

Sermon Title: The Crucifixion
Scripture Text: Mark 15:22-47

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-2-20

Come with me to the Gospel of Mark once again, where we will begin this morning at Chapter 15, Verse 22. We're going to take on a rather large chunk this morning, purposefully. It is one of the most moving portions of God's Word. If you can read of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ and *not* be moved, I need to check you for a spiritual pulse! This is really quite something.

We saw the trial of Jesus; it is concluded now. We saw all six parts of it: three Jewish parts and three Roman parts. The sentence was decided by the leaders of the Jews *long before* Jesus was even arrested; they had already decided, for about a year before that, that He had to die (Mk. 3:6). So the trial was all about a sentence in search of a crime; it was all about manipulating people and telling lies to get the deed done.

You remember that along the way, the charges changed several times. When it came down to the final phase of the trial, it was before the Roman governor named Pontius Pilate. He found Jesus innocent, and he said so (Lk. 23:4). In the end, though, Pilate showed his true colors (Mk. 15:15). Understand that truth is important to a politician, but often not as important as staying in power. Justice is important to a politician, but not as important as being popular. Standing for principles is important—*unless*, of course, standing on your principles might get a crowd of people upset. Well, Pilate put on a show of humility, and then he gave in completely; he caved in, and sent Jesus to be crucified.

I didn't include it last time, but I wanted you to see the fullness of Pilate revealing what he was really like; it's over in Matthew 27, Verses 24 through 26—"When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing"—that is, "accomplishing nothing" to turn the tide by saying that Jesus was innocent—"but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves.' And all the people said, 'His blood shall be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified." (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

So what do you do if you're Pilate, and you're in that situation? Well, you proclaim: "Jesus is innocent!" Then, you set free a murderer; you cave in to the mob. You take the man that you say is innocent, and you brutally have Him punished by being scourged—a punishment that killed many people. Then, you send Him to be crucified. And, of course, you make a *big* public display that *you* aren't responsible for what you just did in sending an innocent man to be killed—as if making a show of washing your hands removes your own guilt!

We come today to the Crucifixion. I have preached on it a number of times over the years. We're going to be moving pretty fast today, but if you want more detail, go to our website and hunt up our sermons on the Gospel of John; we lingered a little longer on the Crucifixion when we went through John.

But today, I want you to get the wide-angle view, so I'm going to read you this extensive passage. Follow along with me as I do, and then we will circle back through and pick out some of the most significant sights here.

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It's Mark 15:22 through 47—"Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. It was the third hour when they crucified Him. The inscription of the charge against Him read, 'THE KING OF THE JEWS.'

"They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.'] Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!' Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

"When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, 'Behold, He is calling for Elijah.' Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, 'Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'

"There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

"When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid."

Now, let's go back over this passage, and this time, as I say, point out some of the important sights, when you see here what Jesus did to purchase your redemption (Rev. 5:9). Let it sink in that Jesus did this *for you* (Gal. 2:20; cf. Jn. 13:8; 1 Pet. 3:18), and Jesus did this voluntarily (Matt. 20:28; Jn. 10:15, 17-18). It's 26 verses; it's a lot, by our normal standards of what we bite off on any given Lord's Day, but here's how we'll break it down, just to give you points to know that we actually are making progress along the way:

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They Crucified Him; They Mocked Him; Jesus Bore Your Sin; Some Believed; and, Friends Buried Him.

We start out with a simple statement: They Crucified Him. Mark 15:22—"Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull." "Golgotha" is the Aramaic word for "skull," and Mark translated the word for his readers. We don't know why it was called "Place of a Skull"; it could very well be because, that's where so many people were crucified in that region, and a skull is always a symbol of death; it could be that.

There are two locations archaeologically proposed for where this site might be. The traditional one is to the west side of the old walled city of Jerusalem; it is where, if you go there now, you will find the Church of the Holy Sepulchre located. As with most well-attested archaeological sites, somebody builds a church over it, and you can no longer see *anything* that has to do with the site that is there. The theory that that's the place goes back to the Fourth Century. If we know where the place is, that's most likely it.

But there's another place—it's called "Gordon's Calvary," for the man named Gordon who discovered it in 1867. This one is to the east side of the old city—still outside the old city walls, so it could have matched the description of where the Crucifixion had to be. If you go to "Gordon's Calvary," there's a little bit of a promontory—a rock outcropping—and if you're standing below it and you look up just the right way, and you have a good imagination, you can see, in the rock, what *might be* something that looks a little bit like a skull—hence, "Place of a Skull." And you can get spiritual goosebumps if you want to go there...that is, if it doesn't bother you that now, there's a gigantic bus terminal right at the foot of that hill, and it smells like diesel fuel all the time; but if you can block that out, you can kind of see, maybe, a "Place of a Skull." The truth is: there's not very much evidence that that really is the place. But what's interesting is, right next to that place is the famous "Garden Tomb"; there is a tomb there that is the first-century-style of tomb, like where Jesus was laid, and it's a very good pictorial for picturing the kind of situation in which He would have been buried. And if you go with me to Israel in the Fall, we'll probably stop there and do a little bit of teaching and actually have communion outside of the Garden Tomb. But the truth is, it doesn't matter exactly where this place was.

Verse 23—"They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it." The "wine mixed with myrrh" was a potion designed to temporarily deaden pain; it was probably given, not out of compassion for the person being crucified, but probably to minimize struggling and wriggling and screaming on the part of the one who was being crucified, for the convenience of the soldiers. In Jesus' case, He refused it; He chose to endure all of this with no human-authored physical relief whatsoever.

So, Verse 24—"And they crucified Him." That's how much detail Mark gives to the crucifixion; and actually, Matthew, Luke, and John don't give a whole lot more description of what it means to be crucified. We *know* a lot about what it means to be crucified, and it is an absolutely horribly brutal method of execution—one of the most vicious ever invented.

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"And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take" (vs. 24). Apparently, the soldiers who did these executions got a little perk from being allowed to divide up and salvage whatever they could of the possessions of their victims. For the largest single-piece outer garment of Jesus, they cast lots; they used a game of chance to see who would get to keep that most precious of the pieces of clothing. And by the way, that is an *exact* fulfillment of what is described in Psalm 22, Verse 18. Psalm 22 is one of the most famous Messianic psalms; it begins with: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"—those are words that Jesus quoted, alluding to that entire Psalm.

Verse 25, and following: "It was the third hour when they crucified Him." Now, nobody was wearing a Timex in those days; they didn't mark exact times, but that they broke the day into segments: Starting with sunup—roughly 6:00—the "third hour" would be about 9:00 in the morning.

"The inscription of the charge against Him read, 'THE KING OF THE JEWS.' They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.']" That last verse there—" [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.']" (vs. 28)—it is not actually in the better manuscripts of Mark; it's not in the older manuscripts of Mark, *but* there's not a single problem with it because it is a quote directly from Isaiah Chapter 53, Verse 12—another very specific prediction of Jesus's death in the Old Testament, and we can see how that came to be written down as a marginal note, and then eventually included in later manuscripts as they were copied. It does no harm to the text whatsoever.

So, as a person was crucified, the custom was that they would write on a piece of wood what the charge was; you'd see the person hanging there on the cross, and it would say, "For Murder," "For Extortion," "For Kidnapping"—"For whatever-the-capital-crime-was." According to John Chapter 19, Verse 20, we are told Jesus's inscription "was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek"; they wanted to make *absolutely* sure everybody knew why this guy was there. Pilate was the one who would have been responsible for specifying what the charge would be, and Pilate had *repeatedly* declared Jesus to be innocent of any crime; so he ordered *this* inscription to be written for Him. Pilate, I'm sure, intended for that to be an affront to the Jewish authorities. If you read the other Gospels, you discover that they didn't want it to say, "The King of the Jews"—they wanted it to say: "He said, 'I am King of the Jews'" (Jn. 19:21), but Pilate would have nothing to do with that; so he was trying to get back at the Jews who had just run over him for the umpteenth time in manipulating him.

By the way, in Mark the inscription says, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." If you read Matthew, if you read Luke, if you read John—none of them say that the inscription exactly said, "The King of the Jews." As a matter of fact, if you read the four descriptions of what was over the Cross, no two of them are identical. So I love to use this passage when I'm helping people learn how to interpret the Bible. We teach the principle of how you have to harmonize parallel passages of the same thing. If you put all four Gospels together, there's no contradiction, but if you put together all the pieces, the inscription said: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

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None of them contradict, but none of them have the full inscription, either. That's not a problem; that's *not* a contradiction. Now, if one of them said, "This is Bob of Boise, the King of the Road," we would have a problem! But, that is not the case. It's a really good little study in how to interpret the Bible.

Now, we know that Jesus was crucified on the middle of three crosses on that day. Again, we can go study the archaeology that we have on this place; we know what the most widely accepted place is—it says so right in your hymnbook: "On a hill far away." Well, part of that is right—it is "far away"; we know that it happened right outside the walls of the ancient city of Jerusalem, but the Bible doesn't even say that it was "on a hill."

When crucifixions were performed, we know that the purpose of capital punishment, as the Romans saw it, was as it *should be* in any place that capital punishment is practiced: it is *meant* to be a deterrent (see Rom. 13:4; cf. Deut. 21:21; Ecc. 8:11; Acts 5:5, 11; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7), so they wanted people to see, visually, what happened if you did really awful things; and so, crucifixions were done alongside major roads or at intersections—places where there would be a lot of public attention. It *might* have been on a hill, but all we can do is say, "We don't know," but it probably was a very public place. You'll notice that, whenever you see this portrayed in any kind of artwork, you always see that Jesus was on a cross higher than the other two, or that His cross stood out in front of the other two—and that's absolutely pure *myth!* Nothing in the Bible indicates that at all. He was crucified *just like* the criminals that were on either side of Him.

They Crucified Him, and then we read on: They Mocked Him; the mocking continued. We saw the incredible level of blasphemy surrounding all the stages of Jesus's trial and sentencing, and it didn't fade one bit when He went to the Cross. Look at Verses 29 and 30 in Mark 15—"Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him"—shouting at Him—"wagging their heads"—the phrase, literally, is: "lifting their noses," like sneering at Him—"and saying, 'Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' " Whoever these unnamed passersby were, they were just parroting what they had heard. They had heard the false accusation that was brought against Jesus, that He said He would destroy the temple; He never did say that—they were twisting what He said about His own death in John Chapter 2, Verses 19 through 21. But, if you tell a lie long enough and loud enough, it becomes a motto.

Well, by this time, you would think that the chief priests and the scribes who had been working on this plan for over a year—you would think that by now, they would be satisfied; you would think that by now, they would go back to their normal hypocritical public pomposity and displays of self-righteousness, but...not to be. Their mask of pseudo-spirituality and decency is completely off now. They keep the party going, if you will—reveling in, making fun of Jesus's suffering, and mocking Him all the more. Verse 31—"In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe! " "

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Now, that's interesting! They had seen, *for three years*, countless miracles (Jn. 15:24). They had rejected all of them; they had said it was all done by the power of Satan (Mk. 3:32)! They absolutely refuse to believe anything Jesus said, or the validity of anything that Jesus did, and *now* they have the audacity to say, "Well, if You would just come down from the cross, we could see and believe!" The hypocrisy is complete.

Then we're told, at the end of Verse 32—"Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him." It was nothing but ridicule and scorn and blasphemy. And the two men crucified on either side—they joined in. And what were they talking about? They didn't care about Jesus's trial; they were just parroting the things that they heard from the crowd. Maybe making sport Jesus somehow took a little bit of the sensation off the edge of their own pain.

I'm sure you also know the story that's recorded in Luke 23:40 through 43, where we are told that, in the midst of the mocking from the two crosses, God graciously granted faith and repentance to one of those men, who turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And Jesus said, famously: "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." If you ever need a proof-text for the fact that a person can put their faith in Christ at the very end, well, you don't get any better than that. Solely on the basis of His grace, and the fact that this man turned to Him, Jesus made that promise.

Then comes the reason why Jesus went to the Cross. They Crucified Him; They Mocked Him; and it's because Jesus went there to Bear Your Sin. Mark 15:33—"When the sixth hour came"—alright, if it's about 9:00 when they crucified Him, it's about Noon now—"darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." After three hours on the Cross—and Jesus had said *several* things; one of the more interesting studies you can do, in looking at the Crucifixion, is to find the seven things that Jesus said from the time they began nailing Him to the Cross until He died; He had said several of those things in those first three hours—and then, all the lights go out; it turns pitch dark at high noon in Israel, some day in April in the year of A.D. 30.

What's all that about? I've heard people explain that, that's *Satanic* darkness. Where in the world do you get the idea that Satan controls the sun? That's *completely* made up! The truth is: that was God's presence. Very often in the Old Testament—and I won't take time to take you to all the evidence and all the examples of it—darkness can be a sign of God's presence in judgment (e.g. Deut. 4:10-11; 2 Sam. 22:12). And the passages that predict the eschatological "Day of the Lord"—when God brings His final judgment and sets up the kingdom and all of that—often, those passages describe it being a day of "darkness" (Amos 5:18-20).

We don't know exactly how far it extended. It says: "over the whole land"—that's a little bit ambiguous; what does *that* mean? Did it follow right along the borders of Israel? If you were seeing it from the space station, would you have seen this one black spot over the eastern Mediterranean? We don't know. It doesn't really matter. There are some comments among the writings of early church theologians suggesting that it *did* go beyond the boundaries of Israel. I imagine it got some people's *attention*, to wonder what was going on.

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Well, it was during those three hours that Jesus Bore Your Sins. Since He is the eternal Son of God (Prov. 30:4; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3, 8-10), He was able to bear the eternal punishment of God in what is a blink of an eye compared to the history of the world, and compared to eternity (see Acts 2:24; cf. Rom. 1:4). He bore our sins (Is. 53:4-6). That was the darkest moment, if you will—certainly for Jesus (Is. 53:10a).

Later revelation explains what went on there. Second Corinthians Chapter 5, Verses 20 and 21—a favorite passage you would do well to memorize—says this: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ"—what's an ambassador? An ambassador is one who represents the foreign government on alien soil; so, we represent the kingdom of God "for Christ," who is the King. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (cf. Rom. 5:10) Now, what happened during those three hours of "darkness" (Mk. 15:22)? Read on: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." There is an example of the doctrine called "imputation" (Ps. 32:2; Rom. 4:8)—all your sin was credited to Jesus; He hung on that Cross as *if* He committed every sin you ever committed...and me, and everybody (Is. 53:6); all that, credited to Him. He bore the punishment of God's righteous wrath against sin (Ecc. 12:14; Nahum 1:3; Rom. 5:9). And then, again, through the concept of imputation in the *other* direction, all of Jesus's righteousness—His *perfect* righteousness (Matt. 3:17; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)—is credited to you (Rom. 3:22; Ph. 3:9; Heb. 10:14), but only when you receive the free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23), which is only in Him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Jn. 5:12). It is given by His grace; it is received through your faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

Another way to say it: Colossians Chapter 2, Verses 13 and 14—"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." Now, that is a *great* statement! All your transgressions have been forgiven...But, *how*? God doesn't just say, "Oh, that's okay! I don't mind! You've tried hard." No...He has "forgiven us all our transgressions"—read on—"having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." There are some great words there! If I owed you a bunch of money, and you had an invoice that said so, and I said, "I can't pay that," and you said, "Give me that piece of paper," and you wrote on it, "Paid In Full"—what would you be doing? You would be *eating my debt*! You would be taking what I owed upon yourself. The "decrees against us"—think of them as the laundry list of all of your sins (see Rev. 20:12b), nailed to the Cross, and God took it upon Himself! How? By pouring out His righteous necessary wrath on His own Son, who voluntarily went there to fulfill that plan so that you could be redeemed (Is. 53:10-11).

That's what was going on during those three dark hours. I'm sure it is not humanly possible to describe fully what Jesus endured on that Cross. I *do* know it left Him in a state that He had never experienced. Verse 34 of Mark 15—"At the ninth hour"—okay, now put it together: crucified at the "third hour," 9:00 in the morning; it goes dark at the "sixth hour," Noon; now, this is "at the ninth hour," and it was dark until the ninth hour; so, as the dark is ending, or as the light is coming back: "At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' "

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There are a couple of things there. One is: it's astounding, from a human standpoint, that more than once, from the Cross—after that initial time when He was there, when He said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34)—Jesus cried out from the Cross more than once "with a loud voice"; humanly speaking, that was nearly *impossible* for a normal man, who was steadily being asphyxiated, to have the strength to cry out "with a loud voice." If you had been scourged, and you're hanging on a cross, every breath is precious and hard to get. Remember how they came by and they "broke the legs" of the other two because they weren't dead yet (Jn. 19:32)? That's because you could last longer on the cross if you could lift yourself up a little bit; you would get tired of lifting yourself by the arms, but you could press up a little bit on your legs and get a chance to get one more breath to fill your lungs. And Jesus just hung there, and He "cried out with a loud voice."

He cried out the Aramaic words that you will find in Psalm 22, Verse 1—same psalm that we've already alluded to. That psalm describes in detail what happened in a crucifixion; it *is* a Messianic psalm; it *is* a prophecy of Jesus's death. And by the way: it was written hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented! God knows "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10).

You'll hear some rather fanciful interpretations of what it means that Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" You've got the Word-Faith false teachers; they say that Jesus, when He was crucified, He went to hell and suffered there, and then returned to rise from the dead as the first born-again man. That's commonly taught in many circles these days, and that's part of a *false* gospel.

There are others who say that during that time, Jesus and the Father were severed from one another, and their fellowship was broken because the Father abandoned Him when He took on sin. Well, there's an ontological and theological impossibility with that—that violates everything else the Scripture reveals to us about the nature of God and the eternal existence of three persons. Understand that He quoted Psalm 22; go look at all of Psalm 22—it's all about God's *presence* with the person who *feels* abandoned in the midst of that suffering! Jesus was identifying with the words of Psalm 22; He was not separated from the Father—God was *very* present there. It was *God's* darkness; it was *God's* wrath. God the Father *was there*, doing all of that.

There's also the silly teaching of the "Gnostics," the group that was the first sort of codified pseudo-Christian heresy in the early Church. They say that the "Christ-spirit" came upon the man Jesus at His baptism, and then it left Him just before the Crucifixion—so, Jesus *really* was "forsaken," and He was crying out because He had now lost the "Crist-spirit." That is also heretical.

There are theories all over the place; and to be sure, I admit that there is some mystery involved, because nowhere in the Bible is it fully explained. But we *can* say this: Jesus was not abandoned; the Father didn't turn away from Him. He did not cease to be God. He was *pouring out His heart*, having just experienced the wrath of the Father against sin! God is with "the Righteous One" (Is. 53:11) *through* His suffering—*that's* the message of all of Psalm 22: He was expressing the agony of enduring the wrath of the Father against all sin (Rom. 1:18).

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Every other time in the Gospels where Jesus speaks to the Father, He calls Him "Father," or even, "Abba! Father!" (Mk. 14:36). This is the *only time* He calls Him anything else; He drops the familial name, and He says: "My God." And by repeating "My God, My God"—read it with *affection*—He is expressing His profound affection for the Father, and His longing to be with Him; like Hebrews says that He "endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2), looking forward to what was coming after that (see Jn. 17:5), and in the midst of that: "My God, My God"—what unspeakable *agony*, feeling separated from Him with whom He had spent eternity, from before Creation to that moment (Mic. 5:2b). He was bearing the wrath of sin...and, oh, it hurt! His Father never left Him. He visited that place that day in massive judgment. But for those moments, you could say this: the Father's comfort was not available to His Son. Oh, it would come—but not in that moment.

Now, look what happened: there's a great contrast here between what happened among the people watching and what transpired between the Father and the Son. Go down to Verse 35 and 36—"When some of the bystanders heard it"—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—"they began saying, 'Behold, He is calling for Elijah.' Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, 'Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.' " This is just nothing but more ridicule, more mocking; they were not trying to comfort Jesus.

You see, there were many superstitions and false beliefs about Elijah. Elijah had been made into not, only who he *is*, but kind of a superhero in Jewish mythology. One of the things that was said is that they believed that Elijah could answer prayers and could personally come to the aid of a righteous person who was in a terrible situation of distress. So when Jesus uttered words that kind of—sort of—*maybe* sounded a little bit like "Elijah," the mockers immediately rekindled their mocking. Again, they offer Him an analgesic—just part of their cruel game to mock Him even more. And remember: this is probably just when God is turning on the sunlight again. Nothing has changed; nobody seems to have learned anything during that darkness; and now, the bystanders are blaspheming again.

And that led immediately to the final of the things that Jesus said during the Crucifixion. Mark describes it this way, in 15:37—"And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last." Now, we know what He cried out. As He finished bearing the wrath of the Father, the next-to-last thing He said from the Cross—He shouted out one word in Greek: *tetelestai*, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30). What was finished? He had finished bearing the wrath for sin. And then, that *final* loud cry was to the Father; and again, He's quoting from the Old Testament—it comes directly from Psalm 31, Verse 5; we have that described in Luke 23:46—"And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last."

Who killed Jesus? Well, the only one you could actually pin it on would be God the Father (Is. 53:10; Ac. 2:23; 4:27-29). Jesus "laid down His life" (1 Jn. 3:16; cf. Jn. 10:17-18)—the Crucifixion didn't kill Him; the flogging didn't kill Him; He gave "His life" (Mk. 10:45), having taken on the sins which were all "nailed...to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

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At that same moment, a great symbolic event took place. Mark 15, Verse 38—"And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" The "veil of the temple" is what separated "the holy of holies" (Ex. 26:33; cf. Heb. 9:3)—that's the little 10 by 10 by 10 cube area in which was the Ark of the Covenant; *only* the High Priest could *ever* go behind that veil—that curtain—and he only once a year, only after all the prescribed sacrifices, only to sprinkle the blood to apply the atonement on behalf of all of the people of God (Heb. 9:7). Nobody else could go in there.

Do you remember Grand Opening Day of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, when Aaron the High Priest went in, and he offered the sacrifice, and God miraculously sent down "fire" and "consumed" the sacrifices in front of all the people, and everybody was astounded (Lev. 9:24)? And then, remember Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu; they thought, "Oh, that was cool...Our turn! We're going to go in there! Give us some incense." They pulled back the curtain, and God miraculously sent down fire from heaven and consumed *them* on the spot, and said, "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy" (Lev. 10:3). "No one goes in there, except when I allow them in there, and *make the way* for them to go in there!"

So, what does it mean when God takes that veil, and *He* rips it in two? Because of what happened in those hours of darkness on that Cross, we can come into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-22)! This is the turning-point day in human history! I would love to have seen the look on the faces of the priests who were busy in the temple the moment that happened. "Barney, what's that ripping sound?" And they would turn and they would gasp in astonishment! Surely, they thought they were going to be *consumed*, but they weren't, because all of those sacrifices that they had made those countless hundreds of thousands of times—*all* pointed to Jesus, and He had just made the "once for all" sacrifice (Heb. 10:10-12).

Oh, but we're not done yet! Something Mark doesn't tell us, Matthew 27 mentions that, at that very moment also, "many bodies" of Old Testament believers in and around Jerusalem "were raised" at the moment that Jesus died (vs. 52). It doesn't tell us much of what they did, except that they "appeared" on Sunday. We're not told what they did between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, but after Jesus arose, they went into Jerusalem and they "appeared to many" people (vs. 53). And we're not told what happened; I think the most logical conclusion would be that after they "appeared to many," God probably took them directly to heaven. I don't think it would be kind on God's part to send them back to Earth after they had already been set free. And there's no proof of this, but I would suspect that the appearances of those people probably played a role in preparing the hearts of some of those 3,000 who so quickly responded in faith to Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). I bet they could have been hearing that sermon and saying, "Yeah! You know what? I saw my aunt and uncle, right after Jesus died!" I don't know...I sure like to think that's the case.

Well, They Crucified Him; They Mocked Him; it was all about the fact that Jesus Bore Your Sins; and then, Number 4—Some Believed. Remember: the constant theme through the phases of Jesus's trials and the Crucifixion is this relentless mocking and ridicule; but there *are* delightful exceptions. Mark 15, Verse 39—"When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him"—he was *right there* for maybe the whole three hours; maybe he was there to guard Him—"saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' "

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As He breathed His last, He said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30). "Father"—calling Him "Father" again—"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk. 23:46). That centurion said, "I get it!" This was a Roman soldier! I don't think he had been following Jesus around Galilee and seeing all that stuff. And by the way: this really stuck out to Mark. Remember how Mark begins his book: Mark 1:1—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*." Well, here's the other bookend on that; even a Gentile, a Roman soldier, says, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

So, on that day, at least one Gentile was saved, along with the man on the Cross, who was a Jew. But there were also some people who didn't come to faith *that day*, but they *remained* faithful *through* that day: Mark 15, Verses 40 and 41—"There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem." Women played a very significant role in ministering alongside Jesus and the disciples, and taking care of them. So, there *were* believers there, although the launching pad doesn't come until the preaching of the Apostles after the Ascension of Jesus.

But finally, before we leave Mark, I want to get Jesus into the tomb. You know the story; we'll recap it a little bit when we study the Resurrection, when we come back to Mark. For all the terrible things that we know about the hypocrisy and the evil intentions of the Jewish Council that was called the Sanhedrin, there were at least one or two shining exceptions. Our text mentions this man named "Joseph" from a place called "Arimathea" (vs. 43), and we don't even know where Arimathea is. And we know, from the other Gospels, that in what Joseph does in our text here today, he was aided by the man named "Nicodemus" (Jn. 19:38-42). Nicodemus isn't mentioned, except here at the take-Jesus-down-from-the-Cross stage; we do know that Jesus met Nicodemus back in John Chapter 3, and at that time, he was called "the teacher of Israel" (vs. 10), so he was a Pharisee, and he was almost certainly one of the ones who was a leader among the Sanhedrin (see Jn. 7:45, 50). And now we have Joseph. We don't know if Nicodemus was still on the Council or not, but we know that Joseph was.

So, look at these last six verses: "When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead." Don't you wonder if the centurion said, "Yep, He's dead—and He was the Son of God, Pilate!" I'd like to think he said that. So Pilate "questioned him as to whether He was already dead." They wouldn't let the Jews stay there on the Day of Preparation—that's *why* they broke the legs; that's *why* they did that to hasten the death so that they could be off the cross before sundown, when the Sabbath began, and they wouldn't be able to do anything like that. "And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid."

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And that sets the scene for the ladies to come back on Sunday morning; they wanted to see where the tomb was so they could come back and finish the burial process. They didn't embalm, they just wrapped bodies, and then poured spices and things over them to preserve and add a little bit of dignity to it. They would place it in a tomb—this was a rock-hewn tomb; it was the tomb of a rich man—and the body would be laid on a shelf there. If you ever get to go to Gordon's Calvary, you get to duck into the tomb, and you can see several shelves; you put the body there, and you leave it there until it has deteriorated to only the bones; and then, you come back and you disassemble the bones; you put the bones into a box the size of a little toolbox—that's an ossuary—and then you bury the bones, and you can put the next person there to dry out. Well, this was a new, never-used tomb (Lk. 23:53)—again, fulfilling prophecy.

There's so much more we could do, but we won't. I just want you to let this sink in. Like we read from Second Corinthians Chapter 5—what are we supposed to do with this information? In the 26 verses that we've read here today, I haven't read *anything* that's a command to you or me. What are we supposed to do? Well, we read, in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, that the way we should handle this information is that we should "beg" people to "be reconciled to God" (vs. 20) by what Jesus did (see Rom. 5:10). God the Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so *that* we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (vs. 21). If you have not taken that step to receive that free gift of the righteousness of which you are *totally incapable* (see Rom. 3:10; cf. Phil. 3:9), then that's what you need to do with this: "Be reconciled to God," if you have never done that. And you could have sat in churches *thousands of times*, but if you've never called out to God for His grace and forgiveness through what Christ—and *Christ alone*—did, I beg you: Make this the day (see 2 Cor. 6:1-2).

I'll leave you with one other passage looking back to this. Remember Peter—his absolutely *colossal* disaster, after Jesus was arrested and he betrayed Him three times during that Jewish part of the trial. The good news is: Jesus hunted him down, restored him, and Peter became quite the mouthpiece. Look how Peter describes this in First Peter Chapter 2, starting at Verse 21—"For you have been called for this purpose"—my friend, God is calling *you* today to respond to His purpose! "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

You'll still battle sin in this world. The world, the flesh, the Devil—it's all against you. But you can be "dead to sin" because you're "alive to God" (Rom. 6:11), *only* through what Christ did.

Let's Pray: *Father, thank You for making this known to us. Thank You, indeed, for sending Your Son. As we ponder what He did, all we can do is say, "Thank You!" We are Yours. Have Your way with us. Use us for Your glory. Whatever might be in any heart here today that is contrary to the purpose for which You have called us—so that we can demonstrate Your righteousness to the world—sweep it away, I pray. Do what You need to do in each of our lives, that we could serve You the more effectively, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*