbath was over at the start of Saturday evening, but it wasn't light enough until Sunday morning to do the work. The time from sundown on Friday to sunrise on Sunday must have been dark, empty, desperate days for the disciples.

2. What concern do the women have on their way to the tomb? (verse 3)

They are concerned about who will roll away the stone from the tomb.

They expect Jesus to be dead, laying in a sealed tomb – the stone will require 2 or 3 men to move it!

3. What do they discover when they arrive? (verse 4)

The very stone has already been rolled away. God has solved the problem before the women have arrived.

Matthew 27:65-66 reminds us that there was a guard set round the tomb. All this shows that the stone could not have been rolled away by the women (they were not strong enough) or by the disciples (even if they were brave enough, they could not overcome the armed guards). We also understand that no one else wanted to roll away the stone. Matthew 28:2 tells us that it was an angel who rolled it away.

4. Whom do they see inside the tomb? (verse 5)

Inside the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe sitting at the right side. This young man is an angel – God’s messenger with the most amazing news!

5. What announcement does the young man make? Should they/we be surprised? (verse 6)

*The announcement is: “**He has risen! He is not here.**”*

*We should **not be surprised** because Jesus predicted He would rise from the dead three times:*

- *Mark 8:31 - He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and **after three days rise again.***
- *Mark 9:31 - because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, **and after three days he will rise.**”*
- *Mark 10:34 – “...who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill **him. Three days later he will rise.**”*

There are several examples in the Bible of people being resuscitated before this, such as the widow's son in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Lazarus (John 11:38-44). Each of these was resuscitated from death, but none of them were resurrected. Each of them was raised in the same body they died in and raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn't just living again; it is living again in a new body, based on our old body, perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one resurrected.

*The resurrection is **planned, predicted, and promised**.*

Whenever Jesus says He will do something, He will ALWAYS do it!

6. What instructions are the women given? Again, should they/we be surprised?

Why does the young man say "**and Peter**" (verse 7)

*The women are given specific instructions: They are to go and tell the disciples "and Peter" that Jesus is going ahead of them in to **Galilee** and they will see Him there*

The "And Peter" is very important because:

- *Peter denied Jesus three times*
- *Peter probably thinks he is finished as a disciple*
- *This shows **grace, forgiveness, and restoration***
- *Jesus specifically includes the one who failed*

This is a beautiful gospel moment: Jesus restores failures.

7. What do you make of the women's response in verse 8?

They women are trembling and bewildered. They fled, and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

This does not mean that they made no report of the resurrection because we plainly know that they did (Mark 16:11 and Luke 24:9). It means that as they left the scene of the empty tomb, they did not discuss it among themselves. They didn't try to figure it out or match their stories. They simply went to make a report to the disciples as the angel invited them to do.

Their response shows:

- *The resurrection was terrifying and overwhelming*

- *It was not what the women were expecting*
- *And it's like Mark wants to challenge us to speak up about the resurrection!*

8. Ponder: Why is the rolled-away stone significant?

- *It wasn't moved by human hands but supernaturally through God's angels*
- *The stone wasn't moved to let Jesus out of the tomb but to let witnesses in! The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. John 20:19 tells us that Jesus, in His resurrection body, could pass through material barriers. It was rolled away so that others could see into the tomb and be persuaded that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.*
- *It proves the tomb is empty*
- *It proves Jesus is alive*
- *It proves death has been defeated!*

9. Why is the resurrection announcement central to the gospel?

Because it proves:

- *Jesus really is the Son of God*
- *His death paid for sin. **The death of Jesus on the cross was the payment, but the resurrection was the receipt, showing that the payment was perfect in the sight of God the Father.***
- *Death is defeated*
- *Salvation is accomplished*
- *Jesus is alive and reigning*

Without the resurrection, there is no gospel.

As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 - if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

10. What contrast do we see between the women's expectations and God's action

Women Expect	God's Action
Dead body	Risen Saviour
Sealed tomb	Empty tomb
Stone obstacle	Stone removed
Grieving and mourning	Victory
The End	The Beginning of life to the full leading to eternal life

11. What "**stones**" do people today assume are impossible for God to move?

Here are some "stones"

- *Death*
- *Cancer*
- *Broken marriages*
- *Broken relationships with family members or friends*
- *Wayward children*
- *The reversal of wrong choices*
- *Addictions*
- *Depression*
- *Church decline*
- *Guilt over past sin*
- *Financial burdens*
- *Unemployment*

The resurrection shows nothing is impossible for God.

"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

12. When are believers tempted to respond with fear rather than faith?

Here are some occasions when believers are tempted to respond with fear rather than faith

- *When prayers seem unanswered*
- *When facing death*
- *When life seems uncertain*

- *When we fail like the Apostle Peter did*
- *When the future is unknown*
- *When following Jesus is costly*

13. How does the resurrection strengthen your confidence in Jesus' promises?
*Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection – and they both happened.
 Therefore we can be confident that everything else He promised will also happen*

- *The forgiveness of our sins*
- *Eternal life in Heaven*
- *His return to judge the world*
- *New creation – the New Heaven and Earth*
- *The resurrection of our bodies*

14. What does this passage teach us about God's grace toward failing disciples (like Peter)?

*Peter failed badly, especially given how vocal and confident he was about never denying Jesus and saying even if everyone else deserted Jesus, he wouldn't – and saying he would even die for Jesus. Peter's failure was spectacular!
 But in Jesus' grace and love – He gave the women a specific message for Peter!
 It teaches us that:*

- *Failure is not the end!*
- *Jesus restores sinners!*
- *Jesus' grace is greater than our failures!*

15. How can we be more faithful in sharing the good news of the risen Christ?
Here are some ways we could be more faithful in sharing the good news of the risen Christ

- *Remember Jesus is alive – we have a Saviour who is alive and interceding for us*
- *Pray for courage and boldness to share our faith*
- *Speak about what Jesus has done for us personally – people can't deny our own story*
- *Invite people to church / Bible study*

- *Live differently – so people notice a difference in us – and are attracted to way we live*
- *Don't stay silent like the women initially did*

16. **Ponder:** Why does Mark end (at verse 8) with fear and silence?

Here are some possible reasons:

- *To shock the reader into making a response*
- *The question becomes: **What will you do about this Good News that Jesus is risen and alive? Will you remain silent, or will you tell people Jesus is risen?***
- *Mark often ends sections with **fear and amazement***
- *It's like Mark finishes the story and leaves it unfinished – so that WE can continue the story...*

17. **Optional:** Why are verses 9 to 20 in italics in your Bible and rarely preached on?

You can leave this question for your Bible Study leader if you prefer.

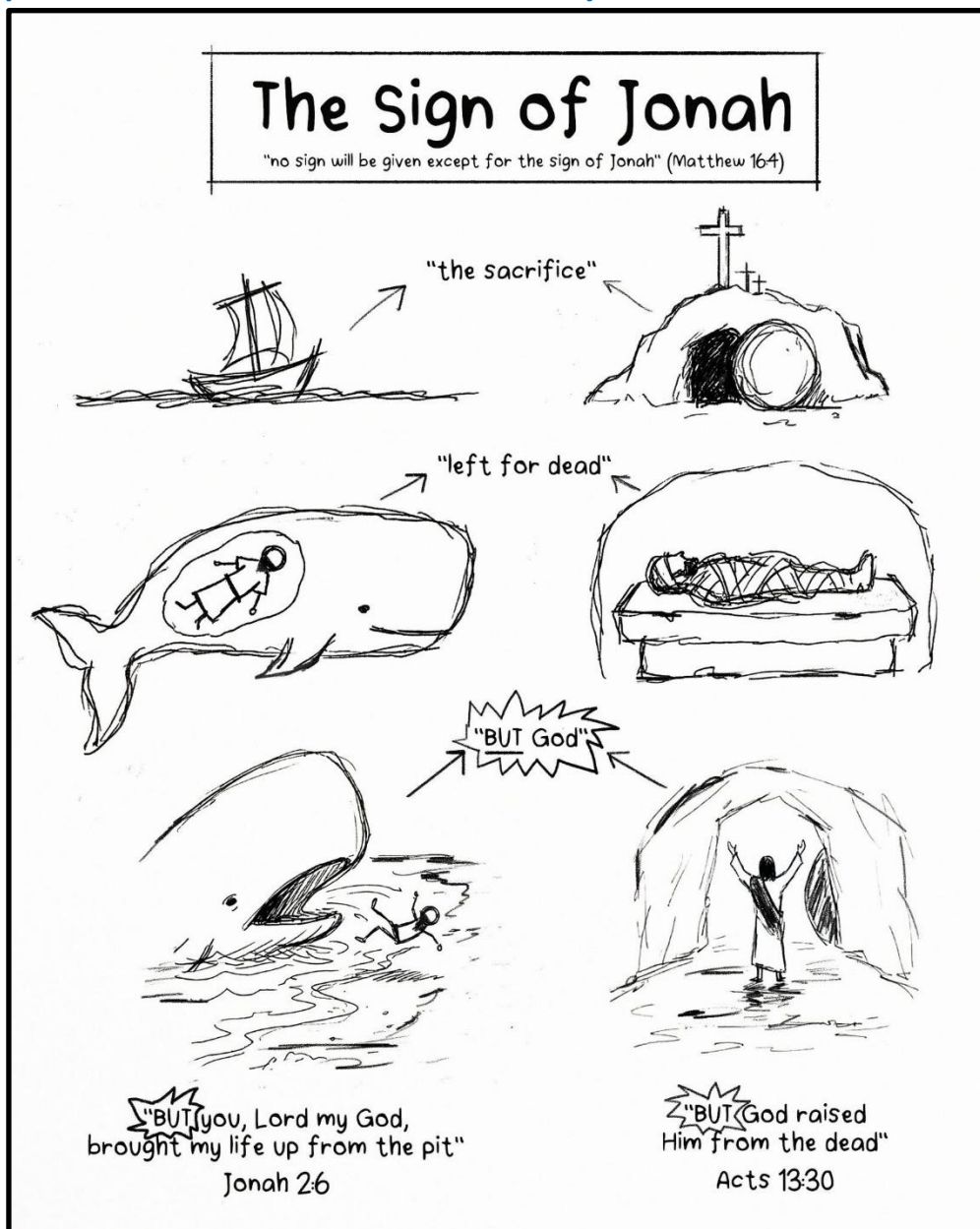
The reason that Mark chapter 16 ends at verse 8 and verses 9 to 20 are in italics is because the earliest Greek manuscripts of Mark's Gospel finish at verse 8 – and only later manuscripts have verses 9 to 20.

Therefore, scholars believe that verses 9 to 20 were added later as a summary ending. The verses contain truths taught elsewhere in the Bible, but scholars think they were not added by Mark.

18. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 16:1-8**?

Jonah 1:1-17 (especially v17)

*Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights → is a picture of Jesus in the tomb in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights.
(Matthew 12:40; 16:4; Luke 11:30)*



Psalm 16:9-11

This Psalm says God will not let His Holy One see decay → this is a prophecy of resurrection of God's Holy One, Jesus!

Isaiah 53:10-12

Isaiah 53 describes God's suffering servant, Jesus and after suffering, the servant will see the light of life → this points to Jesus' resurrection after death.

Psalm 22:22-24

Psalm 22 written by King David and describes his suffering before/during his kingship but it is also the Psalm of the Cross and describes fully Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. Verses 22-24 after this suffering there is praise and victory, pointing to the resurrection!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 16:1-8**

Jesus is not dead — He is risen.

The stone is rolled away, the tomb is empty, and fearful disciples are called to go and tell the world that the crucified King is alive.



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

⁶“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you that the stone was rolled away and that our Lord Jesus is risen indeed. Fill us with joy and faith in the power of the empty tomb. Turn our fear into bold witness, and help us to live each day in the hope of the risen Christ. In His victorious name we pray, Amen.

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
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Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

The Gospel of Mark (William Barclay)

The Gospel of St. Mark Commentary by C.E.B. Cranfield

Preaching Mark by Phil Crowter

The Gospel of Mark by Ben Witherington III

Matthew Henry's Commentary