

when asked directly whether he was the “Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One” he affirmed it with crystal clarity:

“I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” –Mark 14:62

Jesus would be rejected not on the basis of false testimony but on the basis of his own true testimony about himself. Are Mark’s readers willing to stand and testify to the truth of Jesus?

The Romans and the crowds exchanged the murder Bar-Abba (Hebrew, father’s son) for the King of the Jews. The irony is that the King of the Jews is the Bar-Abba (see Psalm 2, 2 Sam. 7). With the substitution, the ransom is exchanged, a son for a son. The King of the Jews will die in the place of his people. While the Romans make a mockery of his royalty. They will one day confess Jesus as the Roman soldier at the foot of the cross: “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

The Crucifixion, Death and Burial of Jesus (15:21-47)

The Crucifixion and Death

The central theme of Jesus Crucifixion is salvation. The “passers by” derided him (Greek: blasphemed) saying:

“Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. –Mark 15:29-32 ESV

Again, with tremendous irony to the believing reader, the priests scribes suggest that they will only “see and believe” if Jesus “comes down from the cross”. However, as the Gospel has been teaching up to this point it is in dying to himself and picking up his cross that salvation comes to the people of the world. “He will not save himself, because he chooses to save us!”

Just as Jesus was unveiled in shame with a sweet drink offering of wine mixed with myrrh, the temple was unveiled (15:38) and the bitter drink offering was now vinegar. Jesus refused the sweet cup and drank the bitter; he rejects the sweet offer of self-salvation in order to offer many salvation.

“So the first wine (mixed with myrrh) was designed to dull Jesus’ pain, to keep him from having to endure the cross with full consciousness. This wine he refused.

And the second (sour) wine was given to keep him “conscious for as long as possible,” and thus have the effect of prolonging his pain. This is the wine Jesus drank.

Other condemned criminals would have taken the first (to ease their torment) and passed on the second (so as not to prolong their horrific pain). But Jesus would ²⁰take no shortcuts on the way to our redemption.

At the cross, he drank the wine of his Father’s wrath down to its very dregs, and he did so for us—that we might enjoy the wine of his Father’s love, join him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and live redeemed forever in the glorious presence of the one who took no shortcuts in saving us.” –David Mathis²¹

Jesus body has taken the place of Jerusalem, the temple and all its sacrifices. Mark has structured his telling of the cross to mirror the lament over the destruction of Jerusalem. Only, the “temple” of Jesus body is being destroyed and the enemies are the leaders of Jerusalem.

Table 1 Jesus in Jerusalem's Stead

Mark 15:29-32 ESV	Lamentations 2:15-16 ESV	Structure
Jesus	Jerusalem	
And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying,	All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem:	All who pass by Wag their heads
“Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!”	“Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?”	A Sarcastic Attack on Jerusalem – A Sarcastic Attack on Jesus
So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying,	All your enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry:	All your enemies Rail against you – Jesus enemies mock him.
“He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.”	“We have swallowed her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; now we have it; we see it!”	She/He is finished! We wanted to See! We See!

²⁰ Bailey, Kenneth “The Text of the Gospel According to Mark: A Rhetorical Analysis of its Narrative Mosaics” PA (2005) p. 85.

²¹ David Mathis, <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/the-wine-jesus-drank>

The stewards of the temple have become the enemies of it. Remember the Parable of the Tenants (12:1-12). The stone/son which the builders/tenants have rejected has become the cornerstone, this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes'. (12:10) It is marvelous in the eyes of the one who believes!

A person has replaced a building. Jesus has become the way of salvation and access to the throne room of YHWH. He is the new Holy of Holies.

"The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (15:38)

In being utterly forsaken by God (15:34 cf. Psalm 22), by giving up his life as a "ransom for many," Jesus secures salvation and blessing for all who truly see and believe in him.

True Sight and True Belief

The "true seeing and believing" is in a crucified "King of the Jews" and a crucified "Son of God". Where the passers-by, the Chief Priests and Scribes and even those crucified with him completely stumble over the cross and fail to "see and believe", the Roman Centurion in v. 39 "saw" the way he breathed his last and confessed true belief in the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: "Truly this man was the Son of God." The call to the reader of the Gospel of Mark is to see and believe in the true salvation that comes through the sacrifice and offering of himself by the crucified Son of God.

Burial

The burial story provides confirmation of Jesus' death. Joseph of Aramethia is the first believing witnesses to Jesus death and burial. Pilate and centurion are unbelieving witnesses that confirm Jesus death. In many ways Joseph is the first courageous believer to "take" Jesus body as Jesus himself commanded at the Last Supper: He is the one asks for and is granted the body of Jesus from Pilate. Joseph was "looking for the kingdom of God." Are we?

And as they were eating, he took the bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

—Mark 14:22

The Resurrection (Mark 16:1-8)

The emphasis in Mark is on Jesus' absence from the tomb. If the burial story emphasizes the courage of Joseph of Aramethia in asking Pilate for the body of Jesus, the empty tomb story emphasizes the fear of the women at the resurrection of the body of Jesus.

On the way to the tomb the women ask who In Mark's Gospel, Jesus resurrection is announced by a "young man" sitting in a white robe. The worldly concerns of burial preparations and "who will roll away the stone?" which they brought to the tomb were transfigured into wonderment at the unfathomable by an empty tomb and an angelic announcement:

And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go,

tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” –Mark16:6-7

Mark leaves the disciple reader of his Gospel to speculate with the same trembling, astonishment and fear. How will you complete the story of seeing and believing the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

All throughout the Gospel, Jesus commands people to be silent and not speak, yet in their excitement they cannot help it. But after the resurrection he has now commanded his disciples to speak, to go, to tell, and the women “said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid”. Again, what will you do?

Do not fear, see that Jesus the crucified has risen, go and tell.

Alternative endings

The earliest known manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark end with verse 16:8. It is believed that early Christian scribes did not like the last words of the Gospel being “they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” So alternative endings were proposed by later scribes which gave a more uplifting endings some of which are included with a notation in Modern English manuscripts. New Testament scholars across the theological spectrum are united in the opinion that Mark these alternative endings were not a part of the Gospel.