

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 23RD, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

A CRIMINAL'S DEATH (MARK 15:21-32) ROMAN CRUCIFIXION CUSTOMS

Jesus had just experienced a flogging and physical and mental torture like no other. Following this torture, a criminal would have been led by a Roman centurion in a sort of parade to strike fear into the eyes of others. This was also done to broadcast the offenses.

- In John's Gospel, we learn that Jesus started out by carrying His own cross.

TOO WEAK TO CONTINUE

Even though Jesus would have been responsible for carrying His cross, He was eventually unable to do so.

Notice here, the soldiers found a **stranger** to carry Jesus' cross for Him.

- Jesus had just finished being beaten and had carried the cross some distance. Because He was so weak, Simon of Cyrene was recruited and forced to assist.

THE PAIN OF THE CROSS

The crossbeam was carried by the individual. It weighed around 100 pounds.

- The individual was usually stripped of all clothes during the journey to the cross and remained uncovered while on the cross.
- Prior to crucifixion, a criminal would be offered a drink to numb the inevitable pain (Proverbs 31:6; Matthew 27:33-34). **In this case, Jesus declined.**
- Nails were placed through the wrists and ankles, fixing the body of the individual to the wood.
- The individual would need to pull up by the shoulders and against the nails to breathe, thus making it extremely difficult and painful.
- Breathing in this way would scrape and worsen the wounds on their back.
- In all of this, death was slow but imminent.

PROPHECIES FULFILLED

There were many prophecies that not only foretold the death and resurrection of Jesus, but also the way in which He would be crucified.

- Prophecies in Psalm 22:
 - **"They pierced my hands and my feet."**
 - **"They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing."**
 - **"He relies on the Lord; let him save him..."**
- Prophecies in Isaiah 53:
 - **"But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities."**
 - **"We are healed by his wounds."**
 - **"He willingly submitted to death...yet he bore the sin of many."**
 - **"He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death."**

MOCKING AND SCOFFING

The people who were passing by were not only travelers but also the priests and scribes.

- There is great irony in the insults spewed by the crowds. Jesus' life did not need saving, as our lives do. **Jesus had the ability to come down from the cross but stayed on it for the very people who insulted Him.** "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

THE DEATH OF JESUS (MARK 15:33-41) "DARKNESS CAME OVER THE WHOLE LAND..."

Other Gospels report a darkness coming over the land during this time, but Mark gives us the detail about it staying dark for three hours. **Passover is usually held during a full moon, so a natural eclipse would have been impossible.**

- Historians mention that not only was there an eclipse during this time, but also an earthquake. God and creation were saddened.

JESUS CRIES OUT TO THE FATHER

When Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" He was quoting Psalm 22:1 but also feeling the absence of God.

- Jesus is God in flesh. **Jesus had never experienced abandonment as He did on the cross.** This was the moment for which Jesus was preparing while praying in the garden (Mark 14:35-36).

EXPERIENCING HIS PRESENCE

Because Jesus had oneness with God, **He truly lamented at the thought of being cast out of God's presence** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

- Some of us have never grieved the thought of being cast out of God's presence because we have never truly experienced His presence. **If the thought of continuing in sin does not grieve us, we may still be attached to the world.**

MORE MOCKING

Unfortunately, Jesus was mocked and humiliated until His last breath. In verse 35, those around Him were mistaking His words for calling out to Elijah.

- The crowd knew enough to get it wrong but failed to **listen completely** and get it right. As Believers, this is why we must evaluate things entirely. **Do we hear Jesus entirely, and do we genuinely believe what He says?**

SOME WERE FINALLY CONVINCED

In John 19:30, we learn that when Jesus cried out and gave up His spirit He said, "it is finished," or *tetelestai*, which is translated *paid in full*. Once Jesus breathed His last breath, the curtain in **the temple was torn from top to bottom**.

- Numerous times in the Bible, miraculous things are observed. Even several of the priests eventually came to the faith (Acts 6:7).

WOMEN PRESENT

It is interesting that women were documented as being present during Jesus' last breaths and later as seeing Jesus' resurrected body.

- If the Gospels were manufactured, wouldn't it be more believable to have the first witnesses be men? The only reason the four Gospels agree here is because the women really were witnesses.

WRAPPED IN LINEN (MARK 15:42-47) MORE PROPHECY FULFILLMENT

"He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death" is another prophecy that was fulfilled through Jesus' death (Isaiah 53:9).

- Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin but also a disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). Joseph was unique in what he could offer Jesus.

JOSEPH ASKED FOR THE BODY

Typically, bodies would be left on the cross following a crucifixion, but not Jesus'. Joseph, "a member of the Sanhedrin, **who had not agreed with their plan and action,**" was now willing to expose himself (Luke 23:51).

- Joseph, like the disciples, had moments of cowardice, **but in the end, he was unashamed of who he followed.**

PREPARATION FOR BURIAL

Crucifixion was usually slow, and it sometimes took days for the individual to die. Therefore, it was unusual for Jesus to be pronounced dead the same day. Even so, the burial process had to be quick because it was later in the evening.

- Since this was hurried, Jesus was wrapped in linen and placed in a **borrowed** tomb.

HIS PRESENCE

- In experiencing God's wrath through taking on the sin of humanity, Jesus knew He would be separated from the love of God.
- **Have we ever been worried about our sin causing us to be temporarily separated?**
- **Have we forgotten what His presence feels like?**
- **Are we a passionate example to others?**

FOR ALL WHO WILL BELIEVE

- Jesus willingly gave His life through obedience to God's plan to save humanity from their sin.
- "To grow in your passion for what Jesus has done, increase your understanding of what He has done; never be content with your grasp of the gospel." – C.J. Mahaney
- **Are we fascinated with Jesus' sacrifice?**
- **Have we "moved on" from the cross?**

IT IS ALL ABOUT THE CROSS

- **We cannot be so invested in understanding how He died that we miss why He died.**
- Jesus experienced the abandonment of the Father so that we could live in perfect communion with the Father.
- **Do we understand the depravity of our sin?**
- **Do we understand the ferocity of His wrath?**
- **Then we will begin to understand His grace.**

OUR DEBT WAS PAID

- For our sin, we owe a debt that we will never satisfy on our own (Romans 6:23).
- Jesus did not just pay the price for sin and forgive all people in general, but He paid *your* price for *your* sin and forgave *you*.
- **His death on the cross is not the end of the story.**
- **Both His death and resurrection are necessary.**