



Truly This Man Is The Son Of God!

Mark 15:22-39

1. He was Crucified (verses 22-26).
2. He was Mocked (verses 27-32).
3. He was Abandoned (verses 33-38).
4. He was Son of God (verse 39).

I want to begin this morning with some important dates in history, ...

September 11, 2001 - World Trade Center Terrorist Attacks
- Brought the United States into war with terrorists

November 9, 1989 - The Fall of the Berlin wall
- Uniting East and West Germany, symbolizing the defeat of communism by democracy

July 21, 1969 - Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon for the first time
- a huge technological achievement for the human race.

December 7, 1941 - Attack on Pearl Harbor
- Brought the United States into World War II

December 17, 1903 - Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first powered airplane ride in Kitty Hawk
- It paved the way for air travel and air combat.

May 10, 1869 - The Union and Central Pacific Railroads were joined together.
- Instead of taking months on a long, hard journey, it only took a few days to travel across the United States. You could do so in comfort in a sleeper car.

July 4, 1776 - Signing of the Declaration of Independence
- Brought America out from under British rule.

October 31, 1517 - Martin Luther posted the ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg.
- Kicks off the reformation

October 12, 1492 - Christopher Columbus discovers America
- Opening up the entire world for travel and trade.

June 10, 1215 - The Magna Carta was signed.
- It established basic human rights for English citizens.

Late May, 337 A. D. - Constantine is Baptized.
- A giant indication that Christianity had won the day.

Now, each of these events had a profound impact upon the world as we know it. But, the historic event that we will look at this morning had a far greater impact than any of these events. The historic event that we will look at this morning had a far greater impact than all of these events combined! I'm talking about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

It can well be argued that the crucifixion of Jesus was the pinnacle of history -- the hinge upon which everything turns. Our world knows this. How do we count history? Isn't everything either B. C. or A. D. Before Christ or A. D., which stands for *Anno Domini*, "Year of our Lord." Some try to take Christ out of our year's designation, by using B. C. E. (Before Common Era) and C. E. (Common Era) But, they still refer to the same thing. And it all hinges around the coming of Jesus.

This is what our Bibles tell us. Everything in the Old Testament anticipates Jesus. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures [the Old Testament Scriptures] because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:39). On the road to Emmaus, "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to [the disciples] the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Everything in the New Testament explains Jesus. The gospels tell the account of His life. The epistles explain His life.

Mark Dever wrote two books. One was an Old Testament survey; the other was a New Testament survey. The Old Testament book is called, "Promises Made." The New Testament book is called, "Promises Kept." And it can well be argued that the crucifixion was where it all turned.

What a privilege we have of looking at these things this morning.

This morning, we will look at the Gospel of Mark, chapter 15 and verses 22 through 39.

Mark 15:22-39

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!"

The title of my message this morning comes from the lips of the centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus. He saw how Jesus was crucified. He saw how he was mocked by those who walked along the way and by those who hung on crosses next to Jesus. He saw how he was abandoned. And he made the conclusion that, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (verse 39). My hope and my prayer for all of you this morning is this: may you come away from my message this morning repeating the same thing as this man: "Truly this man is the Son of God!"

My outline this morning is quite simple. It will trace out what happened to Jesus in His death. First of all, ...

1. He was Crucified (verses 22-26).

This is obvious. Mark's account of His crucifixion is straightforward. It tells us much about the circumstances surrounding the crucifixion. In verse 22, we find out where Jesus was crucified, ...

Mark 15:22

Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull."

This was a well-known place in the days of Jesus. It was known only for its name, which means "The Skull." This is where we get the name, "Calvary." "Calvary" is the Latin translation of the word, "skull." We don't know exactly where this place was. We do know from John 19:20 that it was "near the city." We also know from Hebrews 13:12 that this location was outside the gates of the city. But, there is an ongoing debate among Archeologists, as to exactly where this place was on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

But in the days of Jesus, the people would have known exactly where this place was. This is where the Romans crucified their criminals. In that place, there were certainly some vertical poles, called "stipes" upon which the crossbeams which the criminals carried to Golgotha would be attached. And so, as the crowds Jesus walking down the Via Dolorosa, it was obvious to all where they were heading. They were heading to the place where all criminals were executed: "Golgotha."

All the crowds knew what to expect whenever they happened to pass by Golgotha. They would see men nailed to crosses and lifted high for all to see. They would observe these men die a very slow death.

In verse 23 we read of a drink that some people tried to give Jesus, ...

Mark 15:23

They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.

This was the first order of business for all who were crucified. They were given some wine to drink. This was given as a form of analgesic, to lessen the pain.

I remember the occasion on one of our vacations to California that did the "gold rush" tour. We went to Sutter's Mill, where gold was first discovered in California in 1848. We also went to Sutter's fort, where many of the people who came out to California in the gold rush would first visit before they took off to find their fortune. I remember going on to the town of Columbia, which is essentially a giant museum. They have tried to keep the town as it would have been in the days of the gold rush. As we walked through the town, we saw the old fire-engine. We saw the old saloons, which still function as restaurants. I remember going to the dentist's office. They had a replica of the chair that the dentist used. Out for display were the tools that the dentists would use to pull teeth.

Think about this dentist. This was 150 years ago. They had no Novocain back then (it wasn't invented until 1905). Furthermore, dental hygiene 150 years ago isn't what it is today. There was no fluoride in the water. This was especially the case in the rugged wilderness of California during the days of the gold rush. Tooth decay was often.

Their tools were far from sophisticated. They looked about like my toolkit. Various pliers. Various straight things, like my screwdrivers.

I remember pausing with Yvonne at this place, just thinking about the reality of using these crude pliers to pull out teeth. The dentists who were particularly fast about removing the teeth were well-known as the "good dentists." So, what did they use to help dull the pain? They used hard liquor. They got their patients drunk. When they pulled their teeth, it didn't hurt nearly as bad, and patients wouldn't remember what happened.

Such a practice is biblical. But, at the cross, Jesus wasn't merely going to have a tooth pulled. He was going to die. Proverbs 31:6 instructs us to "give strong drink to him who is perishing." Such was the purpose of the wine that was offered to Jesus. This wasn't "fine wine." This was more like hard liquor wine to help manage the pain of the cross. It was to help be an anesthetic for the pain that He would endure on the cross.

But, of course, once Jesus realized what had been placed near His lips, He refused it. As our text says, "He did not take it" (verse 23). Jesus wasn't going to go through with this sacrifice in any way diminishing the pain or suffering. His cup was to endure the full brunt of the suffering involved.

I'm sure that the "two robbers" willingly took it (Mark 15:27). Surely they wanted to do anything that they could to decrease the pain involved in their death. But Jesus, Himself, "was unwilling to drink" (Mar 27:34).

In verse 24, we find out what the soldiers did with Jesus' garments, just after Jesus was lifted into place.

Mark 15:24

And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.

With any occupation comes certain privileges. A physician can write prescriptions for his sick family members. A carpenter can build an addition onto his house. A pilot can get discounts with the airlines. One of the perks of being a soldier responsible for the crucifixion process is that you would get the victim's clothing. Obviously, those dying didn't need their clothing any more.

And so, the soldiers were "casting lots" for His clothing. They rolled dice or picked straws (or something of that nature). The winner received His garments. This was in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, which said, "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." All was according to God's plan.

In verse 25, we find out when Jesus was crucified.

Mark 15:25

It was the third hour when they crucified Him.

The Jews began their clock each day at sunup. And so, the third hour was nine o'clock in the morning. Jesus began His night praying in the garden. He was arrested at some point that night. He was carted about through various trials of the Jews and of the Romans. And shortly after the cock crowed, Jesus was led out to be crucified. Before He made it to the cross, He was "scourged" (verse 15). It was nine o'clock when Jesus was hoisted upon the cross to die.

In verse 26, we find out the official charge against Jesus.

Mark 15:26

The inscription of the charge against Him read, "The King of the Jews."

When you read John's account of the trial before Pilate, the entire discussion revolved around Jesus being a king. Jesus admitted to Pilate that He was a king, "You say correctly that I am a king" (John 18:37). But, Jesus also clarified it, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). And so, rightly so did the charge above Jesus' head read, "the king of the Jews." It's what Jesus claimed to be before Pilate.

Such an accusation angered the Jews. It angered them because the "king of the Jews" is another name for the Messiah. Psalm 2 makes that clear. The anointed one is the King that the LORD has installed upon Zion. But, they deemed such an accusation to be blasphemy (Mark 14:64). In John's account, the Jews tried to get Pilate to change to wording of Jesus' crime (John 19:21). But, what Pilate had written, he had written and he wasn't going to change it (John 19:22).

Such were the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. Verse 22 tells us where He was crucified. Verse 23 tells us that He refused to drink the wine. Verse 24 tells us what happened to His garments. Verse 25 tells us when He was crucified. Verse 26 tells us the charge against Him.

But, did you notice that very little is said of the actual crucifixion, itself? It's mentioned twice. First, in verse 24, "and they crucified Him."

Second, in verse 25, "they crucified Him." But, nothing of the details. "Why?" Why so little told about the pain and agony of the cross? Why doesn't Mark record anything about the actual pain and suffering that Jesus went through on the cross? Why didn't Mark explain the pain of receiving a nail through your hands and feet? Why doesn't he describe the pain of such things as hanging upon the cross on a few nails and lifting yourself up to breathe? Why doesn't he explain the pain of the cramps that you would experience due to the dehydration?

I believe that Mark didn't write much about this because those who first received this gospel account were very familiar with the process of crucifixion. Most of the people who originally read the gospel of Mark had probably seen a crucifixion or two in their day. Perhaps they had seen three or ten or even fifty or more in their lifetimes. Crucifixion loomed large in their society. This is the common way in which the Romans put their criminals to death.

Exact practices varied from geographic region to region. There was no one standard way in which crucifixions were carried out. I'm sure that those doing the executing used whatever was available to them at the time to pin their victims to the cross and let them hang there until they died.

When the Persians practiced crucifixion, a single post may have been used. At times, criminals may have even been impaled upon a high-hanging branch of a tree.

The custom of the Romans at the time of Christ was to use a cross of some shape and size, which varied from region to region. Some were formed in the shape of an "X" which would stretch out the victim's arms and legs. Some were formed like a capital "T" which would consist of a vertical stake with a crossbeam that would rest upon it. In the case of Christ, he was probably crucified upon a cross that looked like a small letter "I" with the horizontal crossbeam a bit lower than the top of the stake to allow a sign to be nailed above the head of Jesus (as in verse 26).

This whole process was familiar to those alive at the time, and so Mark felt little need to expound upon the pain of the cross. The case is a bit different for us today. We don't see crucifixions too often in our society. It would do us well to spend a few moments this morning thinking about the pain of the cross.

The process of the crucifixion was designed with the intent of producing a slow death while maximizing pain and suffering. None of the crucial organs of the body were damaged in the process of crucifixion. Bodily functions would carry on as normal. Eventually, the victims would die from lack of energy, as they simply no longer had the energy in them to lift themselves up to breathe.

I remember being at a friend's house in California with a group of college students. We happened to notice some rather large beetles which flew. I don't know what kind of beetles they were, but they were about the size of a quarter. We got the idea that it might be fun to put a leash on them and have our own "beetle on a string." And so, we went into the house and got some thread. And we tied the necks of these beetles with some thread and let out between five and ten feet of thread. It was really pretty cool. We would hold one end of the thread and watch the beetles begin to fly away until they reached the end of their tether. At that point, they were stopped in their flying. Often, they would find another direction in their flight so as to loosen the tether. And off they would go again, until the thread became taut again. We walked around the yard taking our "pet beetles" for a fly.

As I remember, we had probably a half-dozen beetles tied like this. They provided great fun -- for about an hour. After that time, the beetles preferred to sit on the ground, rather than fly. They didn't even move very much when poked or prodded. Eventually, they died. I believe that they died of exhaustion.

This was a little bit like crucifixion. These beetles died because their energy was spent. However, these beetles weren't in great pain as they became fatigued. This is what happened in the case of crucifixion. All energy was lost. And there was no way to breathe any more. Eventually, the criminal would die from what physicians call "exhaustion asphyxia." Through the scourings, much blood would be lost. Through the carrying of the cross, much energy would be lost. Upon the cross, the victim would slowly be worn down until they eventually expired.

Jesus felt the painful iron spikes that were driven through His hands. These spikes were some 5-7 inches long. They probably would have been driven through His wrists, between His radius and His ulna to be able to bear His own weight upon the cross. Though the spikes would have missed the bones, they would have been driven right through the median nerve, crumpling the fingers into a fist and shooting great signals of pain to the brain.

Jesus felt the iron spikes that were driven through His feet. His feet may have been nailed just below his second and third metatarsal (which is half-way up his foot). Or, His legs may have been turned to the side to enable the soldiers to nail the spike right through His heel bone. In 1968, archeologists uncovered portions of a skeleton of one who was crucified near Jerusalem. His heel bone still had the spike in it when it was discovered. At any rate, the nails would have been placed well enough to miss any major arteries to cause the victim to bleed to death.

Jesus felt the pain of hanging by these spikes for hours upon the cross. Have you ever attempted to move a heavy object that has no good place to lift? The small surface area begins to dig into your fingers so that your fingers begin to hurt. Perhaps your fingers go numb. You decide to put it down for a bit because of the pain. That gives you a small taste of the pain that Jesus endured on the cross. But His pain did not let up.

All I can say is that the pain of His death would have been excruciating. Isn't that the word that we use to describe the greatest amount of pain that we can bear? "Excruciating!" Do you know where the word, "excruciating" comes from? This word comes from the Latin, "excruciatu," which literally means "out of the cross." The cross is the measure of the greatest pain that we experience as human beings. Pain "out of the cross" is the most severe pain that might be experienced.

Jesus experienced the full amount of pain for us. He didn't take the mercy of diluting His pain with the "wine mixed with myrrh". He didn't have the mercy of having His legs broken like the criminals on either side of Him did (John 19:32). Breaking your legs was an act of mercy,

allowing you to die quickly. No, Jesus bore all of our punishment. Peter writes, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Excruciating pain is the punishment that all of us deserve. In our minds, we think that such a great punishment is due only for the worst of criminals! But, what we don't understand is that in light of our rebellion against an infinitely holy God, every single one of us deserves such a punishment for our sins. The descriptions that Jesus gives of hell ought to establish this in your mind. He describes hell as a place of terrible pain that continues forever. Jesus said that the suffering of hell was like a man feeling the agony of burning in a flame of fire (Luke 16:24). In Revelation 20, it is described as a "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). Jesus said that such punishment is eternal (Mat. 25:46). This is what we deserve! It is only by faith in the sufferings of Christ that we are even delivered from such punishment.

You ought to wake up each and every morning realizing that whatever grace you receive from God today is far more than you deserve. Whatever pain and suffering that you receive today is far less than you deserve.

2. He was Mocked (verses 27-32).

In the early days of Kishwaukee Bible Church (our sending church), my father gave a presentation of the physical aspects of crucifixion as seen from a medical perspective. He showed pictures using anatomical diagrams which displayed how the body would be impacted by a crucifixion. He described the physiological sufferings that Christ experienced.

As soon as my father sat down from that presentation, a verse suddenly flashed into my mind. It was Hebrews 12:2, which tells us to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). As terrible as His physical sufferings were, I remember coming to realize that the Bible speaks of the shame hurled at Jesus as being the most detestable part of the crucifixion.

Jesus Christ endured the pain of the cross, all the while knowing the shame of the cross. There is more to the cross than the mere physical sufferings of Jesus. While Jesus was upon the cross, He was mocked by many. Psalm 22:7 says, "All who see me sneer at me. They separate with the lip. They wag the head." Such was the shame of the cross.

Never underestimate how difficult this was for Christ to receive such abuse. We have this saying, "Sticks and stones break my bones, but names will never hurt me." It may be a nice saying, but it isn't true. Words can do much harm.

Laura Bush was once asked what the hardest thing about being First Lady was. She replied, "Seeing my husband being criticized unjustly." It wasn't the long hours or the great pressure that was the most difficult. It was unjust criticism. Words do hurt us!

Even the circumstances surrounding His crucifixion was shameful. Jesus was numbered with the transgressors. That's the point of verses 27 and 28, ...

Mark 15:27-28

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."]

Although Jesus was perfectly righteous, He was placed right next to the wicked. Such was in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 - He was numbered with transgressors. Jesus was assumed to be a criminal as well, though He, Himself, never committed any sin. This would have caused many to think of Jesus in ways in which we don't even dream.

When we think of Jesus, we think of Him as a righteous man. Even unbelievers today who think of Jesus will think of Him as a good man. But, when many of those who saw Him hanging upon the cross with these criminals, they would have thought Him to be a great sinner. It would have brought great shame to Jesus. Their thoughts come out in verse 29 and 30, ...

Mark 15:29-30

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!"

The crucifixion of Christ was done in a very public place (Romans 3:25). As a result, there were many people who would have seen what was happening. As they passed by, they may have looked at the men to see if they recognized any of them. I suspect that when they looked at Jesus, He was unrecognizable, having been awake all night and having been scourged by the Romans. Those who passed by Him must have asked those who were standing around, "Who are these people being crucified today?" When it was explained to them that one of them was Jesus, certainly, they would have remembered His teaching and laughed at Him. "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

These weren't words of genuine entreaty. These weren't words of helpful suggestions. As verse 29 suggests, these were abusive words, meant only to insult Jesus upon the cross. These were words that were intended to show Him how foolish He was. He claimed to be able to destroy the temple and rebuild it! Where did it get Him? It got Him crucified upon the cross!

But, beyond the people (the hoi polloi) the religious elite got in on the action as well, ...

Mark 15:31-32

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!"

It seems as if they weren't really even talking to Jesus as much as they were preaching to the crowds about Jesus. With Jesus as the ultimate object lesson, they may have preached something like this:

He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Look at Him. He is perishing upon the cross. He certainly isn't a savior. He is not to be trusted in.

"He is the King of Israel." Or so says the sign above His head. But, is He really a king? Are kings crucified like this man? Certainly not.

Let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. He has every opportunity to show Himself to be who He claimed to be. All He has to do is climb down from the cross. And then we will believe in Him.

The Psalmist clearly said, "He trusts in God; Let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him" (Psalm 22:8). Let us wait and see if God will come and rescue Him. Didn't the Psalmist also say, "He will give His angels charge concerning you" (Ps. 91:11). Let us see the angels come down and rescue the one who said, "I am the Son of God."

Even the robbers got into the action.

Mark 15:32
Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

Luke tells us in His gospel how one of these two robbers confessed His sin before Jesus and requested mercy in His kingdom (Luke 23:39-43). And yet, before this criminal did so, he joined right along with the others in insulting Jesus as well. "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39). "You are no better than we are! How can you claim to be innocent. You must be a criminal as well! Surely, the Romans would not put to death an innocent man. You are a sham and a disgrace."

The words of this robber would only serve to heighten the extent of the shame upon Jesus. It's one thing to be verbally abused from free men who are watching the crucifixion from the ground. But, when those being crucified along with Jesus join in shaming Jesus, you know that it is getting bad!

It's one thing for a crowd to boo a certain athlete for his poor performance. But, it's another thing entirely for his own teammate to turn on him and boo his performance in front of everybody. That would be a shameful thing. And that's exactly what this was when the robbers on the other crosses were casting insults at Jesus as well.

And though not in the text, I do believe that there was a way that God was mocking Him as well. In the Old Testament, God pronounced a curse upon the crucified. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). Where does the curse come from, but from God, Himself?

Jesus was mocked by all. He was mocked by Pilate, who took His claim to be a king at face value. He was mocked by those who passed by, by the religious elite, by the robbers, and even by God.

3. He was Abandoned (verses 33-38).

Here we come to the great reality of the cross of Christ. God, the Father, forsook God, the Son (verse 34). We read in verse 33, ...

Mark 15:33
When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.

That is, from noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon, darkness was upon the whole land. How this darkness came about, we don't know. We know that it wasn't caused by an eclipse, for the Passover was always celebrated during a full moon, during which an eclipse is impossible. It may have been a sudden cloud cover. It may have been a dust storm. It may have been a rain storm. It may well have been something supernatural. Perhaps God, the Father, turned off the sun for a few hours, much like we turn off our light switches.

The question comes, "Why? Why the darkness?" I believe that it was a clear sign of God's judgment. Throughout the Bible, darkness is a sign of judgment.

One of the plagues brought upon Egypt in the days of Moses was the darkness that came upon the land of Egypt (Ex. 10:21-29). In the book of Revelation, a portion of the judgment is the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars. The prophet Amos tells of the day in which the Lord God would "make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight " (Amos 8:9).

This is exactly what took place in death of Jesus. The sixth hour of the day was noon! In Amos, this speaks about a day of judgment, which, I believe, is the meaning of this darkness.

Judgment was coming upon those who rejected their Messiah. Judgment was coming upon those who "disowned the Holy and Righteous One ... in the presence of Pilate" (Acts 3:13, 14). Judgment was coming upon those who "asked for a murderer to be granted" in His place (Acts 3:14). Judgment was coming upon those who "put to death the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15) and "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Here was perfect love and pure light. They did the worst thing imaginable to Him: they put Him to death.

But, there was another judgment taking place. God was judging Jesus as well. This comes in verse 34, ...

Mark 15:34

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?"

These words are loaded with significance. It has caused theologians to think and ponder hard for centuries to seek to fully grasp what was going on in this moment of time: God, the Father, was forsaking God, the Son.

For thirty-three years of His life, Jesus had known intimacy with the Father. He "came forth from the Father ... into the world" (John 16:28). While in the world, Jesus said, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John 16:32). Jesus did the work that God the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). This intimacy came down even to the words that Jesus spoke. He said, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works" (John 14:10).

Never was there a time in the entire life of Jesus in which He was apart from the presence of God, the Father, until this moment upon the cross. Suddenly, the Father was gone! Jesus no longer felt or experienced the presence of His heavenly Father. Jesus felt truly abandoned and alone for the first time in His life.

Jesus knew what it was to be abandoned by other people. Surely during His life, there were many who were unfaithful to Him. Of the ten lepers that were healed, they all abandoned Him to pursue their own interests, except for one who came back to give thanks to Him (Luke 17:16). How many thousands did Jesus heal that left Him high and dry. Of the 5,000 that He fed, many went against His teaching (John 6:14). Many who heard Him gladly one day would leave Him the next due to His doctrine (John 6:60). Many who cried, "Hosanna" turned to cry out "Crucify Him" in less than a week. Then, there was Judas and the twelve, all of whom abandoned Him during His time of greatest need. So, Jesus knew what human abandonment was like.

Never did Jesus ever vocalize His own agony at those who left Him. When Judas betrayed Him, His words were only compassion, "Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). When Peter denied Him three times, it was only a look that Jesus gave to Peter (Luke 22:61). But, this moment upon the cross was far different. It was far more difficult for Jesus. It caused Him to scream in agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (verse 34).

It wasn't because Jesus deserved to be forsaken. Rather, it was so that we could be forgiven! Our sin must be punished. God cannot merely turn His face away and ignore our sin. No, He has to deal with it. His justice demands it.

The good news is that Jesus took the punishment for our sins that we deserved. But, the only way for God to punish Jesus was to abandon Him first. There was no way that God would be with Jesus and judge Jesus at the same time. There had to be this divine abandonment for Him to be judged. So, when you hear Jesus cry out to His heavenly Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Listen to heaven calling down to Jesus, "So that I can save My people."

Apart from the Father forsaking the Son, salvation would be impossible. Think about how difficult this was for Jesus to bear. First of all, this was an entirely new experience for Him. He had never experienced alienation from His Father before. Second, His Father abandoned Him when He needed Him most. For all of the martyrs throughout the history of the church, this has not (and will not) be the case. In the hour of greatest need, God has always been faithful to sustain His people. God has promised, "I will never desert you, Nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

When Joshua was soon to lead the people into the promised land, the Lord told him, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). When David faced His troubles, he rested confidently in the Lord's help: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?" (Ps. 27:1); Israel was told, "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Is. 41:10).

We are promised that nothing can separate us from the love of God, "... not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing" (Rom. 8:38-39). Yet, for our sake, God the Father abandoned Jesus, the Son.

How that could be, we cannot understand. But, we understand far more than did those who watched Jesus die.

Mark 15:35-36

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."

The most obvious sense of these words is that those who were standing by who heard Jesus cry out, "Eloi, Eloi," misunderstood the words that were spoken. Rather than understanding them as a call to "My God, My God," which is what "Eloi, Eloi" means in Aramaic, they may

have understood these words to be a call for Elijah.

Elijah was a worker of miracles who didn't die. Rather, he was taken "by a whirlwind to heaven" (2 Kings 2:1). There was a Jewish tradition floating around during the time of Christ that believed that Elijah might come and rescue the righteous in their distress without letting them die. [\[1\]](#)

Putting all of these things together, those who heard Jesus say these things surmised that Jesus was calling for Elijah. And so, one man sought to sustain the life of Jesus a bit longer by taking giving Him a drink of sour wine. The rest were waiting to see if indeed Elijah would come. But He didn't.

We read in verse 37, ...

Mark 15:37
And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.

At this point, Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus said. We might even think that Jesus let out one final scream of pain. However, John records for us what Jesus said (John 19:30). He said, "it is finished!"

How I love to heard these words come from the mouth of our children. "Did you clean your room?" ... "It is finished." "Did you empty the dishwasher?" ... "It is finished." "Did you fold the laundry?" ... "It is finished." "Did you vacuum?" ... "It is finished."

And these words of Jesus ought to come the same way into your ears as well. "Did Jesus fulfill His mission?" ... "It is finished." "Did Jesus remain faithful until the end?" ... "It is finished." "Did Jesus satisfy the Father's wrath for our sin?" ... "It is finished." Never would Jesus need to be sacrificed again. Never would Jesus have to die again.

In fact, it gets better than that. Never would there ever need to be a sacrifice for sins ever again! The work of redemption was finished! There is no need to add to it any more. His one sacrifice upon the cross satisfied the wrath of God for all time for all who would believe upon Christ.

This is the point of the book of Hebrews, especially chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:10
By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:11-14
Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:18
Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

This was all signified by what took place in the temple. Verse 38, ...

Mark 15:38
And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

This would have been a devastating thing for the Jews. The other side of the temple was the most holy place in all of the world. Nobody was ever permitted to go past the veil, but for the high priest. And he could only go past the veil one time each year, on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. He would make sacrifice for his own sins, and then he would make sacrifice for the sins of the people. And then, he would leave the holy of holies. Nobody would ever look upon that sacred place for an entire year, until the next year during Yom Kippur.

The Jews were very careful about these things. They knew that it was a matter of life and death. When Nadab and Abihu presented their offerings to the LORD in a way not commanded by the LORD, they were consumed by fire from heaven (Lev. 10:2). In explaining the event, Moses said, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored'" (Lev. 10:3).

And the Jews kept this place holy. The Jews indeed honored the LORD in this way. In fact, so holy is this place that they called it the "holy of holies" (Ex. 26:33). The entire temple was holy. Gentiles were not allowed in the temple. But, this particular location was the most holy of all of the holy places in the temple.

With the temple curtain ripped, the holy of holies was opened for all to see. I wouldn't be surprised if the priests quickly sought to secure another veil and covered over the ripped one as quickly as they could, lest others sneak a peek into the holy of holies and the nation of Israel be consumed by the fiery anger of God!

Little did they realize that God ripped this veil down. Notice how the veil was torn. It was torn "from top to bottom." Were mere mortal men to tear the veil, it would be torn "from bottom to top," as two men would tear and tug and the bottom two corners. The veil was 30 feet wide and 60 feet tall! But, this was God's doing! It was no accident! It was no act of men! It was torn "from top to bottom." And what God has torn down,

let no man put up.

By rending the veil, God was making an announcement to the world: You no longer need the holy of holies to access God. You no longer need the high priest to enter into the altar to sacrifice on Yom Kippur on your behalf! Because the ultimate Day of Atonement has arrived! The Son of God has been sacrificed! The Perfect Passover Lamb has been sacrificed.

And that's why I would argue that it was the crucifixion of Jesus that is the fulcrum upon which the entire course of human history turns. The moment Jesus died, the veil was torn. The yearly sacrifices all pointed to the one sacrifice that would once and for all take away sins! The writer to the Hebrews pointed out quite well that, "the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. ... It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:1, 4).

But Jesus, "by one offering ... has perfected for all time those who are sanctified ... through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:14, 10). "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). It is "by the blood of Jesus ... [that] we have confidence to enter the holy place" (Heb. 10:19). This is what God was announcing with the ripping of the veil in two!

Jesus was abandoned that we might have access to the Father. And all that happened was not lost on the centurion who watched Jesus die. He had seen many die. But he had never seen a man die like this.

This is my last point, ...

4. He was Son of God (verse 39).

Mark 15:39

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!"

In many ways, this is the point of the entire gospel of Mark. Jesus is the Son of God!

This is how the gospel begins. Mark 1:1 says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And this is how the gospel ends. Mark 15:39, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" The obvious question is this: Do you believe it?

Mark has written his account of the life of Jesus to bring us to this end. "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Will you believe it? Those who walked by didn't believe it. The religious leaders didn't believe it. They were the Jews -- we would have expected them to believe it.

But, it was this Roman centurion who believe. He gave his expression of faith, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" And I say, "Truly this man is the Son of God!"

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For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] D. A. Carson, The Expositors Bible Commentary, volume 8, p. 579