

Message #60**Mark 15:24-39**

What is described in these verses is beyond anything we could invent or imagine. Even death row criminals on their day of execution get someone to show up who is sad about it. The night before Ted Bundy was executed he called his mother who said, “You will always be my precious son.” Here was one of the most diabolical serial killers to ever live and his mother at least let him know she cared for him. In fact, one of the 500 people who showed up to cheer his execution said, “It is kind of sad because he was a human being.” Some were sad that Ted Bundy was executed.

No one really showed up to support Jesus Christ when He was executed. No one rallied around Him. There were some women who stood off at a distance, but for all practical purposes, He dies alone.

In fact, the only people who actually showed up for His execution, showed up to make fun of Him. This was the sinless and perfect Son of God who is being executed and no one seems to care. Why did Jesus do this? Why did Jesus permit this? Why didn’t Jesus put a stop to this? Only one answer.

JESUS CHRIST PERMITS HIMSELF TO BE CRUCIFIED IN ORDER SO HE COULD SAVE SINNERS AND GIVE SINNERS ACCESS TO HEAVEN.

I do not even want to try and outline this sacred event. All I want to do is to go straight through the thirteen specific realities of what is described by Mark:

REALITY #1 – Soldiers divided Christ’s garments and cast lots to see what each man got.
15:24

It was not uncommon for executioners to divide the possessions of those they crucified. It was viewed as taking some of the spoils or plunder after battle. The casting of lots was like rolling dice. Jesus had an outer garment, a linen garment, a loin cloth and perhaps a turban. The soldiers were rolling dice to see who got what. This is all Jesus physically had in this world when He died. No bank account, no will, no life insurance policy, no assets to leave the family. He didn’t own a house; he didn’t have any land. He didn’t own a horse or donkey. All He had were the clothes on His back.

All four gospels talk about the fact that they divided His garments, but only John brings out the fact that it was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy found in Psalm 22:18 (John 19:24). Now the reason why they cast lots is because Jesus garment was a seamless garment and they did not want to tear it (John 19:24).

REALITY #2 – Jesus was crucified the third hour. **15:25**

The third hour of the day is 9AM. So Jesus is crucified at 9AM. Darkness will come the sixth hour at noon and Jesus will cry out and die the sixth hour, which is 3PM. Now it is clear that God wants us to know exactly the time of day this happened to His Son.

REALITY #3 – The inscription charge against Jesus read “The King of the Jews.” **15:26**

All four gospels bring out the fact that a written inscription or notice concerning Christ was on the cross. It was common to force a condemned criminal to wear a plaque that contained the reason for the crucifixion. Normally when a person was crucified, the Romans would post a notice that explained the reason for the execution.

The notice read “The King of the Jews.” Matthew says this notice was located above the head of Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:37) and John says it was put on the cross (John 19:19).

Now the inscription that was nailed to the cross has some slight variations:

Matthew says: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews”

Mark says: “The King of the Jews.”

Luke says: “This is the King of the Jews.”

John says: “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.”

In each reading of the Greek text “the king of the Jews” is identical (o basileus tw n Ioudaiwn).

John adds it was written in three languages–Hebrew, Latin and Greek (John 19:20), which explains the slight variation. The chief priests did not want Pilate to write that Jesus was “the king of the Jews.”

Remember Pilate had asked Christ if He was the King of the Jews and He told him that He was (Luke 23:3). The religious leaders wanted him to write; He said or claimed He was the King of the Jews. But Pilate would not change. It clearly was stated at His crucifixion that He was the king of the Jews.

REALITY #4 – Two robbers were crucified with Jesus. **15:27-28**

Two robbers were crucified at the same time as Jesus. The word “robber” indicates they did illegal things for money. Now there is a debate as to whether or not they were just outlaws who stole things or insurrectionists who tried to get people to turn against Rome. Luke uses a word “criminal” which is a Greek word that describes the fact that they did violent things (Luke 23:39) (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 227).

What we do know is that these were two law breakers who were violent robbers who were being crucified right with Jesus Christ. Jesus was in the middle and one of the criminals was on His right and the other on His left. Typically the worst of the criminal was put in the middle.

Now **verse 28** is very clear to point out that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. This was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12, which predicted that the Savior would be “numbered with the transgressors.”

REALITY #5 – People who passed by Jesus said insulting and abusive things to Him. **15:29-30**

As Jesus was hanging on that cross, in order to make it possible for sinners to be saved, sinful people were saying abusive things to Him and shaking their heads. They were laughing at Jesus hanging on the cross.

This group was the fickle public who at one time said this is the One who comes in the name of the Lord (Mark 11:9). These were some of the same people who loved the fact that Jesus debated the religious leaders and shut their mouths (Mark 12:37). Now this same public has turned against Him and actually are making fun of Him.

Some were saying so you are the guy who is going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (**15:29**). They are watching Him die. He is bleeding and gasping for breath and they are saying aren't you the strong guy who was going to tear down the Temple and rebuild it in three days? Some were saying, “save yourself” and “come down from the cross.”

What these people don't realize is that the reason He is on that cross is to save them. If He does save Himself and come down from that cross, they cannot be saved. This crowd was getting a good laugh at Jesus.

REALITY #6 – Religious leaders were verbally mocking Christ. **15:31-32a**

The ruling religious leaders came by to mock Christ. The chief priests who were in charge of the Temple and the Scribes who were the religious scholars were getting a good laugh at this.

They were mocking Him by saying He saved others; but can't save Himself. They are basically saying this is the One who claims He can save sinners; but He can't even save Himself.

They were mocking by saying, “Let's see you come down off the cross so we can believe.”

REALITY #7 – Those crucified with Christ were insulting Christ. **15:32b**

The two outlaws crucified with Christ also mocked Him. They were hanging right beside Him. But Luke brings out the fact that one of the disciples did in fact repent (Luke 23:40-43).

So Jesus is being mocked by the people, the religious leaders and the criminals. They are laughing at Him. They are taunting Him. This is how Christ died. Surrounded by totally depraved people and abandoned by His own disciples.

REALITY #8 – Darkness fell over the whole land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour.
15:33

God said you have mocked My Son long enough. You have had your fun, now I will turn off the world lights. Darkness is often closely associated with the judgment of God. We may remember that the ninth plague against the Egyptians was a three day total darkness (Ex. 10:21-23). We know that during the Tribulation, God will cause terrible darkness to come against the world (Is. 13:9-13; Joel 2:10; 3:14-15; Amos 5:18, 20; Rev. 8:12; 16:10)

Now at about noon, the earth became dark. There has been some discussion as to whether or not this is just referring to the land of Israel or the entire earth. Actually the Greek text would support either view. It is very possible that the entire world went dark from noon until about 3 PM.

REALITY #9 – Jesus cried out with a loud voice in the ninth hour. **15:34**

It was predicted in Psalm 22 that described Christ's death that He would cry out specific words (Ps. 22:1). Jesus had been hanging on this cross for about six hours at this point. **At about 3 in the afternoon, Jesus cried out with a loud, mega voice.**

Now Mark transliterates what Jesus cried out into Greek. Matthew gives the Hebrew translation and Mark gives the cry in Greek.

The Greek reads "Eloi Eloi Lema Sabachthani." Then Mark translates this this way: "The God of Me; the God of Me; why have you forsaken Me?" Our English rendering is accurate: "My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?"

These are words of despair and they are the only words Mark records. Mark does not record any call for forgiveness like Luke (Luke 23:34). Mark does not record the concern Jesus had for His mother (John 19:26-27). Mark does not record the offer of salvation to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Mark does not record final words that He will soon be in Paradise (Luke 23:46). Mark does not record the ultimate cry of achievement "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Instead the focus of Mark is the abandonment Jesus was experiencing by His Father. There is deep mystery here. Jesus had endured the torture and the mockery and never once cried out until this moment.

Now the teaching of all of Scripture for God's people is that God may not deliver us from fiery trials but He will be with us through them. In Daniel, there is the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire and Daniel in the lion's den. God was right there with them.

We know from N.T. passages that God will never leave or abandon or forsake His people. **But here is one moment when God abandoned His own Son.**

Mark does not give us a theological explanation of this; but we know what it is. **Jesus, at this very moment He cries out, is experiencing the full weight of the judgment of God and the wrath of God and the full weight of our sin (Mark 14:36; 10:45).**

This was the exact moment that Jesus became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) and this was the exact moment that God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us (II Cor. 5:21).

Jesus was momentarily forsaken by God so we would not have to be eternally forsaken by God. Peter would later say that “He Himself bore our sin in his body on the tree” (I Pet. 2:24).

We cannot even begin to grasp this. The totality of the world’s sins and the totality of God’s wrath is poured out on Jesus Christ and at that very moment He cried out the only verse in the Bible that describes it Psalm 22:1–“My God, my God why have you forsaken Me?”

REALITY #10 – Bystanders thought Jesus was calling for Elijah to come get Him. **15:35-36**

Those standing by that heard Him scream this didn’t have a clue as to what He was even saying. They thought He was saying something about “Elijah.” After all, to them “Eloi” sounds like Elijah.

There had been some prophetic predictions that just before the Messiah would return Elijah would return (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). There was a “widespread eschatological expectation” that Elijah would return.

Someone ran and grabbed a sponge and filled it with “sour wine.” Sour wine was cheaper than regular wine and was the wine soldiers would drink. It isn’t certain whether this was an act of kindness or an act of mockery. But Jesus did not take it because it would have somehow lessened the sacrifice.

REALITY #11 – Jesus uttered a loud cry and took His last breath. **15:37**

This is very unusual because in most crucifixion cases the victims don’t have enough strength to even speak, much less cry out. What this tells us is that Jesus was fully conscious and fully aware of everything happening. Jesus cried out and breathed His last.

Mark does not tell us what Jesus cried out; but John says His last words were “it is finished” (John 19:30). His last words were not “I am finished,” but “It is finished.” Now the Greek “it is finished” is perfect tense. This is critical because what this means is “My death has finished and forever finishes” the program of God that is able to save sinners.

REALITY #12 – The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. **15:38**

The veil of the Temple was 4 inches thick, 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. At the very moment that Jesus Christ died the “veil of the Temple” was torn in two from top to bottom. This curtain was the curtain that separated the Holy place from the Most Holy place.

All synoptic gospel writers (Matt., Mark, Luke) record this but none explain it. The one who explains it is the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 9:1-14; 10:19-22).

Now the fact that the curtain was torn from the top down indicates that Christ’s death had just made it possible for heaven to be opened for sinners to have access to God.

Jesus Christ has just opened up heaven by His death. Now any sinner can have access to the Holy God at any time through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ’s death just gave sinners free personal access to God.

REALITY #13 – The Roman centurion acknowledges Jesus is the Son of God. **15:39**

Now a centurion was a Roman captain who was in charge of the military detachment responsible for carrying out crucifixion. He was in charge of about 100 soldiers. This heathen soldier who had overseen the death of Jesus Christ becomes the first believer.

He was standing right in front of Jesus Christ when He died and he said, “Truly this man was the son of God.” Now the title nailed on top of the cross was this is the King of the Jews. This soldier saw Jesus differently. He saw Him as the Son of God.

So the first believer in Christ was this soldier. It was not religious leaders; it was not His disciples; it was not the political elite; it was a pagan Gentile soldier.

Now why did Jesus Christ do this? Why did God the Father permit His Son to do this?

Well the Apostle Paul would answer the question and here is what he said:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:8-9).

He did this for us. If you will believe on Him you will be saved and you will go to heaven.