

CRUCIFIXION – THE FIRST THREE HOURS

Mark 15:24-32

INTRODUCTION

There are many traditions associated with Christmas. The exchange of gifts is one of those traditions. However, the greatest gift is the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Christmas leads to the cross.

READ Mark 15:24-32

Christ being mocked before crucifixion

1st – before Caiaphus (14:65)

2nd – before Herod (Luke 23:11)

3rd – by the soldiers of Pilate

Proposition →

4 Groups of Mockers:

1. The **Ignorant Soldiers**
2. The **Knowing Thieves**
3. The **Fickle Crowd**
4. The **Vile Leaders**

So That:

- First 3 hours of Crucifixion – Mark skips the first 3 words of Jesus
- Emphasis in Mark on the first 3 hours is on these mockers
- Why?? Why little detail on the crucifixion?
 - show the total depravity of man...
 - which illuminates God's gift of grace, redemption and salvation

1st Group of Mockers ...

I. The Ignorant Soldiers

Mark 15:24-26

Point – The Authoritative Wicked; Those in Power; Those Who Sin in Ignorance

- This group doesn't have as much of the knowledge that the religious leaders or Israelites did
- Could represent those today who sin in ignorance
 - Recall: sin is our responsibility

Mark 15:24-26 – “**And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.** ²⁵**It was the third hour when they crucified Him.** ²⁶**The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**”

15:24 – “**And they crucified Him,**”
→ Summary Understatement

“**they**” – the quaternion of soldiers

Crucifixion originated in Persia → picked up by the Carthaginians and then by the Greeks and especially the Romans – estimated by the time of Christ Romans had crucified 30,000 in Israel.

Dr. Truman Davis, member of Arizona Medical Association describes crucifixion in *Arizona Medicine* in March, 1965:

Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The soldier feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action being careful not to pull the arms to tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed.

The raised cross is dropped into a hole prepared for it. As Jesus slowly sags down with more weight on the nails, in the wrists excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain -- the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes

Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. There is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. This is repeated over and over again.

At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward ... Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen ...

Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins...A terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart ...

The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air ...

Mark describes all of this with the words, “**And they crucified Him.**” – 3 words in the Greek

This is part and parcel of the Good News.

What Jesus suffered on our behalf

→ The **Suffering Savior**

Consider this quote:

‘The Blood of Sprinkling (part 1)’, Sermon in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*: by C. H. Spurgeon during the Year 1886

“If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits are full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then will there remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing. Hushed will be forever those silver notes which now console the living, and cheer the dying; a dumb spirit will possess this sullen world, and no voice of joy will break the blank silence of despair. The gospel speaks through the propitiation for sin, and if that is denied, it speaks no more. Those who do not preach the atonement exhibit a dumb and dummy gospel; it has a mouth, but it speaks not...

Would you have me silence the doctrine of the blood? Would any one of you attempt so horrible a deed? Shall we be censured if we continually proclaim the heaven-sent message of the blood of Jesus? Shall we speak with bated breath because some affected person shudders at the sound of the word ‘blood’? or some ‘cultured’ individual rebels at the old-fashioned thought of sacrifice? No. We will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.”

The ignorant soldiers:

“and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.”

This is one of multiple fulfillments of prophecies written hundreds of years before crucifixion was even invented:

Psalm 22:18 - “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

- clothes were more valuable in ancient times than today

Matt 27:36 – “and sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.”

- the 4 soldiers were required to remain with the victim until he was dead, making sure friends or family members did not rescue him or kill him to reduce his suffering.

The **Suffering Savior** is also → The **Forgiving Savior**

1st Word (of the 7 on the cross) – **Luke 23:34**

“But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”

Mark 15:25 – **“And it was the third hour when they crucified Him.”**

- Jewish time – 9:00 am
- on the cross for six hours - from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm –

Mark 15:26 – **“And the inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.””**

- it was Roman custom to hang the crime around the neck of the condemned man → recall the road to Golgotha
- then they would take it off and hang it on the cross during the crucifixion

Matt 27:37- **“they put above His head the charge against Him”**

John 19:19 – **“Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross”**

John 19:20 – **“written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek”**

Matthew – **“This is Jesus the King of the Jews”**

Mark – **“The King of the Jews”**

Luke – **“This is the King of the Jews”**

John – **“Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews”**

The full inscription is reconstructed from the four gospel accounts:

“This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.”

Consider this illustration: A thief robs a carriage. He steals plunder from the King's chariot but doesn't realize it is the King. However...he is still guilty of the robbery.

Application– Think of what these soldiers leave with. What do they take home from Golgotha? A few pieces of used clothing.

What could the ignorant soldiers take home?

- A new heart.
- A new inner man.
- Changed lives.
- A living Savior.
- Deliverance from fear of death.
- **Hope.**
- **Joy.**
- **Reconciliation** to God.
- **A certain future.**

They don't realize it's not the nails driven through the hands and feet of Jesus that hold Him there on the cross. It is the sin of man that holds Him on the cross.

Application – Friend, I pray you do not go home today with just a few pieces of used clothing.

2nd Group of Mockers ...

II. The Knowing Thieves

Mark 15:27-28, 32b

Point – The Full Out Wicked; Those in Prison

- Those fully aware of their guilt
- Could be those today who know the Bible and that they violated it but ...

Mark 15:27 – “**And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.**”

This is the fulfillment of prophecy:

Isaiah 53:12 – “**was numbered with the transgressors**”

- the Greek word here is not the word for a thief – *kleptos*

- a *leistos* operates on a large and systematic scale
- Insurrectionists – Barabbas was a *leistos* – **John 18:40**
- in fact, these two were probably part of the same insurrection as Barabbas – Barabbas was likely their leader.
- they were probably condemned at the same time as Jesus.

Mark 15:28 – “**And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."**”

Mark 15:32b – “**And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult.**”

3rd Group of Mockers ...

III. The Fickle Crowd

Mark 15:29-30

Point – The Fickle Wicked, Superficial Loyalty; Those in Majority

Friend’s Description

– “Mankind is one giant herd heading south toward hell”

Mark 15:29 – “**And 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,*"**”

Normally, the one crucified is not raised more than two feet above the ground – He is in the midst of the crowd around Him

Psalms 22:7 – “**All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,**”

This all occurred in a public area, beside a road.

This crowd certainly includes of Judeans and Galileans who previously admired Christ and perhaps even followed Him for a while. They heard Him preach and saw Him perform miracles.

Some of them had participated in His Humble Entry a few days earlier and joined in shouting hosannas to His name. They saw Him cleanse the Temple of the money changers and probably cheered Him while listening to His teaching.

It is also almost certain that these former admirers had earlier in the day called for Jesus' crucifixion and followed Jesus to the Place of the Skull to witness the execution.

These are the fickle wicked who have a place for Jesus **only** when He satisfies their wants.

They have no desire for Him to cleanse them of cherished sins or to give Him control of their lives. They expected Him to be their kind of Savior, a Savior who would overthrow Rome and establish Israel. The fact that He allows Himself to be arrested, mocked, beaten, scourged, and tried before the pagan Pilate.

“were hurling abuse” – imperfect – *blasphemeo* – blaspheming

- profane speech
- insulting speech against God
- a most extreme form of sin.

The One who is falsely accused of blasphemy (**Mark 14:64**) becomes the object of true blasphemy.

Mark 15:30 – “**save Yourself, and come down from the cross!**””

Matt 27:40 – “**save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross**”

- It is not weakness that keeps Jesus on the cross.
- It is **strength** that keeps Him there.

Sacrificial Strength

Recall: Mark 10:45!

Application – Many people today are like this crowd. They may have been raised in the church, heard the truths of the gospel many times, and know that Jesus Christ claims to be the Son of God.

They may have been baptized, made a profession of faith, and attended church regularly for a while. But because Jesus does not fulfill their worldly, selfish expectations they lose interest. They

are unwilling to be confronted with their own sin and need for repentance and forgiveness. The world is full of passers-by who once praised Jesus but now ridicule Him.

4th Group of Mockers ...

IV. The Vile Leaders

Mark 15:31-32a

Point – The “Righteous” Wicked; The Holier than Thou Majority;
The Worst of All

Mark 15:31 – “**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."**

- in their evil mocking, they declare a tremendous truth
- they got it right → He saved others
- got it wrong. → He cannot save Himself
- their only concept of power is power that acts in self-interest

It is not that He could not save Himself.

It is that He would not save Himself.

Jesus is not their kind of Messiah. They do not want to be made righteous. They want to be made successful. They do not want to be cleansed. They want to be selfishly satisfied.

Mark 15:32 – “**“Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!””**

Mocking title:

“This Christ, this King of Israel” – scorn and derision, ridicule

Their promise to believe is a complete lie

- They will not believe the miracle of His resurrection.

Their will is bound by their sin

- they have eyes but cannot see
- ears but cannot hear

The Knowing Thieves:

“And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him.”

“were casting the same insult” – imperfect – repeated insults

You would think dying this agonizing death would be enough to consume you. These two robbers are the perfect representation of the total depravity of man.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is - Suffering Savior

- Forgiving Savior

-Loving Savior

Loving Savior → Jesus sheds tears for those who shed His blood.

Friend of Sinners

Every unbeliever, no matter when he lives, is as guilty as the unbelievers who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ.

This event is timeless. If Jesus were crucified in Arizona today, these same people would be gathered around the cross. I believe this is the purpose of Mark's careful, deliberate descriptions of those who gather around the cross.

Hebrews 6:6 – Those who reject Christ **“crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”**

Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners, does not come down from the cross because He dies for the ignorant soldiers, the knowing thieves, the fickle crowd, and the vile religious leaders.

- Christ dies for all who crucify Him.

Jesus died for people from each of these groups.

1. From among the Ignorant Soldiers → A Centurion

Look at **Mark 15:39**. Who is he? This centurion is the leader of the four soldiers around the cross. I believe Scripture indicates the

centurion came to Jesus Christ as Savior this day. By the saving grace of God, he was plucked out of the group of the ignorant wicked to embrace the Savior they crucified.

2. From among the **Knowing Thieves** → A Thief

Turn to **Luke 23:39-43**. Picture him hanging on the cross suffering...mocking...and then...

3. From among the **Fickle Crowd** → 3000 Souls

Turn to **Acts 2:14-40**. Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost

(v. 41) → “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

- God, in His sovereign grace, saved three thousand souls out of the crowd that rejected Christ, screamed for His crucifixion, and mocked Him on the cross.

(v. 47) → “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

- more were added every day

4. From among the **Vile Leaders** → A company of priests

Even some of the corrupt mocking religious leaders were saved in the early days of the church.

Read **Acts 6:7** – **“The word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”**

Jesus is the friend of sinners. He died on the cross to bear the sins of those who crucified Him--and those of all ages who reject Him. He calls sinners to Himself out of each group. He is able and eager to forgive. Where are you? Are you in one of these groups who rejected Him?

→ Are you a believer or a crucifier?

- Our Savior sheds tears for those who shed His blood.

He died for you, if you will have Him.

Three Crosses, three Men. *One man died IN sin, one man died TO sin, one man died FOR sin.*

THIS IS THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS GIFT.

12/18/11