

The Crucified King

Text: Mark 15:15-39

Introduction:

1. Mark's account is given in his characteristic brief, yet vivid and powerful manner. You will observe that a majority of the verses in this section begin with the conjunction 'And' as Mark pictures the sufferings of Christ like successive waves breaking upon His sacred head. "The monotonous repetition of 'and', 'and', 'and', gives the effect of an endless succession of the waves of sorrow, pain and contumely (abuse) which broke over that sacred head." (Alexander Maclaren)
2. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ brings us to the heart and soul of the Gospel which is that "Christ died for our sins...was buried...and rose again." (1 Cor. 15:1-4) As we read and study the account of the crucifixion let us keep truth that "Christ died for our sins" fixed firmly in our minds.
3. In this lesson we follow in the footsteps of Christ from Pilate's hall to Golgotha's hill and view the crucifixion through the pages of God's Holy Word. In our next message, we will consider the burial and resurrection of Christ.
4. We will divide this study of Christ's crucifixion into 5 parts:

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 15-20a)

There was...

A. The Scourging by the Soldiers (Vs. 15)

1. "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him" (Jn. 19:1)
2. "The scourge consisted of a handle to which several leather thongs were affixed. These were weighted on the ends with jagged pieces of bone and metal. This would help tear the flesh and make each blow more effective. The victim was stripped, and usually tied to a post with his hands also bound so as not to be able to defend himself. The blows were normally applied to the back and loins, but sometimes to the whole body. According to Jewish law, a man could receive no more than forty stripes (Deut. 24:3). With the Romans, however, no such limitation was observed; it depended entirely upon the commander in charge. The implication of the text is that Jesus Christ received a Roman scourging, and it was by no means limited to 39 stripes." (John W. Lawrence) Isaiah 52:14 "As many were astonished at thee; **his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:**"
3. Let us remember that it was our sin that ultimately drove those bitter whips into Christ's sinless body that day. Isaiah 53:5 "But he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was **bruised for our iniquities**: the **chastisement** of our peace was upon him; and with his **stripes** we are healed."

B. The Scoffing by the Soldiers (Vs. 16-20a)

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There was...

1. Scornful Accolades (Vs. 16-18, 19b)
Verse 20 says, “And when they had mocked him...” This is the **third time** Christ is mocked before He is crucified. This took place in the “common hall” (Matt. 27:27) called ‘Praetorium’ (Mk. 15:16) which was likely the fortress Antonia (Hiebert). The whole ‘band’ of soldiers gathered. A ‘band’ was normally composed of six hundred men. There was...
 - a. A mocking robe – “they clothed him with purple”.
 - b. A mocking crown – “a crown of thorns”. Thorns are a symbol of the curse – “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; **Thorns also and thistles** shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;” (Gen. 3:17-18) Christ bore the curse of our sin as His crown that day.
 - c. A mocking sceptre – “and a reed in his right hand” (Matt. 27:29; Vs. 19).
 - d. A mocking salute – “Hail, King of the Jews!”
 - e. A mocking bow – “and bowing their knees worshipped him” (Vs. 19).
2. Scornful Abuse (Vs. 19)
 1. Beating
 - a. With the reed – “And they smote him on the head with a reed” (Vs. 19).
 - b. With their hands – “and they smote him with their hands” (John 19:3).
 2. Spitting – “and did spit upon him”
 3. Plucking – Isaiah 50:6 “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

II. THE PATH TO THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 20B-21)

A. The Burden of His Cross (Vs. 20b)

1. John 19:17 “And he **bearing his cross** went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:” Christ bears His cross initially as “it was the practice to compel the one to be crucified to bear his own cross to the place of crucifixion.” (Hiebert)
2. There is an estimated distance of about 650 yards (590 meters) from the place of judgment to the place of crucifixion.
3. Evidently our Lord was unable to hold up the weight of the cross for very long as they will soon compel another to bear the cross for Him. The weight of that cross bearing down on Christ’s shoulders and back that day speaks to us of **the awful weight of the sins** of the world that He carried that day.

B. The Bearer of His Cross (Vs. 21)

1. His Identity – ‘Simon’. He is one of the few players actually mentioned by name along with his two sons Alexander and Rufus.

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This is strong evidence that his sons were well known to Mark's audience, indicating Simon and his sons became converts of the early church. It appears Simon was unaware of the events of that day as it simply states that he was one "who passed by". Little did he know as he was walking past that procession that he was going to have an encounter that would change his life forever.

2. His locality – "a Cyrenian". He was from Cyrene in North Africa and was evidently in Jerusalem as a pilgrim for the Passover season. Cyrene had a sizable Jewish community and reference to its synagogue is made in the Book of Acts (Acts 6:9).
3. Simon was compelled "to bear his cross." Simon was compelled to do literally what Christ's followers must do spiritually (Mk. 8:34).

III. THE PLACE OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 22)

A. Its Name (Vs. 22)

1. Called '**Golgotha**' in Mark's Gospel meaning "a skull." Strong's concordance says, "the name of the place outside Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; so called, apparently because its form resembled a skull." Mark uses a word of Aramaic origin.
2. Called '**Calvary**' in Luke's Gospel. The Greek word is 'kranion' which forms the basis of our word 'cranium'.
3. Scripture indicates the place was outside but near the city (John 19:20; Heb. 13:12).

B. Its Significance

1. The skull is usually associated with death. Death came as a result of man's sin (Rom. 5:12). Christ died that death might be defeated. He died in the place of death that we might have life!
2. Isaiah 53:4 "...with his stripes we are **healed**."

IV. THE PROCEDURE OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 23-24)

Christ was...

A. Offered Narcotics before the Cross (Vs. 23)

1. Christ is offered vinegar, mingled with myrrh/gall to drink. He tastes it but then refuses to drink it (Matt. 27:34). "The addition of myrrh gave it a bitter taste and was intended to deaden the sense of pain." (Hiebert)
2. Rabbinic writings indicate that the drink was provided as a charitable act by rich women in Jerusalem to deaden the sense of pain (like an ancient anaesthetic) in accordance with Prov. 31:6-7.
3. Christ refused it, "determined to meet His suffering and death in the full possession of His faculties. It meant that in His self-giving, there was to be no self-sparing. He was determined to drink the bitter cup of His vicarious sufferings consciously to the very last." (Hiebert) Christ tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9).

B. Nailed to the Cross (Vs. 24a)

1. Four soldiers assigned the task (John 19:23). No doubt the number was in part due to the expected struggle with the victim. But Christ laid down His life willingly. As the soldiers drove in the bitter, 7-inch

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(17cm) spikes into His hands and feet, they heard no cursing or uncontrolled shouts of terror. “It was probably at this moment of inconceivable horror that the voice of the Son of Man was heard uplifted, not in a scream of natural agony at that fearful torture, but calmly praying in Divine compassion for His brutal and pitiless murderers – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)”

2. His **Hands** were nailed (Luke 24:39) – those blessed hands that had touched blinded eyes and deafened ears; the hands that took little children tenderly into His embrace; the hands that had never been used in the service of sin were cruelly nailed to the tree for my sin.
3. His **Feet** were nailed (Luke 24:39) – those blessed feet that were never once used in the service of sin; the feet that always walked the path ordained of the Father.
4. The Cross lifted into place: “When the cross was erected upright, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. (Metherall) The arms, being held up and outward, held the rib cage in a fixed end inspiratory position which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would only be able to take very shallow breaths. (This may explain why Jesus made very short statements while on the cross). As time passed, the muscles, from the loss of blood, lack of oxygen and the fixed position of the body, would undergo severe cramps and spasmodic contractions.” (David Terasaka M.D.)¹
5. **Naked upon the Cross (Vs. 24b)**
 1. Our Lord hung on the cross in total shame and humiliation. The soldiers had stripped Him bare and now divided His garments among them as spoil.
 2. John 19:23-24 brings out further detail.
 - a. They tore Christ’s outer garments into four pieces.
 - b. They gambled over Christ’s coat which was a “tunic, a garment worn next to the skin underneath the rest of the garments” (Rogers, Linguistic Key).
 - c. This fulfilled in exact detail the prophecy of Psalm 22:18 “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”
 3. We were naked before God spiritually (Heb. 4:13), clothed in nothing but the filthy rags of our own righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Christ hung naked for us that we might be clothed in the seamless robe of His perfect righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). What an exchange! My rags for His righteousness; my unrighteousness, ungodliness, filthiness and unrighteousness for His spotless righteousness! My sin for His salvation!

¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/terasaka_david/misc/crucify.cfm

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V. THE PERIODS OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 25-39)

Christ was upon the cross for 6 hours and this is divided into two distinct periods of three hours each:

A. The Period of Light (3 hrs) – 9am to 12pm (Vs. 25-32)

We are informed by the Gospel writer concerning a number facts and incidences in this period of 3 hours:

1. The Time of His Cross (Vs. 25)
 - a. The third hour was approx. 9am in the morning. For the Jews, the first hour of the day was 6am. This precise statement of the time Christ was crucified found only in Mark's Gospel.
 - b. This would be around the same time the morning sacrifice was being offered in the temple. Think of it! While they were offering a lamb in the temple, the perfect Lamb of God was being offered upon the cross.
2. The Title upon His Cross (Vs. 26)
 - a. The letters of the title – “THE KING OF THE JEWS”. A ‘superscription’ was “an inscription in black letters upon a whitened tablet” (Hiebert). “It was the board on which was written the charge on which the one to be crucified had been condemned.” (Wuest) What was intended to be a message of mockery by Pilate was in fact a statement of the truth. Jesus Christ is the King - King of Israel, King of kings, King of glory and King everlasting. And while Christ was rejected as King by Israel at His first coming, when He comes the second time He will rule and reign from David's throne for a thousand years (Luke 1:32; Rev. 20:4).
 - b. The languages of the title – “letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew” (Luke 23:38. Also John 19:20).
 - c. The location of the title – “over his head” (Matt. 27:37). Indicated that Jesus' cross was the familiar Latin cross.
3. The Thieves either side of His Cross (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. Prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled – “and he was **numbered** with the transgressors” (Is. 53:12). “The ‘friend of publicans and sinners’ died in the company of those whom he had come to seek and to save.” (John Phillips)
 - b. Both thieves mocked Christ initially (Vs. 32b) but praise God one repented and received Christ's forgiveness (Luke 23:43). Christ was a loving soul-winner until the very end!
4. The Taunts towards His Cross (Vs. 29-32)
 - a. Christ subjected to a fourth round of mockery. Christ had already been:
 - i. Mocked before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Mk. 14:65).
 - ii. Mocked before Herod and his soldiers (Luke 23:11).
 - iii. Mocked before the soldiers of Pilate (Matt. 27:29).

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- b. We note several groups engaged in this fourth burst of mockery:
 - i. Passers-by (Vs. 29-30)
 - ii. Religious leaders (Vs. 31-32a). Their claim that they would accept Christ if they saw a miracle proven false when the greatest of all miracles occurred at the resurrection of Christ.
 - iii. The two thieves (Vs. 32b)
 - iv. The soldiers – “And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,” (Luke 23:36).
 - v. Scroggie: “Had he been a self-saviour He could never have been the world’s Saviour. Sacrifice is at the heart of all salvation, and to live one must die.”

B. The Period of Night (3 hrs) – 12pm to 3pm (Vs. 33-37)

- 1. The Silence of this period (Vs. 33)
 - a. This period started at the 6th hour (Vs. 45) which was midday (12pm) when the sun is at its zenith. There was much activity around the cross in the first three hours but now a sacred hush falls over the scene.
 - b. “It was nature divinely draped in mourning over the sin of sins, the most tragic of deaths. It was a symbol of the eclipse of the Light of the world; but ere He died it passed, and the sun shone on His expiring head, in token that His death scattered our darkness and poured day on our sad night.” (Maclaren)
- 2. The Shouts at the end of this period (Vs. 34-37)
 - a. The cry of torment (Vs. 34-35)
 - i. “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Psalm 22:1) Sin’s punishment is eternal separation from God (2. Thess. 1:9). Christ endured the wrath of God on our behalf and was forsaken by the Father at the cross. From all eternity past, the Father, Son and Spirit had enjoyed close and intimate communion (John 17:24) but now Christ is left alone.
 - ii. The mocking response of those standing by is truly staggering. “Savage laughter was man’s response to the most pitiful prayer ever uttered.” (Maclaren)
 - b. The cry of thirst (Vs. 36) Prompted by Jesus words “I thirst” (John 19:28), vinegar is given to Christ in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.
 - c. The cry of triumph (Vs. 37; John 19:30)
 - i. Christ, in a loud voice, shouts “FINISHED” (Vs. 37a, John 19:30)

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- ii. “It is finished” = (τετέλεσται) “Word was used in Greek commercial life. The term signified the completion of a transaction by the full payment of a price or the discharge of a debt by a completed payment.” (Pentecost)
 - iii. Christ paid my sin debt in full! We can add NOTHING to His perfect, complete sacrifice. (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7). “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”
 - iv. Immediately following Christ’s shout of triumph, He commits His spirit into the hands of God the Father. Luke 23:46 “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” Christ’s final words before he died. Rom. 5:8 & 1 Cor. 15:3 – Christ died for our sins!
3. The Signs following this period (Vs. 38)
- Several miracles occurred the moment Jesus died:
- a. There was a rending of the temple veil (Vs. 38). The time was 3pm in the afternoon right when the priests in the temple would have been busy with their activities for the evening sacrifice. The rent vail preaches a message that the way into God’s immediate presence is now available through Christ (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19).
 - b. There was a mighty earthquake. Matt. 27:51 “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; **and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**”
 - c. There was a resurrection of O.T. saints. Matt. 27:52-53 “And the graves were opened; and **many bodies of the saints which slept arose**, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”
4. The Statement after this period (Vs. 39)
- a. A ‘centurion’ was a commander of 100 soldiers (Hiebert). He was the one in charge of the crucifixion and directly accountable to Pilate (See Vs. 45).
 - b. He was standing “over against him”, meaning he was standing opposite Christ in full view of all that happened.

Conclusion:

1. Will you repent and receive Christ as your Saviour today? Christ has paid it all. Your job is to receive the free gift of salvation He offers.
2. As believers, we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). How can we live for self in light of the cross? Will you say with Count Zinzendorf, “If thou didst that for me, what can I do for thee?” Personal illustration (March 16, 1995)