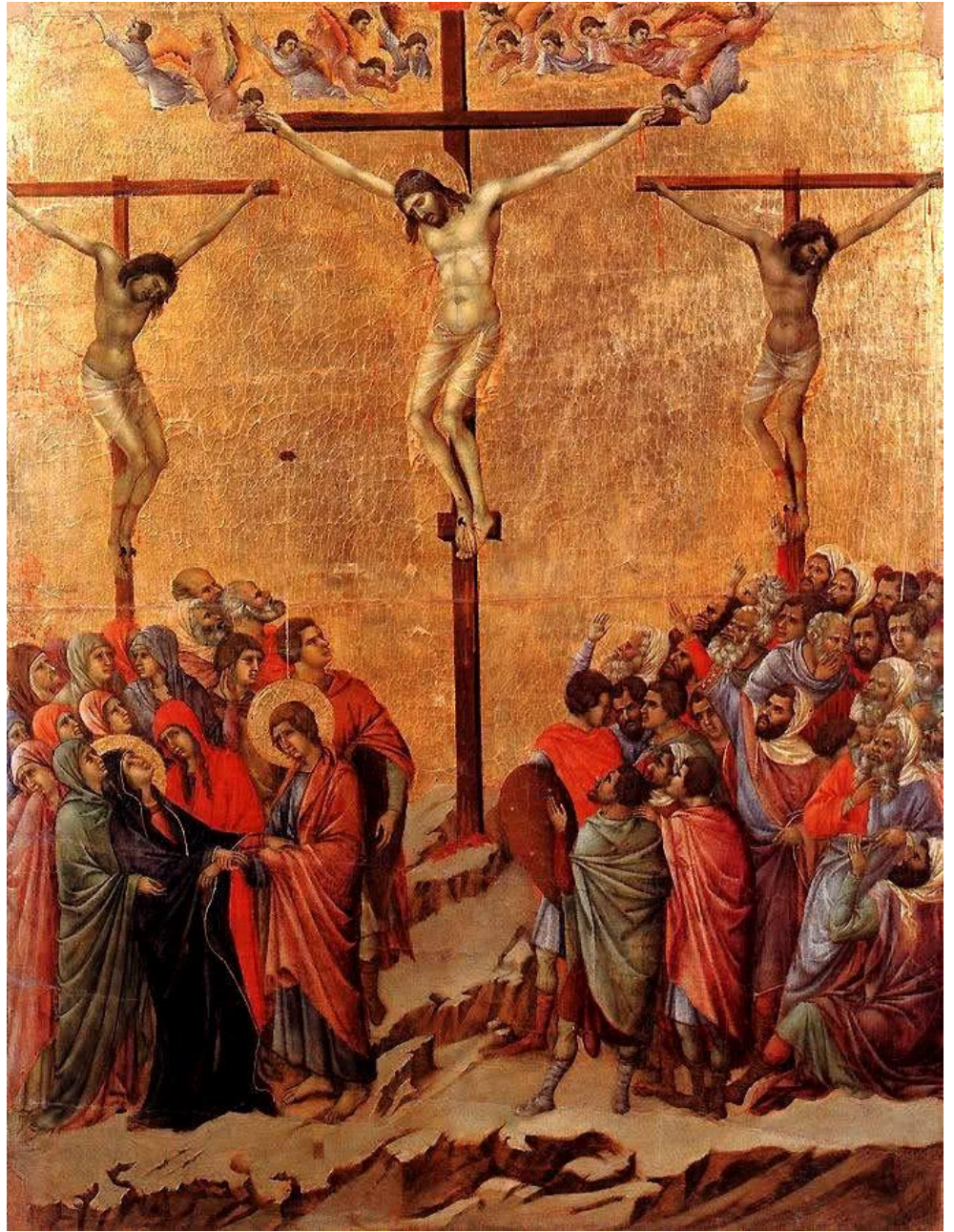


The Passion of Christ in
the Gospel of Mark



Duccio di Buoninsegna, *The Crucifixion*

the Gospel of Mark

By Robby Baxter

Introduction

As we approach Easter we will explore the passion of Christ in the Gospel of Mark, focusing specifically on Mark 14:1-16:8.¹ Mark is widely believed to have been the first of the four gospels in the New Testament to have been written, a record compiled by the assistant to the Apostles, John Mark.² The book, perhaps reflecting the personality of Mark's likely source, Peter, is fast-paced. It moves from one scene to the next with few details, casting vivid and emotive imagery.

Mark particularly calls us to hear the proclamation of the arrival of the King of kings and the inauguration of His eternal Kingdom. We see this especially in three features of Mark's Gospel. In the first place, Mark is careful to draw our attention to the fact that Jesus is the promised Davidic King whose Kingdom conquers and triumphs over sin and rebellion. Mark also writes primarily to a Gentile audience, itself an indication that God's Kingdom extends its reach to people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Finally, Mark helps us to see that Jesus is the gracious King who desires fellowship with His people. For this fellowship Jesus suffered, died, and rose victorious to overcome our sin so that we may dwell with Him in righteousness.

¹ As your English version will note, verses 9-20 of Mark 16 do not appear in the earliest and best preserved manuscripts of the Gospel that we know about. Their absence in the earliest manuscripts is strong evidence that verses 9-20 were not a part of Mark's original Gospel and for this reason we will not include them in this sermon series. For additional remarks on this subject, see the *Excursus on the Ending of Mark* at the end of this devotional.

² We read about Mark's collaboration with the Apostles, particularly Paul, Barnabas, and Peter in such places as Acts 12:25; 13:5; Colossians 4:10; and 1 Peter 5:13. Scholars speculate that Mark's Gospel is a manuscript of Peter's basic evangelistic message to the Christians in Rome (e.g. Paul Barnett, *Is the New Testament Reliable?* [Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 74-88).

The Kingdom of God thus forms the backdrop of Mark's Gospel. Mark tells us about Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:15). Throughout the story we see that we must turn our minds away from our own thoughts and towards the things of God in order to see His Kingdom (Mark 8:33). Jesus is truly the long-awaited King of the Jews (Mark 15:2), but His Kingdom has not come as expected. As a result, it goes unseen by many. The Gospel of Mark tells the story about how Jesus plants the "good seed of God's kingship" in the hearts and lives of His people.³

Mark's frequent translation of Hebrew or Aramaic expressions (e.g. Mark 3:17; 5:41; 15:22), as well as his explanation of Jewish beliefs and practices (e.g. Mark 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42), indicates that his target was Gentile Christians. They would have been largely unfamiliar with the customs and history of the people of Israel. We see in this that the good news about King Jesus and His Kingdom reaches into every nation.

Though Jesus is King, He proves different from all earthly kings, whose rule is distant and often frightening. Jesus instead is a king who desires fellowship with His people. We see this even in the very opening of Mark, as he combines into a single strand several Old Testament prophecies that remind us that God has promised to lead and guide His people by being with them (Mark 1:1-3). We see this also in the way that Jesus ministers to sick and broken sinners during His earthly ministry, breaking bread with them, reclining with them in their homes, and inviting them to His eternal feast (e.g. Mark 6:30-44; Mark 14:3-9; 14:22-25). As Mark Horne helpfully puts it, Jesus is a King who desires "table fellowship," with His people.⁴

Mark's ending is unique among the Gospel accounts. Since there is good reason to think that vv. 9-20 are not original to Mark, his passion narrative does not describe Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to His disciples. Instead, Mark leaves us with the fearful reaction of the women who discovered the empty tomb and heard the angel proclaim that Jesus was risen (Mark 16:8). Although this may seem an unsatisfying end to the story, it forces us to answer this question for ourselves: *who is this man?* David Alan Black reminds us that, of all the Gospel writers, Mark seems the most

³ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 30.

⁴ Mark Horne, *The Victory According to Mark: An Exposition of the Second Gospel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 60.

interested in drawing the reader into the story, challenging him to “form an opinion about Jesus rather than telling [him] what he must believe.”⁵ Mark’s ending impels us to consider what we have heard and decide what we will do about it.

You are encouraged to use this devotional to prepare for Sunday worship during the week that we may be more diligent to hear God’s Word with understanding. Use it for daily meditation and prayer in personal devotions and/or family worship. You are encouraged to use it the week prior to the associated sermon so that you and your family are prepared for worship. We also have the opportunity to prepare each Saturday for the Lord’s Day Sabbath and its associated means of grace.

May the Lord use our time in Mark to remind us that we belong to King Jesus, and His Kingdom will never end. May we continue to seek His fellowship, not by the strength of our own works, but by resting in the finished work of our King who overcame death and sin by suffering the ignominy of the cross and rising from the grave. May we be faithful to proclaim this good news to a dying world that continues to put its hope in broken kings and faltering kingdoms. May we be strengthened to persevere in faithfulness until we experience the perfect fullness of Jesus’ Kingdom with Him in the age to come.

Soli Deo Gloria

⁵ David Alan Black, “Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel,” in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views*, ed. David Alan Black (Nashville, TN.: B&H Academic), *Kindle Edition*.

Sermon Schedule

Date	Call to Worship	Assurance of Pardon	Benediction	Sacrament
Sunday, 3/5:	Psalm 3	1 Peter 1:3-9	1 Thess. 5:9-11	Bread and Cup
	Mark 14:1-11			
Sunday, 3/12:	Psalm 11	1 Peter 2:4-10	Philippians 4:8-9	
	Mark 14:12-25			
Sunday, 3/19:	Psalm 6	1 Peter 2:11-25	Galatians 6:8-10	Bread and Cup
	Mark 14:26-42			
Sunday, 3/26:	Psalm 4	1 Peter 4:12-14	2 Cor. 13:11	
	Mark 14:43-72			
Sunday, 4/2:	Psalm 2	1 Peter 5:6-11	Ephesians 5:15-21	
	Mark 15:1-20			
Sunday, 4/9:	Psalm 22	2 Peter 1:2-4	Romans 6:4-11	Bread and Cup
	Mark 15:21-47			
Sunday, 4/16:	Psalm 7	2 Peter 3:8-14	1 Cor. 15:54-58	
	Mark 16:1-8			

45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He obtained for us by His death. Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.

The Heidelberg Catechism, *Lord's Day 11*

Monday 2/27: Psalm 3: Give praise to God for serving as a shield about you, your glory, and the lifter of your head.

Tuesday 2/28: 1 Peter 1:3-9: What are some ways in which you are experiencing a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead?

Wednesday 3/1: Pray for the staff and interns at CCC: Bonnie, Emilie, Josh, Lizzie, Matt, Micah, and Whitney.

Thursday 3/2: Mark 14:7-11: How do you prepare to encounter and engage with Jesus in worship each week?

Friday 3/3: 1 Thess. 5:9-11: What are some ways in which you can encourage and build others up at CCC in the Gospel?

Saturday 3/4: Prepare for the Lord's Table Take with the preparatory letter and prayer. Give thanks for God's provision of redemption in Christ.

Sunday 3/5: The Lord's Day Sabbath *with the Lord's Table:* Pray for the bread and cup to nourish you in Christ's resurrection.

Monday 2/6: **Psalm 71:** What are some Scriptures that have helped to revive your soul? Take time to give thanks for God's Word.

Tuesday 2/7: **1 Peter 2:4-10:** How are you proclaim the excellencies of God who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light in Christ?

Wednesday 2/8: Pray for the deacons at CCC: Chris A., Chris B., Jack, John, Larry, and Matt (in training).

Thursday 2/9: **Mark 14:12-25:** Give specific thanks for the forgiveness of sins and satisfaction of God's wrath purchased for you in the broken body and the newness of life in the New Covenant by the shed blood of Christ.

Friday 2/10: **Philippians 4:8-9:** What have you learned from other mature saints that you are currently practicing to the glory of God?

Saturday 2/11: Pray for the community of our church to grow deeper in terms of biblical relationships and maturity.

Sunday 2/12: **The Lord's Day Sabbath:** Pray for the means of grace to help us walk in newness of resurrected life.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Monday 3/12: **Psalm 6:** Give praise to God for the specific ways that the Lord has delivered you languishing in sorrow and weariness.

Tuesday 3/14: **1 Peter 2:11-25:** What has helped you most to suffer well for the glory of God? How can you help others to do the same?

Wednesday 3/15: Pray for the elders at CCC: Bill, Cameron, Jonathan, Marc, Paul, Phillip, and Tim.

Thursday 3/16: **Mark 14:26-42:** What bold promises have you made to the Lord that you have not kept? Give thanks that these failures don't ultimately define you, because Christ drank the cup of wrath to the dregs.

Friday 3/17: **Galatians 6:8-10:** What are you currently sowing that you will reap in a few weeks, months, and/or years?

Saturday 3/18: Prepare for the Lord's Table Take with the preparatory letter and prayer. Give thanks for God's provision of redemption in Christ.

Sunday 3/19: **The Lord's Day Sabbath** *with the Lord's Table:* Pray for the bread and cup to nourish you in Christ's resurrection.

Jesus Betrayed and Denied

Monday 3/20: Psalm 4: Meditate on some of the times that God has answered when you have called out to Him and allowed you to lie down and sleep in peace because of His presence.

Tuesday 3/21: 1 Peter 4:12-14: How do you handle being insulted for being a Christian? How could you better prepare for handling this so that you may rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed?

Wednesday 3/22: Pray for those who volunteer for set-up, hospitality, children's ministry, and the worship team.

Thursday 3/23: Mark 14:47-72: What are some ways in which you deny Jesus? How do you deal with it when you do?

Friday 3/24: 2 Cor. 13:11: Are there any relationships that you currently need to aim for restoration?

Saturday 3/25: Pray for our church to grow in our love for our neighbors and in our hospitality with those who visit.

Sunday 3/26: The Lord's Day Sabbath: Pray for the means of grace to help us walk in newness of resurrected life.

Jesus Delivered to Rome

Monday 3/27: Psalm 2: Give praise to God for His sovereignty over kings and nations and for the eternal reign of Christ as King.

Tuesday 3/28: 1 Peter 5:6-11: What are some specific ways you are cultivating a sober mind and being watchful over your life?

Wednesday 3/29: Pray for the church plants we support: Mountain City Church in Jasper and Riverside Community Church in Cartersville.

Thursday 3/30: Mark 15:1-20: Meditate on what it must have been like for Jesus to endure false charges and be mocked. Could you endure such mistreatment?

Friday 3/31: Ephesians 5:15-21: Meditate on how you have been blessed by God fulfilling the Abrahmic Covenant in your various spheres of influence.

Saturday 4/1: Pray for our church to grow in its passion for and participation in the Great Commission in the world.

Sunday 4/2: The Lord's Day Sabbath: Pray for the means of grace to help us walk in newness of resurrected life.

Monday 4/2: Psalm 22: Give thanks to God that you have not been forsaken but redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Tuesday 4/4: 2 Peter 1:2-4: What are some specific things that God has granted you that pertain to life and godliness in Christ?

Wednesday 4/5: Pray for the campus ministries we support: RUF at KSU and North Texas and Campus Outreach at KSU and Dalton State.

Thursday 4/6: Mark 15:27-41: Meditate on Mark's account of the crucifixion. What details affect you?

Friday 4/7: Romans 6:4-11: What are some ways in which you have experienced freedom from sin due to the death and resurrection of Christ?

Saturday 4/8: Prepare for the Lord's Table Take with the preparatory letter and prayer. Give thanks for God's provision of redemption in Christ.

Sunday 4/9: The Lord's Day Sabbath *with the Lord's Table:* Pray for the bread and cup to nourish you in Christ's resurrection.

Jesus has Given Indeed!

Monday 4/10: **Psalm 76:** Meditate on the beautiful inheritance you have in Christ. How does this make your heart glad and whole being rejoice?

Tuesday 4/11: **2 Peter 3:8-14:** What are some ways in which you are being diligent to be found in union with Christ?

Wednesday 4/12: Pray for the MTW missionaries we support with Next and in Chile, SE Asia, and Thailand.

Thursday 4/13: **Mark 16:7-8:** What has been your response to the resurrection of Jesus? Are you sharing it with others in word and deed?

Friday 4/14: **1 Cor. 15:54-58:** How has the victory of Christ over sin and death helped you to be steadfast and abounding in union with Him?

Saturday 4/15: Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw those who desperately need the hope and power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to worship.

Sunday 4/16: **The Lord's Day Sabbath: Easter:** Pray lives to be transformed by Christ's victory over death and sin in the resurrection..

By Robby Baxter

In His wisdom, God providentially allowed the original manuscripts that make up the Bible to be lost to history. We do not have the sheepskin parchment on which Moses wrote the book of Genesis. There is no two-volume Luke-Acts papyrus scroll containing Dr. Luke's signature sitting in a dusty library somewhere. Instead, we have a proliferation of manuscript copies of the original books and letters, made at different points in history, of different lengths and quality of preservation.

Among these manuscript copies we sometimes find discrepancies between the text in one and the text in others. However, the truly astonishing thing about these copies is the striking degree to which they agree with one another. The sheer number of manuscripts provides a way to check the record behind the transmission of the text through the ages. Scholars find remarkable consistency, as opposed to a series of edits or additions that have changed the meaning of the text. One such scholar, Paul Barnett, sums it up well: "Through the labors of textual critics who have collected and compared the manuscripts over the past two centuries, it can be stated that the major questions about the text have been resolved."⁶

Mark 16:9-20 is one of the most notable discrepancies in the manuscript evidence. Broadly, there are three reasons to suppose that the Gospel of Mark originally ended at 16:8, and that vv. 9-20 (referred to as the "long ending") represent a later addition to the text. First, the earliest manuscripts known to scholars of Mark's Gospel lack the long ending.

Excursions on Mark 16:9-20

⁶ Paul Barnett, *Is the New Testament Reliable?* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 46. (Barnett's book is a helpful, layman's introduction to some of the issues involved in New Testament textual criticism).

Not only are these manuscripts older, and thus closer to the original article, they are among the best preserved and most complete copies of the New Testament that we have from antiquity (the period of history before the Middle Ages).⁷ They thus hold serious weight in any textual analysis of discrepancies between manuscripts.

A second reason for supposing that the long ending is not original to Mark is that many of the earliest church fathers seemed not to know about it. It does not appear in their many quotations of Mark's Gospel. It was known to the famous, early church historian Eusebius (active in the fourth century), but he reports that it appeared only in a minority of manuscripts in his day, and these were not considered accurate.⁸

Finally, scholars note that the long ending contains vocabulary and syntax, as well as an overall style, that is markedly unlike the rest of Mark's Gospel. Every author has a certain written "voice," which the reader gradually comes to recognize as he reads the author's words. The written "voice" of Mark 1:1-16:8 is a different one from that of 16:9-20, which would seem to indicate that the words belong to another, later author. David Alan Black observes that "there is not a *single* passage in Mark 1:1-16:8 comparable to the stylistic, grammatical, and lexical anomalies that we find clustered in vv. 9-20. ...the cumulative effect [of this] is devastating for authenticity."⁹

Taken together, these three considerations provide compelling evidence that the Gospel as Mark wrote it ended at 16:8. We should thus be wary of drawing doctrinal applications from the long ending. Famously, certain churches associated with the Holiness movement have interpreted v. 18 as a command to handle venomous snakes and drink deadly poison. Although this is bad exegesis in any case, it demonstrates the danger in assigning the authority of God's Word to the teaching of men.

Knowing this, it is important to stress that the authenticity of our copy of Mark's entire Gospel, much less the rest of our Bibles, is not made suspect by the inauthenticity of the long ending. We

⁷ Viz., *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*, both dating to the fourth century.

⁸ David Alan Black, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel," in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views*, ed. David Alan Black (Nashville, TN.: B&H Academic), *Kindle Edition*.

⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

have only to consider that the very evidences we use to judge that vv. 9-20 are inauthentic enable us to have confidence in the authenticity of the whole of our Bibles.

Of the New Testament manuscripts and manuscript fragments in the possession of scholars working today, more than five hundred date to the early centuries following the time of original composition, an impressive degree of proximity to the original articles. The number of New Testament manuscripts contrasts sharply with the relative few for other writings of antiquity, works whose contents are nonetheless not considered to have been fundamentally altered or in doubt. For example, the number of complete manuscripts for Josephus' *Jewish War* – written at around the same time as the Gospel accounts – is nine, the earliest of which dates to the tenth-century. The record is similarly scarce for Tacitus' *Annals of Imperial Rome*, of which only one manuscript exists for each of annals 1-6 and 11-16, and both date to the Middle Ages.

The abundance of material that Biblical scholars have to work with therefore enables us to reach definite conclusions about what is original and what is the product of scribal error or addition. God has blessed His church not only with abundant manuscript evidence for His Word, He has also given us gifted men and women who are able to look into this evidence and confirm that we possess is the real thing. So we can have firm confidence that the New Testament we possess today is an authentic copy of the New Testament as it was originally written.