

Mark Chapter 15 Continued

Mark 15:21 "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross."

All condemned prisoners were required to carry the heavy crossbeam of their cross to the execution site.

Exhausted from a sleepless night and severely wounded and weakened by His scourging, Jesus was unable to continue.

The Roman guards conscripted Simon, apparently at random, to carry Jesus' crossbeam the rest of the way.

Simon, from the North African city of Cyrene, was on his way into Jerusalem.

The identification of him as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Rom. 16:13), is evidence of Mark's connection with the church at Rome.

"Cyrene":

Is a country of Africa, so this was a black man.

Jesus had carried the cross part of the way, and when they saw His body was weak, they took hold of Simon and compelled him to carry the cross for Jesus.

There are several mentions of Alexander in the book of Acts, and in Romans we read of Rufus, which makes us think that they were followers of the Lord.

Possibly, they were part of the 120.

Mark 15:22 "And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull."

"Golgotha ... place of a skull":

"Golgotha" is an Aramaic word meaning "skull," which Mark translated for his readers.

Although the exact site is unknown, today two locations in Jerusalem are considered as possibilities:

(1) Gordon's Calvary (named for the man who discovered it in modern times), to the north; and

(2) The traditional site to the west at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a tradition dating to the fourth century.

“Golgotha” lay outside the city wall, and was the execution site for Jerusalem.

It is synonymous with Calvary, which comes from a Latin word also meaning “skull.”

In Luke chapter 23, this place was called "Calvary".

This hill really does look like a skull.

Mark 15:23 "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received [it] not."

“Wine mingled with myrrh”:

To temporarily deaden the pain (see note on Matt. 27:34), the Romans allowed this drink to be administered to victims of crucifixion, probably not out of compassion, but to keep them from struggling while being crucified.

“Myrrh”:

Would have dulled the pain, but Jesus would not take it.

This was a drink to kill the pain, but the Lord refused the pain killer, because He wanted not to be numbed from the pain, but to endure the full impact of the cross.

Mark 15:24 "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."

“Crucified”:

See note on verse 15.

None of the gospel accounts give a detailed description of the actual crucifixion process.

“Parted his garments”:

This was in fulfillment of (Psalm 22:18).

The executioners customarily divided the victim’s clothes among themselves.

Roman legal texts indicate that the executioners had a legal right to claim the minor possessions of the accused.

We see here, that Mark doesn't go into great detail about the crucifixion; it just states that they crucified Him.

His coat was a coat that had no seam.

They didn't want to tear it, so they cast lots.

In John 19:23, we read that four soldiers each got a part, and then they cast lots for His coat.

Mark 15:25 "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him."

“Third hour”:

The crucifixion occurred at 9:00 a.m. based on the Jewish method of reckoning time.

John notes that it was “about” the sixth hour” when Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (see John 19:14).

Jesus suffered on the cross six hours, symbolic of six days of work on the earth.

Mark 15:26 "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

“Superscription of his accusation”:

The crime for which a condemned man was executed was written on a wooden board, which was fastened to the cross above his head.

Jesus’ inscription was written in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. (John 19:20; also see the note on Matthew 27:37).

“THE KING OF THE JEWS”:

Since Pilate had repeatedly declared Jesus to be innocent of any crime (Luke 23:4; 14-15; 14:22), he ordered this inscription written for Him.

While Pilate’s intent was probably neither to mock nor to honor Jesus, he certainly intended it as an affront to the Jewish authorities, who had given him so much trouble.

When the outraged Jewish leaders demanded the wording be changed, Pilate bluntly refused (see note on John 19:22).

A comparison of all 4 gospel accounts reveals that the full inscription read THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (see note on Luke 23:38).

This sign confirms that Jesus was sentenced for having claimed to be the Jewish Messiah.

Matthew 27:37 "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Mark 15:27 "And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left."

“Two thieves”:

They were probably involved with Barabbas in the rebellion (see note on verse 7), since robbery itself was not a capital offense under Roman law.

Of these two thieves, the one on the right repented and was saved, and the one on the left died in his sin.

These two symbolized the lost of all humanity on the left, and those saved by the blood of the Lamb on the right.

In heaven, it will be Jesus, the Judge of all the world who will put the sheep on the right and the goats on the left; the separation, sheep (saved), goats (lost).

Mark 15:28 "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."

By placing Jesus' cross between the two robbers (verse 27), Pilate may have intended to further insult the Jews, implying that their king was nothing but a common criminal.

God intended it, however, as a fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 53:12).

Both the man on the left and the man on Jesus' right were sinners and deserved their punishment.

The difference was the one on the right repented, and Jesus promised him eternal life.

Mark 15:29 "And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [it] in three days,"

“wagging their heads”:

A gesture of contempt and derision (2 Kings 19:21; Psalms 22:7; 44:14; 109:25; Jeremiah 18:16; Lamentations. 2:15).

“Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days”:

The passerby repeated the false charge made during Jesus' trial before Caiaphas (14:58).

The charge was a misunderstanding of Jesus' words (in John 2:19-21).

“Railed on” means they hurled insults.

You see, they had no idea that He was speaking of His body in this.

Jesus spoke in parables, so that the unbelievers would not understand.

Understanding of this and all other Scriptures comes from the Holy Spirit of God revealing the meaning to us.

Mark 15:30 "Save thyself, and come down from the cross."

He could have come down off the cross any time He wanted to, but had He gotten down before the body died, all of humanity would have been lost.

This was the choice that Jesus Himself made to endure the shame of the cross that we might be renewed to God and live.

Mark 15:31 "Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save."

If there ever was an incorrect statement, this was it.

Jesus did save others (this is true).

He could save Himself (He just wouldn't for our sakes).

One terribly false teaching going around is that demons took Jesus off the cross.

Satan, a demon, or nothing else ever had power over the Lord Jesus.

He stayed on the cross, because He chose to.

He defeated Satan for all time on the cross.

Jesus did not suffer in hell.

He was victorious on the cross, and the Father had planned it.

This was victory, not defeat.

Mark 15:32 "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him."

“Christ” (see note on 1:1).

“Descend now from the cross”:

A final demand for a miracle by the unbelieving Jewish authorities (8:11).

Their claim that they would then see and believe was false, since they later refused to believe the even greater miracle of Christ's resurrection.

"They that were crucified with him":

The two robbers joined in the reviling of Jesus, though one latter repented (Luke 23:40-43).

They would not believe even if He came down from the cross.

Jesus raised the dead, opened blind eyes, freed the demoniac man, fed the 5000, and still they did not believe.

Even a voice from heaven came and called Jesus God's Son at Jesus' baptism.

This would not alter their opinion any more than all of these things did.

You either believe, or you don't; and they didn't.

Jesus did not use His great power for personal reasons.

He would suffer the pain and humiliation of the cross to fulfill the will of the Father, and to save all who will believe.

We Christians, can learn a lesson from this.

When others revile us for the gospel's sake, just hang in there that much firmer.

Mark 15:33 "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."

"Sixth hour":

Noon, by Jewish reckoning, at the half-way point of Jesus' 6 hours on the cross (see note on verse 25).

Darkness reigned from noon until 3 p.m.

A mark of divine judgment (Isa. 5:30; 13:10-11; Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:14-15; Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

The geographical extent of the darkness is not known, although the writings of the church fathers hint that it extended beyond Palestine.

"Ninth hour":

I.e., 3:00 p.m.

Satan thought he had put out the Light of the world, but Satan never counted on the resurrection.

Mark 15:34 "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

“Eloi ... sabachthani?”:

The Aramaic words of (Psalm 22:1).

Matthew, who also record this cry, gave the Hebrew words (Matt. 27:46).

“Why hast thou forsaken me?”

Jesus felt keenly His abandonment by the Father, resulting from God’s wrath being poured out on Him as the substitute for sinners (see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21).

Mark preserves the Aramaic form of Jesus’ outcry, which calls (Psalm 22:1), to mind.

Some mistook His words (verse 35).

Even in the midst of bearing God’s wrath for sin, Jesus still calls Him “my God.”

His agony does not overcome His faith.

God the Father cannot look upon sin.

Jesus had taken the sin of the whole world upon His body, so that sin might die upon the cross.

The Father, for a moment, turned away so the full pain of the flesh could be experienced by Jesus our Lord (His Son).

Sin was crucified with Jesus on the cross.

Mark 15:35 "And some of them that stood by, when they heard [it], said, Behold, he calleth Elijah."

Further mockery which in effect meant, “let the forerunner come and save this so-called Messiah” (see note on Luke 1:17).

In the 4th chapter of Malachi, it had been promised that Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Some of these people thought Jesus was calling Elijah.

Mark Chapter 15 Continued Questions

1. Who did they compel to carry Jesus' cross?
2. What country was he from?
3. What did that tell us about him?
4. Who are Alexander and Rufus, probably?
5. Give two other names for Golgotha?
6. What did they offer Jesus to drink?
7. Why did He not take it?
8. After they crucified Him, what did they do with His garments?
9. Why did they not separate the coat?
10. How many soldiers were His garments given to?
11. At what hour did they crucify Him?
12. How long would Jesus be on the cross?
13. In Mark 15:26, what was the superscription of His accusations?
14. In Matthew 27:37, what was said?
15. Who was crucified with Jesus?
16. Who did the two thieves symbolize?
17. What was the difference in the two here?
18. What did those wagging their heads say to Jesus?
19. How do we read and understand a parable?
20. Had Jesus come down off the cross, what would have happened to all of humanity?
21. In verse 31, what did the chief priests mockingly say about Jesus?
22. What is a terrible teaching going around about demons and Jesus?
23. Where was Jesus victorious?

24. In verse 32, what did the priests call Jesus?
25. Why do we know that they would not have believed, even if He had come down?
26. What lesson can we, Christians, learn from this?
27. At what hours was the darkness over the land?
28. What does this three hours of darkness symbolize?
29. What did Jesus cry out at the end of the ninth hour?
30. What had Jesus taken on His body?
31. Who did some of the people believe Jesus called?
32. What Old Testament prophecy caused them to believe this?