

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

61. The King Is Crucified

Mark 15:21-41

Mark's very first words told us that we were about to read GOOD NEWS!

The beginning of the gospel — the good news — Jesus Messiah Son of God.

The Good News, the “Gospel” he was delivering to us concerns

a Man (Jesus)

who is God's Anointed Ruler (Messiah)

who is fully divine (Son of God).

About half-way through his account of the Good News concerning Jesus Messiah Son of God, Mark records a critical moment that is essential for us to truly understand what we're looking at tonight in Mark 15.

At a place called Caesarea Philippi Jesus made it clear that He truly is the King to end all kings; the true King who was going to put everything right. But He also made it clear that He was not going to Jerusalem to live in a palace and rule from a throne. He was not going to Jerusalem to receive honor and power. He was going to Jerusalem to die on a cross. He was going to Jerusalem to experience shame and surrender power. He was going to serve and give His life as a ransom. That is how He was going to conquer evil and accomplish divine justice. And He with a single word He made it clear that there was no other way to inaugurate His Kingdom. He said that he *must suffer many things — must be rejected — must be killed and three days later rise from the grave.*

In his book, *The Crucified King*, Jeremy Treat says that

“the kingdom cannot be understood apart from the cross, nor the cross without the kingdom.”¹

¹ Treat, J. R. (2014). *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (p. 25). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

“From the bruised heel (Gen 3:15) to the reigning Lamb (Rev 22:1), the Bible is a redemptive story of a crucified Messiah who will establish God’s kingdom on earth through his atoning death on the cross”.²

We finished last week in verse 20

Mark 15:20 (CSB) ²⁰After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him. They led him out to crucify him.

Those sentenced to death by crucifixion were forced to carry the horizontal beam of the cross (patibulum) through the city to the place of execution. That was pure propaganda. It was Rome’s way of saying: *We have the power of life and death! We have the power to take your life. We even have the power to make you carry the instrument of your death to the place where we are going to take your life!*

REMEMBER — this was the feast of Passover. The streets of Jerusalem would literally be packed with humans. Jesus, beaten, scourged, crowned with thorns, carried a 110-pound piece of rough-cut wood on His shoulders through *that* pandemonium. The Roman soldiers would have had to make a path for Him. The enemies of Jesus would have been walking in the wake of the crowds parting as Jesus walked from the Praetorium towards the place of the skull (Golgotha/Calvary).

Somewhere in that crowd of Passover pilgrims was a man who traveled some 800 miles from Cyrene on the north coast of Africa. He was most likely a black man.

For a Jew to travel that far to be in Jerusalem for Passover was very likely the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. He was probably on his way to the Temple mount just as Jesus was coming by.

As we come to **verse 21** Jesus had been up for well over 24 hours. During that time, He suffered hematidrosis in the Garden of Gethsemane, was forced to walk across the city three times, was brutally beaten in the house of the high priest, had His body torn to shreds by the Roman scourge suffering massive loss of blood, was crowned with thorns — and now was forced to carry over 100 lbs. of

² Ibid. (p.129)

wood on His shredded shoulders on an uneven surface to the place where they would kill Him. At this very moment Jesus collapsed.

Mark 15:21–41 (ESV) ²¹**And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.**

Almost three years earlier Jesus was teaching on a hillside near the sea of Galilee. That teaching occupies three chapters in the Gospel according to Matthew (The Sermon on the Mount).

Matthew 5:41 (CSB) ⁴¹*And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.*

That was a reference to the right of any Roman soldier to demand you to carry a burden for one mile. They would put either a sword or a spear on your shoulder — and when they did that you were obligated to carry their burden for a mile (and it was part of the infrastructure of the Roman empire to have “milestones”). So, there was this man Simon from Cyrene. All of sudden this piece of cold steel comes on his shoulder, and he’s thinking *“what in the world?!”* And they forced him to take the patibulum. It’s covered with blood. He is no doubt appalled at the scene.

If he was anything like me, he would have been thinking, *“I can’t believe it. God, I saved all my money all those years to come to Jerusalem to worship you and this is what I get. Why didn’t I sleep in? Why did I have to push through the crowd?”*

To top it all off, all of the blood made him ceremonially unclean. He couldn’t go to temple.

Little did he know that he was face to face with **the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world**. And little did he know that at that moment he was the most important human being on earth with the most important task on the face of the earth — because **that man and that** cross had to get to Golgotha so that atonement could be made, and the Kingdom of God to be inaugurated.

Evidently his sons were more well-known than he was. Some 30 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Mark identifies Simon by way of his sons who were known to the church: *father of Alexander and Rufus*.

22And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). **23**And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

That mixture was a pain killer. Jesus refused it because He would bear all the pain, all of the suffering for us, so that our forgiveness would be complete.

24And they crucified him

Mark simply says “they crucified Him.” Nailed to the *Patibulum*. Dropped into the *Stipes*. Jesus would have been nailed to the Roman cross naked and close to eyelevel.

There on the cross of Jesus, the matchless love of God was put on display.

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The cross of Jesus reveals — demonstrates — puts on display — the love of God as nothing else in the universe could!

QUOTE: Kenneth Wuest — *He commends, or rather makes good, presents in its true and unmistakable character, ... His own love toward us.” Vincent comments, “Note the present tense. God **continuously** establishes His love in that the death of Christ remains as its most striking manifestation³*

Remember the word incarnation — *in carnare* — into flesh. God came into human flesh **knowing** that men would **beat** his human flesh — **knowing** that men would **shred** His human flesh with the scourge — **knowing** that men would **pound thorns** into His human flesh — and then **drive nails** through His human flesh. **KNOWING** all of this — He came *in carnare*.

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 2, p. 81). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis; Four Loves — *“He creates the universe, already foreseeing—or should we say “seeing”? —the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the medial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake hitched up. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.”*

Luke records for us exactly what happened at the very moment that the soldiers fastened the flesh of God incarnate to the cross.

Luke 23:34 (CSB) ³⁴Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them....

THIS is why we love Jesus! THIS Jesus conquers our hearts — exposes our idols for what they truly are! THIS is the Jesus we want the world to hear about! We gladly surrender our will to THIS Jesus. THIS Jesus exposes our idols as frauds that can never save us — and have never loved us. THIS is the Jesus we want the world to see in the way we live, think, and speak.

and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

Psalm 22 was written by King David about 1,000 years before this event, and hundreds of years before the Jews ever saw someone crucified. Yet in that psalm David wrote: *“they have pierced my hands and feet.”* He also said: *“and for my garments they cast lots upon my vesture they did cast lots.”* 1,000 years later the Messianic elements of Psalm 22 were fulfilled.

For myself, this has always been such a disturbing detail in the midst of all of this. Here were men literally playing games at the foot of the cross of a man they had just nailed to a cross! They would have been covered with blood. And, without flinching — they sat down and played a game — gambled for the guy’s clothes. The quaternion of Roman soldiers are a deeply disturbing display of how bad humans can be. There really are people like that walking around on this planet!

But the Bible tells us why their actions are beyond sociologically and psychologically disturbing: They were playing a game while they were covered with the blood of God become man — while the blood of God incarnate ran down the cross they'd just nailed Him to!

Yet God had even predicted their incredibly disturbing behavior

***John 19:23–24 (ESV)** When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, “They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” So the soldiers did these things,*

But here's why this observation disturbs me so deeply and so personally: The Roman soldiers put my own heart on display! It was my sin that nailed Jesus to the cross — and for twenty-two years of my life I just played games in the face of it — I continued to live without Him and without regard for Him when it was **my** sin that nailed Him to the cross.

²⁵And it was the third hour (9:00am) when they crucified him. ²⁶And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.”

THE INSCRIPTION — That inscription was called the *titulus*. It stated why the person was being executed by crucifixion.

The *titulus* would have been visible to all. Golgotha was just outside of the walls of Jerusalem on the North-East corner of the city just outside of the Damascus gate. You could have seen it from the walls and from the road to Damascus.

We're told in the other accounts that it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. It was written in the language of *religion*, in the language of *government* and the *language* of philosophy. God wanted *every* man and woman from *any* walk of life to know *what* was going on there and *who* was on that cross! He wants the religious person to know that Jesus is King of the Jews! He wants the *politically driven* person to know that Jesus is the King of the Jews — the King of the Kingdom

of God! He wants the person driven by *philosophical pursuits* to know that Jesus is the King of the Jews — the embodiment of grace and truth!

²⁷And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.

There was NOTHING about these events and this moment that was left to chance. In Acts 2:23 Peter declared that Jesus was crucified according to the *predetermined council and foreknowledge of God*. BEFORE the foundations of the world, God had determined EVERY DETAIL of this moment. Seven hundred years before Mark 15, Isaiah declared that Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors.

²⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!” ³¹So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.”

These were the men who were supposed to be the best and the brightest among the people chosen by God to be a witness to God in the world. And here they were — like a pack of hyenas — howling their insults literally in the face of Jesus.

They were so blind to how blind they were about Jesus that they actually condemned themselves in their attempt to condemn Jesus as a powerless savior. **In one breath** they actually admitted Jesus had saved others! They couldn't deny how many times Jesus miraculously saved men and women from the realities of life in a fallen and broken world. Jesus performed His first miracle in a village by turning water to wine in order to **save** a newlywed couple from the humiliation of not having wine for their guests. On several occasions he miraculously saved thousands from hunger. He saved countless men and women from the ravages of disease. He saved people from lives spent in physical blindness. He saved people from crippling diseases and defects. He saved people from the living death of leprosy. He saved men and women from the living nightmare of demonic possession. He even saved people from the grips of the grave. He saved people from living as outcasts in culture — saved people from the hopelessness of being unloved and unlovable.

Yet with their next breath — still looking at Jesus hanging on the cross — they try make Jesus look like a failed savior because Jesus did nothing to save Himself.

QUOTE: David Gooding — *“To mock Christ as the rulers and elders did was sublimely misconceived: they might as well have mocked a literal Passover lamb (in Egypt) because, while it saved others, it could not save itself”*⁴

And we don’t want to miss this — Jesus didn’t say a word! Peter would reference this very moment.

1 Peter 2:23 (ESV) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

We need to understand this. There’s a reason why Jesus didn’t save Himself. It is not because He **couldn’t** save Himself. The One who had saved others **would** not *save Himself* — **would** not *come down from the cross*. Had Jesus saved Himself we would be hopelessly and forever lost!

Jesus didn’t come to save His own life — Jesus came to save US!

*You shall call his name Jesus for He shall SAVE His people from their sin ----
Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*

Jesus didn’t come to save His own life — He came to **give it as a ransom for sinners!**

Coming **down** from the Cross would never have proved Him to be the King of Israel — the Savior of the world — the Son of God. **Staying on the cross** is what proved Him to be King — Savior — and Son

⁴ David Gooding, *According to Luke: A New Exposition of the Third Gospel* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1987), p. 342.

I wonder if Jesus thought “Come down? NO! But I’ll tell you what, in three days I’ll COME UP! Greater than coming down from the cross; He rose from the dead. Yet these same men would not believe in Jesus even then.

Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ³³And when the sixth hour had come,

This would be noon on our clocks — the sixth hour for the Jews.

there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Some try to explain it away as an eclipse. But it was Passover and it was a full moon. The moon was on the wrong side of the earth to produce an eclipse at Passover.

Luke tells us (Luke 23:45) that the sun’s light failed! I believe that the sun was divinely darkened because it was the darkest moment in the history of the universe.

³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

As incomprehensible as the physical suffering of the cross is to us — that was not the greatest suffering Jesus endured. We read in **Hebrews 2:9 (ESV)**

*because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death **for** everyone.*

It was at this moment in **Mark 15:34** that Jesus tasted *the wages of sin **FOR us***. This is a place that Jesus had NEVER been in – not from eternity past up to this moment! The eternal Son was orphaned so we could be adopted.

Timothy Keller — *“But this forsakenness, this loss, was between the Father and the Son, who had loved each other from all eternity. This love was infinitely long, absolutely perfect, and Jesus was losing it. Jesus was being cut out of the dance.”⁵*

⁵ Timothy Keller. “Jesus the King.”

Martin Luther was reading the account of the crucifixion — and when he came to Jesus crying out, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” — he was so overwhelmed by it that he sat almost frozen for nearly 13 hours! Finally he said — *God forsaken of God! Who can understand it?*

*How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory*

THIS is the reason for the Incarnation! THIS is why Jesus willingly became man. THIS is why Jesus willingly went to the cross ([John 10:18](#); [Philippians 2:8](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#)).

What transpired in those three hours on the cross is infinitely beyond our comprehension. I say that because we’re told in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians that

[Ephesians 2:7 \(CSB\)](#) ⁷...in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

We CAN’T understand these words with our finite minds. But it is crucial that with **our hearts we believe** it.

EVERYTHING that needed to be transacted between God and man concerning the forgiveness of our sin and the establishing of His Kingdom was completed on our behalf in that three hours of darkness.

REMEMBER - Jesus had prayed in Gethsamane, “*If there is any way to let this cup pass from me.*” The cup is described in Jeremiah and in Psalms and most importantly in Revelation 14 as, “*the cup of His wrath without mixture.*” So, in those 3 hours of darkness Jesus drank the cup of God’s eternal wrath! We can hardly imagine what’s happening. Satan thinks that he has the victory. He thinks

that he stopped God's plan. But there Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself. There, the Father fired down all His eternal Wrath upon His own dear son.

³⁵And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." ³⁶And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

In John's Gospel we are told that they gave Jesus that drink because He said, "I thirst." John tells us that He said that so the scripture might be fulfilled.

Psalm 69:21in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

I believe that there is another reason why Jesus said I thirst. In Psalm 22 (The Psalm of the Cross) it says of Jesus that He would be so dehydrated that His tongue would cleave to the roof of His mouth. I think He wanted a drink to loosen His tongue because He had something awesome to say.

Turn in your Bible to John 19

John 19:30 (CSB) ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

This was not a whimper of defeat. I believe that He gathered all that was left within Himself and cried those words out loud because it was the cry of victory.

IT IS FINISHED — It's one word in Greek: tetelestai. It literally means PAID IN FULL.

QUOTE: Joe Focht — *He didn't take out a mortgage on us. He paid us off.*

³⁸And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Dave Guzik — The tearing of the temple veil signified that now man had free access to the throne of grace by the cross and that no one should ever think again that God dwells in temples made with hands.⁶

⁶ Guzik, D. (2013). Mark (Mk 15:38–41). Santa Barbara, CA

This was a heaven down action!

³⁹And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Now this centurion had no doubt seen his share of crucifixions. At one time there were 6,000 men crucified along the Apian Way outside of Rome. This centurion had seen men on crosses before - but he looked at THIS MAN on THIS CROSS and said – THIS MAN is the Son of God!

⁴⁰There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.