

“This Is Some Rescue”

The Cross (Part 14)

Mark 15:22-32 (Mt.27:33-44; Lk.23:32-43) 1/14/2023

*God promises to rescue us in times of trouble. But many times he lets the trouble go on.
So how can we trust him to be our shelter, deliverer, and helper if our prayers for help often go unanswered?*

Summary

Jesus refused the wine because he was waiting to drink it anew in the kingdom. The humiliation continued as they scavenged his clothes and associated him with criminals. Then they offered another whole round of mockery, this time with Satan’s message: Don’t die on the cross. They’re motive was self-justification, but their words were ironic. It’s true Jesus couldn’t save himself and save others. But they were asking him to repudiate his whole message (Save your life and you will lose it). Refusing to believe if God doesn’t give different evidence is irrational and suicidal.

Why does it seem like God so often doesn’t rescue us when we pray for help? Many times because we have a faulty definition of “rescue” so that when God does provide it, we don’t even see it.

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Mark 15:21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). **23** Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. **24** And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. **25** It was the third hour when they crucified him.

26 The written notice of the charge against him read: **THE KING OF THE JEWS.** **27** They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. **28 29** Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, **30** come down from the cross and save yourself!" **31** In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! **32** Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. **34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Introduction

What Is a Savior?

The Bible is full of promises that God will deliver you from trouble. God is our protector, our refuge, our shelter, our deliverer, our savior.

Psalm 50:15 Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you.

That's how it's supposed to work. But can you really count on that promise? Why are there so many times when you call out in the day of trouble and he doesn't deliver you? You beg God for help, and things only get worse?

We understand that there are times when God has to allow a hardship to continue for various reasons. But so often that seems to be the rule rather than the exception. God said to call on him in the day of trouble and he would rescue us, but if he only answers that prayer 10% of the time... , how can we take comfort in those promises of deliverance? What does it mean, exactly, when God says he is our savior?

In the crucifixion account, Mark is teaching us all about exactly who Jesus is to us. In the trials, Mark said, "Here, let me introduce you to Jesus the prophet." Then Jesus the Messiah. Then Jesus the Son of God. And then last week, Jesus the King. Now one more. After Jesus is put up on the cross, Mark says, "Let me introduce you to Jesus the Savior." And he's going to teach us some things about our concept of saving and God's concept of saving.

At Golgotha

The Skull

We left off last time with Simon carrying the cross, which was a walking parable of what it looks like to be a Christian.

22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).

That's where you have to go if you follow Jesus—the place of the skull. And you don't need a Bible background encyclopedia to know what that means. Skulls have to do with death. Pirates flew skull and crossbones flags as a symbol of terror. We use it to warn about deadly poison. People use skull decorations on Halloween, when the objective is to scare people. No matter what century you're in or what culture you're in, it's a symbol of death. So they take Jesus to the skull and crossbones place—a place of death, execution, and for the Jew, the worst kind of uncleanness.

By the way, Golgotha is Aramaic. The Greek word is *kranion*, and the Latin translation is Calvary. We use the Latin word more than the Aramaic because of our songs. Calvary rhymes with a lot more words than Golgotha. And Calvary Church sounds a little more inviting than Golgotha Church. But that word really isn't supposed to sound inviting. It should sound terrifying.

There are traditions on the location of Golgotha,¹ but we don't know where it was. All we know is it was along a busy roadway and was outside the city gate.²

Outside the Camp

And Mark says they led him “out” there. That's significant because if you look up the phrase “outside the camp,” it comes up 26 times in Exodus through Deuteronomy. God gave a lot of regulations about how defiling things had to be taken outside the camp so the living space of the people wouldn't be defiled. And all that was put in place to ultimately teach us something about the death of Jesus.

Hebrews 13:11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

Again, we're back to this concept of disgrace. Think of it. The Holy One himself has to be taken outside the gates so that the city won't be defiled by him. He's about to become a corpse. The spotless lamb of God—the only human being in history who could touch a leper and instead of Jesus becoming defiled, the leper became clean. The un-defilable healer is about to become such a defiling contamination that he has to be taken outside the city limits lest he contaminate the whole city. What could be more of a disgrace than that?

And as we saw modeled in the living parable of Simon carrying the cross, we're called to join Jesus outside the camp in his humiliation. He bore our deserved shame and in turn, we bear his undeserved shame. We no longer have to carry the guilt of past sin, but we must carry the humiliation and scorn the world heaps on Jesus and all those connected to him.

¹ The earliest tradition is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. That tradition goes all the way back to 326 A.D. In recent years archaeologists have proved that it was outside the wall in Jesus' day. The other traditional site is known as Gordon's Calvary and the adjoining Garden Tomb, which are a little beyond the Damascus Gate in the present north wall. It is said by those with more imagination than I that the rock formation at Gordon's Calvary resembles a skull. But that appearance probably is the result of medieval and even modern excavation. And the Garden Tomb is Byzantine rather than ancient.

² John 19:20.

Waiting for the Kingdom

23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh³, but he did not take it.

Wine flavored with myrrh was a delicacy. Mark doesn't say why they offered that—whether it was sympathetic bystanders,⁴ or the soldiers continuing their mockery—giving him wine fit for a king. Mark doesn't tell us their motive. What he does give us is a verbal link to something Jesus said the night before.

Mark 14:25 I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.

Jesus will drink fine wine again after he is installed as the King of kings by God the Father. This is Jesus trusting in the plan of God. He will be King soon enough. He'll be able to eat and drink like a king soon enough. He doesn't need any lame, human imitation of it now.

This is exactly what the Bible means by waiting on the Lord. You wait however long it takes to get what God promised in God's timing and in God's way instead of settling for a cheap substitute.

The Crucifixion

So they offer him wine, he refuses it, and then we get the whole description of the actual crucifixion—in two Greek words.

24 they crucified him.

These are the only words you'll find about the actual nailing of Jesus to the cross. It's almost awkward how flat the reports of the crucifixion are. Zero emotionalism. No description at all—just a passing reference—they crucified him. The Holy Spirit doesn't want us focusing on the physical part they want us to focus on the part that mattered the most—his humiliation. And that keeps going in v.14.

Clothes Scavenged

14 ... Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

The fact that they're fighting over his clothes means he's up there naked, displayed along a busy highway. When they're dividing up your clothes, the obvious implication is you won't be needing them anymore. It's just another way of rubbing it in—your life is over. You're going nowhere from here except into the ground.

This is the third time Jesus' clothes are mentioned in the gospel. The other two times his clothes were amazing. In ch.6 everyone who touched Jesus' clothes was healed.⁵ At the

³ In Matthew's account, it's mixed with gall (Mt.27:34), which is a bitter substance. Jesus was offered multiple drinks at various points. Mark even mentions another drink offered later, this one with vinegar. Matthew could be referring to that or even to a third drink. It's also possible that Matthew is giving an interpretive description. It was mixed with myrrh, but because of their evil intentions, perhaps to prolong Jesus' suffering, Matthew equates it with gall.

⁴ Proverbs 31:6 says to give wine to those who are dying. Normally, it's wrong to drink so much wine that you're feeling no pain. Scripture forbids that—except when you're dying. If you're going to die anyway, it's okay to use whatever painkillers are necessary. And so based on that verse, there were some Jewish women who had a practice of giving wine to people who were being crucified. That's mentioned in the Talmud. (B. Sanh. 43a).

⁵ Mark 6:56.

Transfiguration his clothes lit up and became too bright to look at, shining like the sun.⁶ But here his clothes are just a pile of fabric scavenged by the soldiers. It shows that the spectacular qualities of his clothes earlier came from Jesus' own glory. The moment you take Jesus' clothes off Jesus, they're just rags.

People who are into religious relics could learn from this. If archeologists somehow found the robe Jesus wore, or a cup he drank from or anything else, or a splinter of the cross, it would mean nothing. The glory is from Christ himself. We shouldn't be concerned about relics when we have access to Christ himself.

This is such a surreal scene. The most important event in all human history is taking place right next to them, and they have their backs to it, focused on some old clothes. Missing the greatest event ever because of the smallest of trivia. Isn't that the story of our lives so often? How many really important things do we miss because we're caught up in our daily routines and temporal minutia that won't even matter a month from now?

The gambling for the clothes incident is a reference to Psalm 22.

Psalm 22:18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

That's the first of several references to Psalm 22 in the crucifixion account. Later Jesus will quote from Psalm 22 when he says, "My God why have you forsaken me?" And there are several other references in this account to Psalm 22 as well. Mark paints this whole scene for us in the lingo of Psalm 22. We'll have to wait until next time to look into why that is, but it does end up being important, so just keep it in mind for now.

Third Hour

25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.

The third hour was half way between sunrise and noon, so think 9 am.⁷ Mark has never once referred to the time of day throughout his whole gospel. But here he mentions the third hour, then in v.33 he mentions the 6th hour, then the 9th hour. Then evening, which is the 12th hour. Why the sudden interest in the clock, Mark? Did you get a new watch for your birthday or what?

He never mentions the time of day, but this day he gives us constant time markers in three hour intervals covering the whole day. What he's doing is showing us the events of the crucifixion unfolding like clockwork. The details of Jesus' sacrifice tick off one-by-one on a perfectly timed divine schedule. It's not haphazard, random, out-of-control sinners running unchecked. Everything is by divine appointment and plays out exactly according to plan.

That's not to say God is forcing anyone to act. On the human side, the crucifixion was carried out by evil men who are culpable and subject to divine wrath for what they did because they did it by their own free will. And yet God was still in control carrying out his purposes to the letter.

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

⁶ Mark 9:3.

⁷ A day was the time between sunrise and sunset, and they divided that period into 12 equal segments they called hours. So an hour in the summer was a lot longer than an hour in the winter, but there were always exactly 12 hours of daylight.

The Hour of Judgment

One other reason Mark may be repeating the word “hour” in this chapter might be to remind us that this is the hour Jesus prayed about in Gethsemane?

Mark 14:35 ... he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

41 ... The hour has come.

This is that hour of testing.

Final Round of Mockery

Another Round of Mocking

So at 9 am they nail Jesus to the cross, scavenge for his clothes, and for the next three hours, one thing happens—mockery. A whole other round of mockery. All the way down to verse 33. You might be thinking, “Again? How many messages do we have to sit through on the topic of Jesus being mocked?” Don’t look at me. Talk to Mark. This is how he laid it out. This is what the Holy Spirit wants our attention on verse after verse after verse.

Written Notice

It starts with the sign over Jesus’ head.

26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

That’s Pilate mocking both Jesus and the Jews. And for Mark’s purposes, it’s just one more opportunity to show the truth through irony. It’s the correct charge. Jesus did indeed die because he actually was the king of the Jews. That is why Jesus had to die. The only way for the Jews and the rest of the world to be saved was for a king to come and lay down his life for them. So once again what’s intended as mockery is the truth—right on the nose.

Two Robbers

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

When they set up the three crosses that way they have no idea that they are constructing the most iconic scene of all human history. There’s no symbol more instantly recognizable throughout the world than those three crosses. What they do know is that they are grouping Jesus in with evil men. These aren’t just robbers. They didn’t crucify people for robbery. The Greek word can refer to a range of crimes. Most capital crimes didn’t even call for crucifixion, so what they did must have been pretty bad. And Jesus is lumped in with them, which is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12.⁸

Isaiah 53:12 ... he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

⁸ Some translations include a verse 28 here that says the Scripture was fulfilled and then quotes Isaiah 53:12. That statement appears in Luke’s Gospel, and some copyist penciled it in here to Mark later on. So Mark didn’t write that, but he did imply it.

Part of bearing the sins of many required that he suffer the indignity of being thought of as one of the criminals. This is like having your mug shot on TV beside a couple child molesters. And now everyone thinks you're one of them when in reality all you did was rescue children from molesters. Humiliation upon humiliation in the death of Jesus.

Mockery of the Criminals

And not only are the priests and the guards and the Romans and the bystanders all mocking Jesus, even those criminals get in on it.

32 ... Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

That's really something. When you're pressed down so low that even two criminals who are hanging naked on poles... , dying for their crimes in front of everyone on a busy road—when even men like that are punching down on you, you've really hit rock bottom. You can't get any lower than that in society, but somehow Jesus manages to get even lower than them.

The mockery is comprehensive. The Jewish officials, the Temple police, the guards, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, random travelers, even the criminals next to him. Ridicule comes from absolutely every direction.

The Right and Left

But there's something else that stands out about the criminals. Sometimes when you memorize a passage, things stand out that you don't notice just reading it. What stood out to me here is how wordy Mark gets at this point. He's normally very succinct, and you would expect him to just say Jesus was crucified between two criminals. That would describe what happened. But listen to all the verbiage.

27 They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left.

If Jesus is between them, then obviously there's one on each side. But Mark isn't even content to say "one on each side." He spells it out, "one on his right and one on his left." What's the significance of the right and left? Does that wording ring any bells from the context?

Mark 10:35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, ... 37 "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

And what did Jesus say?

Mark 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink?"

If you want to ride the coattails of Jesus' glory like we talked about last time, you first have to ride the coattails of his suffering and humiliation and death. And so these two criminals hang there as another living parable. Simon was living parable of what it looks like to follow Jesus. The criminals are a living parable of what the path to greatness is the kingdom looks like. It's like Jesus could look at one of those criminals, then look at the other, then ask James and John, "Do you still want to be on my right and left? Because this is what it will look like."

Bystanders

So let's back up and look at the bystanders' mockery.

29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads.

Shaking Heads

It's amazing how demeaning it can be to have someone shake their head at you because it's like they're saying they can't even understand how you could be so lame. If you trip and fall and they laugh, that's embarrassing. But if they shake their head, that's worse. If they just laugh, they might be thinking, "That was funny. Glad it wasn't me this time." But if they shake their head and roll their eyes, it's like they're saying, "How is it even possible for anyone to be so stupid?" These people shook their heads at Jesus. They couldn't comprehend how someone could be so ridiculous and pathetic.

This is another reference to Psalm 22. The first one was the gambling for the clothes in Psalm 22:18. Now this from Psalm 22:7.

Psalm 22:7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

Come Down, Temple Builder

And here's what they say:

29 ... "So!⁹ You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!"

The current temple had taken 46 years to build and it still wasn't done. They're saying, "If you have so much miraculous power that you could build the Temple in 3 days... , surely you have enough power to come down from the cross and save yourself."

Jesus never actually said he would destroy the Temple. That was one of the unproved accusations from the first trial. And he never was convicted on that. The charge they finally landed on was blasphemy. And yet this is the thing the crowd remembers. That's the way false accusations are. Even after they are proven wrong, people continue to believe them. That's part of the unfairness of what Jesus went through.

What *did* Jesus say? He said *they* would destroy "this temple" and he would rebuild it in three days. And the temple he was talking about was his body. He was saying, "You people will destroy the temple of my body and after 3 days I'll raise it up." And that was exactly what was happening. They're mocking him over a prophecy he made that was being fulfilled as they mocked him.

But on the other hand, even if Jesus didn't directly say he would destroy the Jewish Temple, he did prophesy that it would be destroyed. He said not one stone would be left on another. Sounded ridiculous at the time, but for us looking back, which temple still stands? The structure in Jerusalem, or Jesus Christ and his Church? His prophecy proved true at every point.

⁹ Other translations have "Ha" or "Aha." This is the kind of word that gets its meaning from the tone of voice. And the context makes it clear what their tone was. 100% ridicule, sarcasm, and condescension.

Mocked as Savior

But the main point here is that they are mocking Jesus as savior. First they mocked him as prophet, then as king, now, they mock his ability to save because he can't even save himself. The bystanders: verse 30 ... **"Save yourself!"** The priests: verse 31 ... **"He saved others, but he can't save himself!"** Then the two criminals say the same thing. It's all about Jesus' inability to save himself.

Self-Justification

Why are they focusing on that? It's because they're trying to justify their unbelief.

32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

They're claiming they would believe if he came down, which means as long as he doesn't come down, they think they're justified in not believing. And it's important to them that they justify what they're doing because when you do something this wicked... , no matter how far gone you are, at some point your conscience is going to act up at least a little bit. Some kind of nagging feelings of, "Maybe I shouldn't be doing this." They had seen Jesus' kindness, they had heard his amazing teaching, they'd seen the miracles. You know they must have had a few stray thoughts about, "What if he really were from God—and I'm doing this to him?"

Whenever conscience lights up, you have two options. Let it do its work and drive you to repentance, or set your mind at ease by proving that what you're doing is justified. What if Jesus really is from God? *It can't be. Here, I'll prove it ...* "Hey Jesus, if you're who you say you are, come down off the cross." And then you watch. And he doesn't come down. (Sign of relief) See. I knew he was a fraud. Even God has endorsed our side by not rescuing Jesus.

God Wouldn't ...

They're operating on the assumption that God would never let something like this happen to his Messiah , and the Messiah would never allow something like this to happen to himself. Be very, very careful with the logic that says, "I know X isn't true because God would never ..." Beware of the phrase, "God would never." You have to know someone awfully well to know everything that person would never do. And yet it's amazing how much confidence people have in their theories of what God would never do.

That's really the whole argument of the atheists. God would never create a world like this or allow such and such to happen, therefore there is no God. And they're willing to risk their eternal destiny on that one line of reasoning, as if a limited, finite , sinful creature could ever say with any certainty what an eternal, all-knowing, perfect being would or wouldn't do.

The Voice of Satan

So they're all heckling Jesus, telling him, "If you're really the Messiah, don't die on the cross." Boy, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? Where have we heard that before? When Peter said it, what did Jesus call him? Satan.

This has been Satan's objective from the beginning. In all Jesus' temptations at the outset of his ministry and ever since right up to the Garden of Gethsemane, Satan has done everything he could possibly do to prevent Jesus from dying on the cross. Those songs that say the powers of hell rejoiced when Jesus died are wrong. Jesus dying on the cross was the absolute worst case scenario for Satan and he knew it. And so he never gave up in trying to prevent it. Even after Jesus had been nailed to the cross and was hanging there dying, still Satan didn't give up hope. He knows Jesus has the power to put a stop to this and come down, and so he's still trying to push him to do that.

The first round of mockery came from the Jewish leaders. Then the guards. Then Pilate. Then the Roman soldiers. But this final round of mockery—who is that coming from? First it's the bystanders, but then it's the Jewish leaders again, then the two criminals. But really they're all speaking with one voice. And if you've been reading Mark, you know that voice by now. It's the voice of Satan.

Saving or Losing Your

And think about what they're asking Jesus to do. It's not like they're just asking for a random miracle. They're asking Jesus to repudiate the very core of his teaching about salvation. Look at the words they use.

30 ... save yourself!

31 ... he can't save himself!

They want Jesus to save his life. What did Jesus teach about saving your life?

Mark 8:35 Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life ... for the gospel will save it.

There are just two paths you can take—try to save your life in this world or lose your life for the gospel. Jesus' whole message was, "Don't try to save your life in this world. Lay it down and only then will you gain true life. Don't avoid the cross—take up your cross." That's Jesus' message. And what they're saying here is, "Jesus, if you want us to believe in you, we're not asking much. All we ask is that you do the opposite of what you taught, give up on God's way and embrace the way of the world. Don't take up your cross and lay down your life. Get off the cross and save your life. Then we'll believe in you."

Irony

And to goad him into doing that, look what the chief priests say.

31 ... he saved others but he can't save himself!

Now we're back to the irony. Once again, what they say as mockery ends up being a perfect description of what was really true. What they said is exactly right—Jesus *couldn't* save himself *and* save others. Not for lack of power. He had the power to come down. One

exercise of his will and the cross would be splinters and the executioners and mockers would all be lying dead on road. They think Jesus lacks the power to rip those nails out of the cross? He could snap them like toothpicks. It wasn't the nails that held him up there; it was his love. He couldn't save himself because if he did, all of humanity would be lost.

At this point Jesus could have spoken up and said, "Okay, one more time. The only way to truly save your life is to lose it. We've been over this. Try to keep up." But Jesus makes no effort to defend himself or even to get the last word. He is there to suffer humiliation, and he doesn't do anything to mitigate that. He just lets it happen, full force.

Their Salvation, not His

And when they keep telling him to save himself, what they fail to realize is it was them, not him, who needed saving. And the only hope for them to be saved was to believe. And they claimed they would believe if he did what they said.

32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

If we saw what we want to see, then we would see and believe. And God says, "You can see and believe right now. But you need to believe what you're actually seeing, not what you would rather see." What they were seeing was prophecy being fulfilled before their eyes. All the evidence and proof they needed to believe was unfolding right in front of them. But instead, as the Son of God dies on the cross, they stand there and watch with eyes that see nothing.

Of all the miracles they could have asked for, the one they claim would put them over the top was really a relatively small-time miracle. Compared to all the other things Jesus had done, coming down off the cross would have ranked among the least impressive displays of power. They claim they would believe if he would do that tiny miracle, but what Jesus is doing instead is the greatest miracle imaginable—reconciling sinful humanity to God! Staggering! But that's utterly unimpressive to them because it has to do with the big world, not their little world.

What Would They Believe?

Is it true that they would believe if they saw Jesus come down from the cross? Oh yeah, they would believe all right. They would believe exactly the same thing they already believed.

What was that? What they believed was that this little here-and-now life is what matters most. And if it's a choice between our little here-and-now kingdom and the kingdom of God, that's easy—it's our kingdom. What did they believe about greatness? Is the true path to greatness the one Jesus taught?

- Lay down your life
- Humble yourself
- Be a servant
- Forfeit everything in this world including greatness in the eyes of men and let God lift you up in his time?

Or just seek greatness in the eyes of men and give no thought to whether or not you have God's approval? Easy—human greatness. That was what they believed. It's all about saving yourself.

And it's all about this world, not the kingdom of God. In their mind, the Messiah's job was to defeat Rome and give Israel her independence. Rescue Israel from Roman oppression. So Jesus says, "I'm the rescuer" but he's being executed by Rome? To quote Princess Leia, "This is some rescue." A messiah who can't even protect himself against Rome isn't much good for delivering the whole nation.

And so when they say, "Jesus, save yourself and we'll believe," what they're saying is, "Stop doing this your way and do it our way. Save yourself like we would save ourselves if we had the power. Then we'll accept you as the leader of our kingdom."

So yes, they would believe what they already believed. What they wouldn't do is actually believe Jesus. They saw all the miracles he had already done and it didn't even put a dent in their unbelief, one more miracle wouldn't either. And we know that because when Jesus rises from the dead, not even that convinces them. And that's a far greater miracle than climbing down off a cross.

"Now"

If you think about it, really the only thing wrong with their statement is one word—the word "now."

32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

Jesus would come down from the cross. God did rescue Jesus from the cross in miraculous fashion. What they're asking for is exactly what God already had in mind; the only thing off is the word "now."

"Now" is not a demand we get to make when we're telling God whether we'll believe or not. Think of the insanity of telling God, "Do it now or I won't believe." That's like your doctor saying, "I have medicine that will save your life. It will be here in three days," and you say, "No! If I don't get it right now I'm going to slit my throat." Their refusal to believe doesn't hurt Jesus; it hurts them. How irrational is it to refuse the only thing that can save your life just because you don't get what you want right now?

When God provides evidence for his Word and people say, "No God. Not that evidence. I demand different evidence. Not the resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago—I want this other kind of proof, otherwise I refuse to believe" —what those people don't realize is, God is not desperate to get them to believe. He's offering them a gift. And part of the gift is the form God offers it. If it were in another form, it wouldn't be as great a gift. So when we say, "I refuse it in that form," God says, "Well then, you refuse it." And it's the unbeliever, not God, who loses.

Conclusion: Save us our way

This final round of mocking really gets to the crux of the issue—salvation. Back to my question at the beginning—when God came to save the human race, why did the human race reject that salvation? It sounds like the most unlikely storyline imaginable. Why would someone who is in deep trouble reject his rescuer?

It turns out human beings, no matter how much trouble we're in, can be very picky about how we want to be rescued. Rescue us our way, or not at all.

That's how we roll as human beings—both with big rescues and little ones. When you pray to God for help, what stipulations do you place on how God has to do it? It's not an easy question because most of the time those stipulations are subconscious. We always have our own ideas of what the solutions to our problems are. We ask God for that, and when he gives a different solution, we don't see it as a solution. In fact, many times we see it as an even worse problem than the original problem. It's like when you go to the dentist and say, "I know what I need. Just give me some narcotics for this pain." And he says, "How about a root canal?"

"That's not what I had in mind doc."

"Well, that's what you need. If you want to get better, you need to change what you had in mind."

Why is it that so often when we cry out to God for help it doesn't seem to come? Why does it seem like God only answers that prayer 10% of the time? Could it be because about 90% of the time when we pray for deliverance we have the wrong definition of deliverance? Think about the last few times you've prayed for help and didn't get it. Could it be God rescued you his way and you didn't even know it?

Jesus is the Savior. But he saves his way, not our way. And his way is the way of the cross. His way is the way of laying down your life to save it. And of forfeiting human approval to gain God's approval. Maybe we would do well, when we pray for help, to say, "God rescue from this trouble. And teach me what rescuing really means so when you do it, I will see and believe. Or better yet, believe that I might see."

Harmony

<p>Matthew 27:33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38 Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.</p>	<p>Mark 15:22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. 25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.</p> <p>26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.</p>	<p>Luke 23:32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.</p>	<p>John 19:17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 Here they crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle. 19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.</p>
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<p>Matthew 27:39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" 41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.</p>	<p>Mark 15:29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!" 31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.</p>	<p>Luke 23:35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." 38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."</p>
<p>Matthew 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "<i>Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?</i>"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."</p>	<p>Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "<i>Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?</i>"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.</p>	<p>Luke 23:44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 for the sun stopped shining.</p>

Matthew 27:50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, **he gave up his spirit.** 51 **At that moment** the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. **The earth shook and the rocks split.** 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went **into the holy city and appeared to many people.** 54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and **exclaimed,** "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Luke 23:44 ... And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."** When he had said this, he breathed his last. 47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, **praised God and said,** "Surely this was a righteous man."

John 19:20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

John 19:25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. 28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink,

Luke 23:27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then "'they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" 31 For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Matthew 27:55 Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother **of Zebedee's sons.**

Mark 15:40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Luke 23:48 **When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.** 49 **But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.**

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. 31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. 36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," 37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Matthew 27:57

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Mark 15:42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

Luke 23:50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

John 19:38 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. 41 At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. 42 Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

