

The Gospel of Mark

Session 3:
The Cross

1. Jesus on the Cross



Christ on the Cross
(c. 1628) by Peter Paul
Reubens (1577-1640), at
Het Rockoxhuis, Ant-
werp.

2. The Cross in Mark's Gospel

We looked last week at how the naming of Jesus as the Messiah was delayed until after his death. It was clearly an important part of his story and Mark did not want the confession to come without the full picture. Possibly it was because the Markan community was happy worshipping a risen/ascended Lord, but had forgotten about the humility of the cross.

In the last two sessions we have focused on the 'Confession at Caesarea Philippi' as one of the most significant passages in the Gospel. The whole Gospel appears to be a journey towards Jerusalem, but especially after Caesarea Philippi. The death of Jesus is the dominant theme from 8.31.

3. Bible Study

If any want to become my disciples...

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

Mark 8.34-38

- What does 'taking up a cross' mean in this context?
- What does 'losing your life' mean in this context?
- Is this passage demanding explicit confession of Christ, or can we get by with living a 'good life'?
- What does taking up our cross mean in today's world?

4. Why does Jesus need to die?

If we accept that Jesus birth and death were part of God's scheme for salvation, then clearly Jesus' death on the cross must have been 'willed' by God. Within the Gospel there is emphasis on how the Son of Man must die at 8.31, 9.12, 9.31, 10.33 etc.

There is a strong indication in the Gospel that Jesus' death is caught up with the wickedness of men. For example: "[Jesus] was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' (9.31). But there is no clear indication in Mark's Gospel about *why* Jesus must die. "A ransom for many" (10.45), except that it is unclear whether 'the many' refers to sinners or the righteous.

5. Bible Study

Jesus' death on the cross

33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*
35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' *36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.'* *37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he* breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'*

Mark 15.33-39

- What do you think is the significance of Jesus' 'cry of dereliction'?
- What did the centurion see that the others did not?
- What does the death of Jesus mean to us?