FROM CROSS TO CROWN

THE STORY OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

LifeGroup Bible Studies

FALL 2025
SPRING 2026

What Jesus Endured

- Jesus patiently endured pain, mocking and great shame to save His enemies
- Mark 15:21-32
- In the Roman empire, a Roman soldier had the legal right to force any civilian to carry their equipment for one mile.

What Jesus Endured

- In crucifixion, the crucified had to carry their own crossbeam to the execution site.
- But if they were too weak, the soldiers could force a bystander to do it.
- This is most likely what happened with Jesus; if He had had the strength to carry it the whole way, the soldiers would have made Him do it (John 19:17).

What Jesus Endured

- Mark's mentioning that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus implies that his family was known to the original readers of Mark's Gospel, which meant they likely later became part of the Christian community.
- At this point in the story, Simon physically picked up Christ's cross and carried it for Him, but later he would choose to pick up his cross and follow Jesus as a disciple (Matthew 16:24–26).

What Jesus Endured

- Golgotha was named the “Place of the Skull” because it was the site of so many crucifixions.
- Some scholars believe it was named this because the topography made it look like a skull.
- Just north of the Old City stands a limestone knoll pocked by two large cavities and a nasal-like ridge.

Golgotha

What Jesus Endured

- It was also customary for the soldiers to divide the clothing of a criminal.
- Psalm 22:18 also includes lines about piercing His hands and feet (v. 16), His bones on display (v. 17) and out of joint (v. 14), His mouth dried up (v. 15), and being mocked by all who saw Him, even specifically mentioning wagging their heads (v. 7) and challenging Him to let God deliver Him if God really delighted in Him so much (v. 8).

Dice - Divided His Clothing

Sacrifice of Jesus

- Jesus' sacrifice opened full access to God for all people
- Mark 15:33-41
- Crucifixion was a very long, slow, painful death, intentionally so.
- Criminals often hung for days, though Jesus died after six hours.

Sacrifice of Jesus

- The Crucifixion began at the third hour, 9:00 a.m.
- When the sixth hour came, at noon, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 3:00 p.m., when He died.
- Darkness represents judgment, showing us that on the cross, God’s judgment fell on Jesus instead of us.

Sacrifice of Jesus

- At 3:00 p.m., Jesus cried out with a loud voice the quote from Psalm 22:1, reminding the crowd of the prophecies of that psalm.
- The crowd immediately would have been reminded of the whole psalm, about the righteous sufferer and his hope for divine vindication.

Sacrifice of Jesus

- Crucifixion was a very shameful and degrading way to die.
- Only slaves, rebels, and non-citizens were crucified.
- Roman citizens were beheaded because it was quick and painless, therefore the most honorable.
- For Jews, it was shameful because God’s law said those who hung on a tree were cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Sacrifice of Jesus

- Just after Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1, He uttered a loud cry and breathed His last.
- At the moment Jesus died, the curtain of the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence dwelled on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, tore in two from top to bottom.

Curtain Torn in Two

Sacrifice of Jesus

- The purpose of the veil was to separate sinful people from God’s holy presence (Exodus 26:33).
- Only the high priest could enter once a year with the blood of the sacrifice of Yom Kippur.
- Christ’s body was the curtain torn open to give us full access to God (Hebrews 10:19–22).

Sacrifice of Jesus

- The tearing of the veil would have been shocking to the priests working at the temple and difficult to explain for the chief priests who'd had Jesus crucified.
- But the Roman centurion who saw Jesus breath His last exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Following Jesus

- Following Jesus requires sacrifice and boldness in the face of danger
- Mark 15:42-47
- Most of the Sanhedrin were greatly opposed to Jesus, but two members, Joseph of Arimathea and the pharisee Nicodemus, secretly followed Him or were at least sympathetic to His mission.

Following Jesus

- Jesus died at 3:00 p.m. on Friday.
- At sundown, around 6:00 p.m., the Sabbath would begin.
- Jews used Friday as the “Preparation Day” for Sabbath.
- Since no work was allowed during Sabbath, they made sure all cooking, chores and tasks were done before sundown.

Following Jesus

- They would not have been allowed to bury Jesus on the Sabbath, and they wouldn’t have wanted to wait until after Sabbath; they did not embalm their dead, so it needed to be done quickly.
- Burying the dead was a crucial and pious duty for the family. So, Joseph went to Pilate to ask for His body, to prepare it before sundown.

Following Jesus

- Nicodemus brought 75 pounds of myrrh and aloe to prepare Jesus' body. The typical amount required for burial was only five pounds.
- Seventy-five pounds was an extraordinary amount, only used for royalty.
- Nicodemus was honoring Jesus as king.

Following Jesus

- Joseph and Nicodemus would have had help from servants to roll the stone over the tomb, because it would have taken several strong men.
- Once the tomb was sealed, the body would normally be left there for a year to decompose, then they would return to gather the bones and put them in a box in the tomb wall.

Good News

- Jesus' followers are supposed to tell others the good news that He is risen
- Mark 16:1-8
- Because Joseph and Nicodemus had buried Jesus in a hurry, they had not completed the entire anointing ritual of the body.

Good News

- Mary Magdelene and Jesus' mother, Mary, had been watching where they had buried Him, so after Sabbath was over, they went to the tomb to finish the anointing of the body.
- Preparing a body for burial in two parts was not typical; it happened this way because they'd had limited time to finish before the Sabbath.

Good News

- At this point in the story, the female followers of Jesus took on a more prominent role because the men, except for John, had all scattered.
- This is theologically interesting because in their culture, women's eyewitness testimony was not considered reliable; it was not even allowed to be used as evidence in court.

Good News

- When the women arrived at the tomb, they were surprised to find the stone already rolled away.
- They thought they would have to find some men to help them move it.
- When they went inside, they saw a young man in white sitting on the right side.

Good News

- The angel told them Jesus had risen and would meet the disciples in Galilee, just as He had said two chapters earlier (Mark 14:28).
- That is where His ministry had begun, and it was away from the danger of the religious leaders in Jerusalem.
- Jesus would challenge his disciples with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20).

Didn’t Believe

- Some of the first disciples didn’t believe He had risen until they saw Him
- Mark 16:9-14
- Although the rest of the ending of Mark was not included in the two oldest manuscripts we have of the New Testament, it is included in the vast majority of them – 1,653.

Didn’t Believe

- Verse 9 tells us Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, as John’s Gospel says (John 20:11–19).
- Verse 10 says the other disciples didn’t believe her when she said she had seen Him.
- This fits with Luke 24:11, which says the rest of the disciples didn’t believe the women.

Didn’t Believe

- They only finally believed when Jesus appeared to the 11 Himself in verse 14.
- When Jesus appeared to them, He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart.
- The phrase “hardness of heart” is used many times of God’s own people (Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 6:9–10; 63:17; Jeremiah 7:24).

Our Mission

- As Jesus' followers, it is our mission to spread the Gospel to the whole world
- Mark 15:15-20
- This longer ending parallels the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 and the mission given to the apostles in Acts 1:8, the continuation of Luke's Gospel.

Our Mission

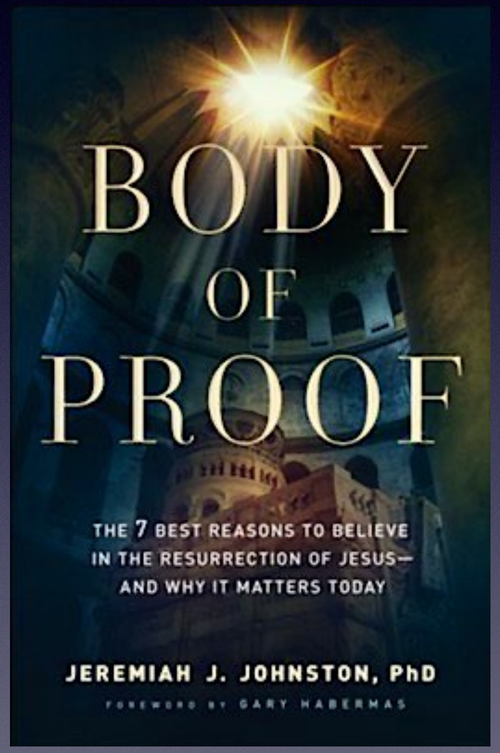
- In verses 17 and 18, Jesus was saying God would do miracles like this for His people as they shared the Gospel.
- At Pentecost, they spoke in new tongues (Acts 2), Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake and not harmed (Acts 28), and they healed people many times (Acts 3:1–10; 5:12–16; 8:6–8; 9:32–42; 14:8–10; 19:11–12; 20:9–12; 28:8–9).

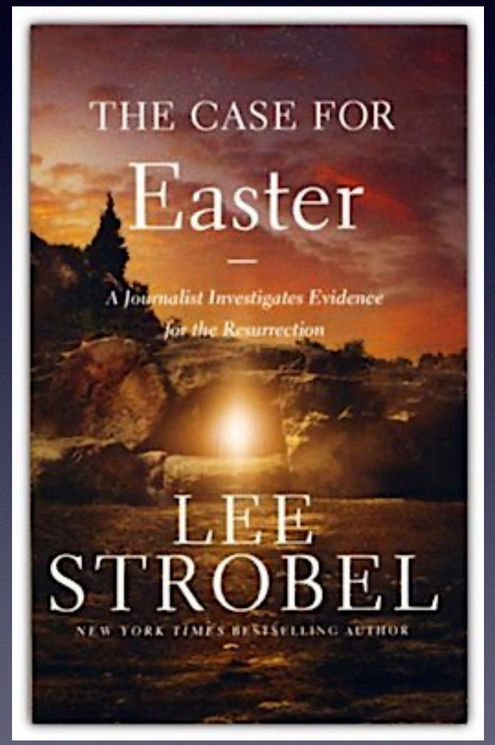
Our Mission

- But the Great Commission wasn’t just for those eleven, it was also for the 120 who were with them in the Upper Room at Pentecost (Acts 1:15). It was also for the deacons who were commissioned in Acts 6:1–10.

- It was for Paul, who was called to the mission a little later (Acts 9:15), and all his coworkers such as Timothy, Silas, Barnabas and Mark himself.

Resources


BODY
OF
PROOF
THE 7 BEST REASONS TO BELIEVE
IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS—
AND WHY IT MATTERS TODAY
JEREMIAH J. JOHNSTON, PhD
FOREWORD BY GARY HABERMAS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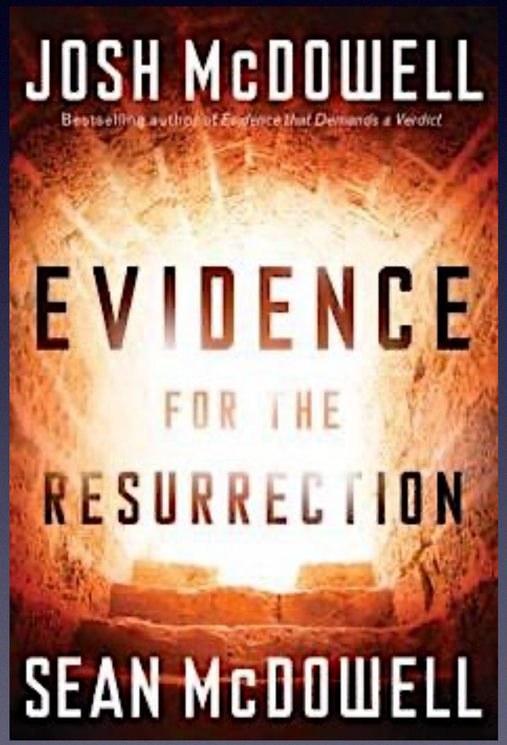
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