

Jesus' Trial and Crucifixion

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Text: Mark 15¹

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Series: The Passion of the Christ

Introduction: This morning we began a look into Jesus' journey to the Cross. He looked into the cup of God's wrath and submitted to the Father. He chose to drink the full cup of God's justice for us. The Lord's table is only symbolic of the greater reality. We drink the cup of God's love because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath. We asked you to do three things this morning...

I. Eat the Feast.

II. Consider the Cup.

III. Behold the Betrayal.

Now I want to ask you to do something else...

IV. Take in the Trial (Mk. 14:53-65).

A. The Jewish Trial

I. A Kangaroo Court (vs. 53-61a).

Mark 14:53-61a, "And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. **54** And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. **55** Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. **56** For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. **57** And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, **58** "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" **59** Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. **60** And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" **61** But he remained silent and made no answer."

There's nothing more dramatic than to be on trial for your life, and no more dramatic moment in a trial than when defendant is called to testify on the witness stand. And perhaps there's never been a more dramatic and shocking testimony given on a witness stand than the one Jesus Christ gave during his trial.

Mark continues with ...

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

2. The Shocking Testimony (vs. 61b-62).

Mark 14:61a-62, “Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.””

The high priest puts Jesus on the witness stand, and asks if He is the Christ (“the Messiah”), the Son of the Blessed One. At other times in Mark, Jesus has avoided identifying Himself when asked similar questions. But this time He is under oath before God, and He must give an answer. This time Jesus answers the question positively and fully—and He explains exactly what He means.

We should remember that the Jews at this time did not expect the Messiah to be literally divine. Therefore, the Lord must explain and amplify what He means.

- First He answers, “I am”. This is one of Jesus’ favorite ways of identifying Himself. “I am the Way”; “I am the Door”. “Before Abraham was, I am”. “I am” is a title of divinity. It is God’s covenant name. In Hebrew you would say “Yahweh”. So when asked by the high priest if He is the Christ, you can imagine Him lifting His hand and saying, as it were, “Yahweh”.
- But He goes further. He gives an allusion to Daniel 7:13 and says, “**and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven**” (vs. 62).
 - **Daniel 7:13** (ESV) —“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”
 - Everyone in the room, the entire council of the Sanhedrin—knows who the Son of Man is. In Dan. 7, the Son of Man comes from the throne of God to earth in the clouds of heaven to judge the world. Now the clouds of heaven are not like the clouds of earth, just water vapor. No, when Scripture speaks of the clouds of heaven, it is referring to the *shekinah* glory, the very presence of God.
 - Understand what Jesus is saying. He’s telling them: “I will come to the earth in the very glory of God and judge the entire world.” It’s an astounding statement. It’s a claim to deity.
 - Of all the Messianic texts in the Scriptures, Jesus specifically chose one saying that He is the Judge. By His choice of Scripture, Jesus is deliberately forcing us to see the paradox. They’ve brought Him before their tribunal to judge Him, but He is telling them, that though they may judge Him now, they will one day stand before Him!
 - As soon as Jesus claims to be the judge, there is an explosive response from the Jewish counsel: In fact I would describe it as...

3. The Violent Mob (vs. 64-65).

Mark 14:64-65, “You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.”

The high priest rips his own garments apart, a sign of the greatest possible outrage, horror and grief. And then the whole trial deteriorates. In fact it’s no longer a trial; it’s a riot. The jurors and judges begin to spit on Him and beat Him. In the middle of the trial, they go absolutely berserk. He is instantly convicted of blasphemy and condemned as worthy of death.

But the court of the Sanhedrin did not have the power to pass the death sentence during the feast of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. At this time capital cases needed the confirmation of the Roman procurator. As soon as they are able, the Sanhedrin hands Jesus over to Pilate, the governor appointed by Rome, so that he can put Jesus to death.

To top it off, Peter is in the courtyard. And here we see the sad denial.

B. The Sad Denial (vs. 66-72).

Mark 14:66-72, “And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, 67and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” 68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. 69 And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” 71 But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” 72 And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.”

- I’ll say only this. At the very moment of Peter’s denial, just after the cock crows, according to **Luke 22:61**, the Lord Jesus, with swollen and beaten face, looks through the open window to the courtyard outside and makes eye contact with Peter. It’s probably around 2 o’clock in the morning. We read in **Luke 22:61 (ESV)** — “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.”
- Jesus is likely put in dungeon in the high priest’s house over night. This dungeon is still in existence till this day.

C. The Roman Trial–Pilate (Mk. 15:1-5).

Mark 15:1-5, “And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

And he answered him, "You have said so." 3 And the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed."

Jesus is on trial again, this time before Pilate. The religious leaders offer a battery of charges. Jesus does not answer them, to the marvel of Pilate. We know from the other Gospel writers that Pilate has no desire at all to try this case. He vacillates and stalls in an attempt to get out of it. But he has another card to play. Maybe he can escape the responsibility of a decision through the time-honored custom of releasing a prisoner amid a time of general rejoicing:

D. The Release of Barabbas (Mk. 15:6-10).

Mark 15:6-10, "Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. 7 And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. 8 And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. 9 And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up."

Pilate is still trying to find a way out. He knows that the religious leaders are only accusing Jesus out of envy; they don't have a case. Barabbas is a violent man who has been convicted of murder. Will Pilate knowingly free a guilty man and condemn an innocent one? Mark continues as...

E. The Crowd's Thirst for Blood (Mk. 15:6-10).

Mark 15:11-15, "But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. 12 And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" 13 And they cried out again, "Crucify him." 14 And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

- Pilate is extremely reluctant to execute Jesus, but despite pronouncing that Jesus is not guilty of a capital offense, he hands Him over to be crucified. But not before He tries to publically exonerate himself.

Matthew records an even more detailed perspective.

- **Matthew 27:24-25 (ESV)** — "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." 25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Before going to the Cross, Christ mocked by the soldiers.

F. The Soldiers' Mockery of Christ (Mk. 15:16-20a).

Jesus had already been slapped repeatedly, his beard torn out by the Jewish leaders. His face was surely already swollen and bleeding. After the scourging His back would be a mass of bleeding wounds and quivering muscles.

The entire garrison of 600 Roman soldiers decided to mock Christ. They found a badly faded tunic that had been thrown aside. Matthew says it was a robe of scarlet. Mark and John say it was a “purple” robe (**Mark 15:17; John 19:2**). It was the closest thing to a royal color they could find.

Mark 15:16-20a, “And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 18 And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him”.

V. Consider the Cross [Mark 15: 16-47].

A. The Via Dolorosa (Mk. 15:20b-21).

Mark 15:20b-21, “And they led him out to crucify him. 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”.

- The Public Procession. Victims of crucifixion were usually paraded through the streets and made to walk in a public procession in order to maximize the humiliation of the spectacle. **John 19:17** simply records of the Way that Christ carried his cross, “and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. simply records of the Way that Christ carried his cross”. Jesus was forced to carry his own crossbeam to the place of execution until He could not carry it any longer. The crossbeam would have weighed about 125 pounds. This practice was what Jesus referred to earlier in His ministry when He said in Mark 8:34 (ESV) — “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”
- But Jesus was in such a state of exhaustion and had such a great amount of blood loss that he could not carry his cross.
- **Simon of Cyrene** at this time is just entering the city as Jesus is leaving Jerusalem for the outer limits to be crucified. Simon must take Jesus’ cross the rest of the way.

B. The Crucifixion (Mk. 15:21-24).

Crucifixion was designed to be the most humiliating and gruesome method of execution. The Romans reserved it for their worst offenders. It was a protracted, bloody, public spectacle of extreme pain that usually ended in a horrible death by shock or asphyxiation. But it is noteworthy that Mark gives us very few of the gory details. He aims his spotlight away from the physical horrors of Jesus ordeal in order to focus it on the deeper meaning

behind the events.

Mark 15:21-24, “And they led him out to crucify him. 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. 22 And 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. 24 And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.”

Jesus was offered a mixture of a narcotic. He refused it. He wanted to take in the full wrath of God.

The crowd doesn't know it, but Jesus is fulfilling prophecy. 600 years earlier, David wrote as the shadow of the ultimate Davidic king something no one could have expected because crucifixion was not yet invented. Yet we read of his hands and feet being pierced.

- Psalm 22:14 (ESV) — 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;
- Psalm 22:16–18 (ESV) — 16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— 17 I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; 18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.,

Imagine what Jesus' followers felt as they watched this scene around the cross, as they watched the man they had followed for years being crucified. Here was a man who calmed storms, banished sickness, and cheated death by the miraculous power of His word. Here was a man who less than a week before had been given a king's welcome to Jerusalem. Here was the Christ. How could this be happening? Mark goes on:

C. The Darkness (Mk. 15:25-33).

Mark 15:25-33, “And it was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. 33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.”

- More prophecy is being fulfilled. The crowd even in it's mocking is fulfilling prophecy. Consider again Psalm 22:7 (ESV) — 7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads”.

What is happening here? The darkness points to something cosmic. In their depictions of Jesus death, Mark and the other three Gospel writers show a consistent concern for what visual interplay between darkness and light. All four Gospel writers take pains to

emphasize that the critical events of Jesus' death happened in the dark. The betrayal and the trial before the Sanhedrin all happened at night, of course, but now at the actual moment of Christ's death, even though it is in the middle of the day, an inexplicable darkness descends. Hell literally descends on Calvary. Verse 33, "And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." The sixth hour was noon. The ninth hour was 3pm. So from 12 to 3pm in the afternoon, as Jesus was dying, there was total darkness.

Many have proposed natural causes.

- Perhaps an eclipse. But a solar eclipse can only create darkness for a few minutes.
- Others say perhaps a desert windstorm. A desert windstorm could obscure the sun for days at a time. But Passover falls in the wet season, so this darkness couldn't have come from that.
- This was a supernatural darkness. In the Bible, darkness during the day is a sign of God's displeasure. It's a sign of judgment. But look at who God is judging. Mark continues.

D. Forsaken by the Father (Mk. 15:34-37).

Mark 15:34-35, "34 And 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?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."

- Jesus was fulfilling ancient prophecy. Psalm 22:1 (ESV) — 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?" Jesus was being forsaken so that I could be accepted by God.
- Jesus is taking away for His people what is described throughout the prophets: the final day of judgment. Take **Amos 8:7-10** (ESV) for example — 7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. 8 Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?" 9 "And on that day," declares the Lord GOD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10 I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

E. The Full Cup of Wrath / the Death of Christ (Mk. 15:36-37).

Mark 15:36-37, "And 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." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last".

- Jesus took death for us. God died.

F. The Miraculous Signs (Mk. 15:38-41).

Mark 15:38-41, "And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."

At the moment Christ died, this massive curtain was ripped open. The tear was from top to bottom, just to make clear who did it. This was God's way of saying, "This is the sacrifice that ends all sacrifices, the way is now open to approach me now." Now that Jesus has died, anybody who believes in him can see God and touch God and connect to God. It's only possible because the price has been paid. Anyone who believes is applied with His blood and is "declared righteous" and justified before God.

But now we see another miracle. There was one person when observing Christ's death got it right. This is a surprising occurrence because this centurion was a Roman. Every Roman coin of the time was inscribed with "Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus." The only person a loyal Roman would ever call Son of God was Caesar, but look at this testimony.

Mark 15:39, "And 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!"

G. The Burial of Christ (Mk. 15:42-47).

Mark 15:42-47, "And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid."

Remember Isaiah told us that Jesus would be buried in a rich man's tomb? That rich man is Joseph of Arimathea.

Conclusion: What should we take home from all of this?

A year and a half ago, I did a funeral. A 23 year old stabbed. He died young. We are all going to die. My mother in law was given the news two years ago that she has cancer. I broke down in a public park in Louisville KY to my knees when I heard the news.

But you know what? It's ok. Christ has faced death so that we can face death. It's ok. We are ok if we are in Christ. There is no fear in death. When we are faced with death we are ok if we know Christ.

Let us close with this triumphant reminder from the apostle Paul.

1 Cor. 15:51-57, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts

on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."