



## The Cross: Whole40 Edition

### Mark 14 (NLT)

“It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill Him. “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”

Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While He was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over His head.

Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. “It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly.

But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed.”

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?”

So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem with these instructions: “As you go into the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, say to the owner, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’ He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal.” So the two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there.

In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me.”

Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, “Am I the one?”

He replied, “It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays Him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!”

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take it, for this is my body.”

And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And he said to them, “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many. I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”

Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

On the way, Jesus told them, “All of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say,  
‘God will strike the Shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered.’

But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.”

Peter said to him, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

“No!” Peter declared emphatically. “Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You!” And all the others vowed the same.

They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, “Sit here while I go and pray.” He took Peter, James, and John with him, and He became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting Him might pass Him by. “Abba, Father,” he cried out, “everything is possible for You. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not mine.”

Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. When He returned to them again, He found them sleeping, for they couldn’t keep their eyes open. And they didn’t know what to say.

When He returned to them the third time, He said, “Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let’s be going. Look, my betrayer is here!”

And immediately, even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders. The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: “You will know which one to arrest when I greet Him with a kiss. Then you can take Him away under guard.” As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. “Rabbi!” he exclaimed, and gave Him the kiss.

Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested Him. But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

Jesus asked them, "Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there among you teaching every day. But these things are happening to fulfill what the Scriptures say about me."

Then all His disciples deserted Him and ran away. One young man following behind was clothed only in a long linen shirt. When the mob tried to grab him, he slipped out of his shirt and ran away naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest's home where the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law had gathered. Meanwhile, Peter followed Him at a distance and went right into the high priest's courtyard. There he sat with the guards, warming himself by the fire.

Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put Him to death. But they couldn't find any. Many false witnesses spoke against Him, but they contradicted each other. Finally, some men stood up and gave this false testimony: "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" But even then they didn't get their stories straight!

Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" But Jesus was silent and made no reply. Then the high priest asked Him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

Jesus said, "I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard His blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

"Guilty!" they all cried. "He deserves to die!"

Then some of them began to spit at Him, and they blindfolded Him and beat Him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped Him as they took him away.

Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth."

But Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed.

When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them!" But Peter denied it again.

A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean."

Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know this man you're talking about!" And immediately the rooster crowed the second time.

Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he broke down and wept.

### **Mark 15 (NLT)**

“Very early in the morning the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law—the entire high council—met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus, led him away, and took Him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus replied, “You have said it.”

Then the leading priests kept accusing Him of many crimes, and Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer them? What about all these charges they are bringing against you?” But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate’s surprise.

Now it was the governor’s custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual.

“Would you like me to release to you this ‘King of the Jews?’” Pilate asked. (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them, “Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?”

They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

“Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has He committed?”

But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!”

So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned Him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor’s headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. They dressed Him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on His head. Then they saluted Him and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” And they struck Him on the head with a reed stick, spit on Him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. When they were finally tired of mocking Him, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.) And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means “Place of the Skull”). They offered Him wine drugged with myrrh, but He refused it.

Then the soldiers nailed Him to the cross. They divided His clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified Him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, “The King of the Jews.” Two revolutionaries were crucified with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at Him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!”

The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but He can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?”

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought He was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to Him on a reed stick so He could drink. “Wait!” he said. “Let’s see whether Elijah comes to take him down!”

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

When the Roman officer who stood facing Him saw how He had died, he exclaimed, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome. They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for Him while He was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with Him to Jerusalem were also there.

This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. (Joseph was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.) Pilate couldn’t believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if He had died yet. The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus’ body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus’ body was laid.”

### **Isaiah 53 (NLT)**

“Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed His powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about His appearance, nothing to attract us to Him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for His own sins! But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open His mouth. Unjustly condemned, He was led away. No one cared that He died without descendants, that His life was cut short in midstream. But He was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But He was buried like a criminal; He was put in a rich man’s grave.

But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and cause Him grief. Yet when His life is made an offering for sin, He will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in His hands. When He sees all that is accomplished by His anguish, He will be satisfied. And because of His experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for He will bear all their sins. I will

give Him the honors of a victorious soldier, because He exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.”

#### **Isaiah 61:1-4 (NLT)**

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for His own glory. They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago. They will revive them, though they have been deserted for many generations.”

#### **Acts 3:1-21 (NLT)**

“Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, “Look at us!” The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”

Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon’s Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. “People of Israel,” he said, “what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate’s decision to release him. You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

“Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes.

“Friends, I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that He must suffer these things. Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and He will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. For He must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through His holy prophets.”

**Romans 6:1-14 (NLT)**

“Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in His death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Since we have been united with Him in his death, we will also be raised to life as He was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and He will never die again. Death no longer has any power over Him. When He died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.

Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.”

**1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NLT)**

“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise  
and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.”

So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense.

But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God’s weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.”

**2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NLT)**

“Either way, Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”

**Galatians 3:13-14 (NLT)**

“But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When He was hung on the cross, he took upon Himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing He promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.”

**Galatians 6:14 (NLT)**

“As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world’s interest in me has also died.”

**Philippians 2:5-11 (NLT)**

“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Though He was God,  
He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.  
Instead, He gave up his divine privileges;  
He took the humble position of a slave  
and was born as a human being.  
When He appeared in human form,  
He humbled Himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal’s death on a cross.

Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor  
and gave Him the name above all other names,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.”

**Hebrews 12:1-4 (NLT)**

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.”



**Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT)**

“Now may the God of peace—  
    who brought up from the dead our  
Lord Jesus,  
the great Shepherd of the sheep,  
    and ratified an eternal covenant with  
His blood—  
may He equip you with all you need  
    for doing His will.  
May He produce in you,  
    through the power of Jesus Christ,  
every good thing that is pleasing to Him.  
    All glory to Him forever and ever!  
Amen.”