

Mark 15:1-41 • The Son of God in the Flesh

Introduction

At Jesus' birth, many people and leaders and religious experts were present—only a few understood what it all really meant. During Jesus' ministry, many people and leaders and religious experts were actively engaged—only a few understood what it all really meant. And so again at Jesus' death. We need to personally take hold not just of the facts and events surrounding the crucifixion, but what they truly mean. There is the personal work of the cross and the corporate work of the cross. Christ's sacrifice is provided to both transform the individual and all mankind. And there's a powerful lesson for us that although humans see "death" as an end, God uses it as a beginning.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

—John 1:24

¹Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.

[Read v.1]

Q: When John the Baptist saw Jesus for the first time after Jesus returned from 40 days in the wilderness, what did John call Him?

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

—John 1:29

Q: Jesus is being crucified at Passover. What is the Passover Lamb?

A: A perfect, unblemished lamb sacrificed in place of those within the house for whom the blood of the lamb is shed.

Q: What is the other significant symbol associated with Passover? What does it represent?

A: Unleavened bread. It represents something that is pure, without sin.

Q: How do these things combine to provide a powerful fulfillment in the actions of these Jewish leaders on behalf of the nation Israel?

A: They have essentially inspected the "Lamb of God"—the literal Passover Lamb—and found Him without blemish—without sin—and therefore an unblemished sacrifice to God on behalf of everyone else.

²Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

And He answered him, "It is as you say."

³The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly.

⁴Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!"

⁵But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

[Read v.2-5]

Q: Jesus was already judged by the leaders of Israel. What is the significance of Him now being judged by a leader of the Gentiles?

A: Just as He is the sacrifice for the sins of ALL mankind, so all mankind is involved in His judgment. Pilate is a representative of Rome, basically acting on behalf of the one government to which nearly all other governments on earth are subordinate. He represents everyone else.

Q: Whereas Jesus' judgment by the Jews in chapter 14 centered on whether He is the Christ—the Messiah, which is mainly a Jewish term—what is the issue during this judgment by the whole world?

A: Whether or not He is "the King of the Jews".

Q: What is the common result of the trial by Jewish leadership and the trial by the rest of the world's leadership?

A: Jesus does not deny either accusation; essentially they condemn Him for exactly what He is: Messiah and King.

⁶Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. ⁹Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead.

¹²Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?”

¹³They shouted back, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁴But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁵Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

¹⁶The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort.

¹⁷They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; ¹⁸and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. ²⁰After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

[Read v.6-15]

Q: To what Old Testament ritual does this closely resemble? What are the parallels?

A: The 2 goats for the Day of Atonement. Essentially, according to Leviticus 16, 2 goats were selected as a sin offering; 1 is sacrificed for the sins of all the people, the other is let go into the wilderness. In other words, one is kept for sacrifice, the other released.

Q: What was the purpose of the one that was sacrificed? How was it used?

Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities.

—Leviticus 16:15-16

This is not only a sacrifice for the sins of all the people, but makes atonement for the place where man comes into the very presence of God. It's the means by which man can come into the very presence of God.

[Read v.16-20]

Q: How does this mimic the actions of the Jews? What is the overall significance?

A: Just as the Jewish leaders mocked and mistreated Jesus, so did the Romans as representatives of the entire world.

Point: *There are those who place the crucifixion solely on Israel and therefore blame them for His death. However, through the participation of others, the entire world had a part in His condemnation and death. Jesus pointed out that the ones that handed Him over had a higher degree of responsibility, but He did not absolve the rest of the world for what the Jews initiated, just that their sin was greater than the rest. Therefore, **ALL** are guilty.*

Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

—John 19:11

²¹They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

[Read v.21]

Q: How does a “Cyrene” bring together the whole world as a witness of Jesus’ death?

A: In biblical terms, the world is tracked through the sons of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. All nations can be traced back to these 3 and are repeatedly done so throughout the Bible. (For instance, this is the significance of the listing of all the nationalities present at the Day of Pentecost—all the nations are represented in this way.) Through the Jews, Romans, and Simon, all nations are present. It’s a powerful statement of the work of Christ on behalf of the **whole** world.

²²Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. ²⁴And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. ²⁵It was the third hour when they crucified Him. ²⁶The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

[Read v.22-26]

Q: In comparing the events of Jesus’ death with parallel events in Old Testament Law, what does His being taken outside the city indicate?

A: The flesh of sacrifices was required to be taken outside the city and destroyed. This is what is done to “impure” things, things that have taken on the qualities and character of sin. Jesus, having taken on the sins of the world, is taken outside the city so that His flesh can be destroyed.

²⁷They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. ²⁸[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with transgressors.”]

[Read v.27-32]

Q: Who witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion and death?

A: Everyone. Not only was it a public execution among other criminals, but there were representatives from every group: Romans, Jewish leaders, people from all over the world in Jerusalem for Passover, soldiers, even family and friends who were close to Jesus. Not just every nation, but every type of person with every point of view was present.

²⁹Those 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, ³⁰save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”

Q: What was the common reaction to Jesus by most of those present?

A: Mocking and derision. Basically, unbelief since they saw His crucifixion as being the end to all the words and teachings of His ministry. (They just didn’t know **HOW** it was “the end”.)

³¹In 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. ³²Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!”

Q: But how had Jesus spoken of this specific moment?

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

—John 3:14-15

Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.

—John 12:31-32

Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

³³When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴At 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?”

³⁵When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, “Behold, He is calling for Elijah.”

³⁶Someone 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.”

³⁷And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. ³⁸And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

³⁹When 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!”

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

[Read v.33-39]

Q: What is the difference between the bystanders and the centurion? Compare and contrast their reactions.

A: Both were witnesses to the same events. However, the bystanders misinterpreted the events while the centurion did not. The bystanders wanted the signs to be some kind of great show for their benefit; the centurion allowed the signs to transform him personally. It's the difference in the condition of their hearts.

Q: Going back to the example of Jesus as the atonement sacrifice, how does this relate to what happened to the veil of the temple?

A: The blood from the atonement sacrifice was sprinkled to make accessible by man the very place where man came into the presence of God. In His sacrificial role, Christ permanently provided access to God.

Q: What is very different about the centurion's revelation of Who Jesus is versus all the discussion having taken place over the past 24 hours?

A: Unbelievers argued about whether or not He was the Messiah and whether or not He was the King of the Jews. The believer understood Him to be the Son of God, that Person in Whom all those titles and characteristics reign. Unbelievers were arguing about little pieces of the picture, while the lone believer saw the **whole** picture.

[Read 2 John 7]

Point: *Is there any doubt in your mind that Jesus was **NOT** flesh and blood? Is there anything in this or the other Gospels' parallel accounts to indicate otherwise? This is how false teachers and false prophets undermine the Gospel and change it into something else, by re-interpreting these events and even claiming that Jesus did not actually suffer them in the flesh. Don't just beware of such teachers—flee from them.*

Application

- Do you see the significance and benefit of studying **ALL** of the Old Testament? Do you understand that every teaching, every ritual, every event and person teaches us something about the work and person of Christ Jesus?
- Share how you personally feel about what Christ has done for you on the cross. Do you realize that until you accepted Him, you were just like one of those mocking, judging, and/or rejecting Him?
- How do you feel about supporting missions? Can you see that the work of the cross is for **ALL** nations? What can you do to support those activities?

Conclude with discussion, meditation, and prayer on Hebrews 2:14-18,

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so

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that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

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