

THE DEATH OF THE KING OF THE JEWS

Mark 15:16-47

Key Verse: 15:34

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'--which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

Today's passage mainly deals with Jesus' death and burial. Mark focuses on the fact that Jesus suffered, died and was buried for our sins. Mark records all the details of the soldiers' mockery, the process of crucifixion, and the anguish of his death. Mark also records the burial of Jesus. The death of Jesus is a sure fact that happened once and for all in history. More than anything else, Mark really wanted to declare that the death of Jesus was the death of the Son of God.

I. The crucifixion and death of Jesus (16-41)

First, the soldiers torture Jesus (16-20). As soon as the soldiers were ordered to crucify Jesus, they took charge of Jesus and brought him to the Praetorium where the palace guards were stationed. As soon as the soldiers took charge of Jesus to crucify him, they began to mock him. They began to enjoy their sadistic joy. Since Jesus was tried and condemned with the charge, "THE KING OF THE JEWS," they decorated Jesus like a king of the Jews. They put a purple robe on him. Next they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on Jesus' head. As soon as the crown of thorns was set on his head, the blood smeared out by the thorns on Jesus' head and face.

Instead of feeling sorry for him, the soldiers began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on his head with a staff and spit on him. It is common sense that striking a person's head or spitting on a person's face will provoke anyone to anger. The soldiers wound-

ed Jesus. Then they fell on their knees and worshiped him, to offend Jesus, the king of the Jews. In their ignorance, they treated Jesus according to their sadistic feeling. The soldiers did not know what they were talking about. But what they said, "the king of the Jews," was exactly right in accordance with the prophecies. Yes, Jesus is the king of the Jews who was promised to come as the Savior of the world.

The Son of God was tortured in our place in a way that tongue and pen cannot describe. Isaiah 53:4 says, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted." Jesus was tortured to the maximum degree. Jesus did not have to be tortured. But Jesus was tortured by the cruel soldiers for the sin of the world.

There are many people who are tortured by the power of sin. There are many examples of this. There was a young man who lived in the town of Gerasa. He wanted to be a nice son to his father. But he sinned by chance. It was unintentional. However, he was soon possessed by several demons. As soon as he was possessed by demons, he was no more a nice son to his father. First he became immoral and ruined the future of many girls. Next, he became extremely violent. He crippled many neighbor people. Finally, he became sadistic. When he left home his parents were deeply wounded. He lived among the tombs. But the mosquitoes did not leave him alone. He became like a skeleton. Once Jesus met him and drove 6,000 demons out of him. St. Peter was the top disciple of Jesus. Outwardly he looked wholesome. But he was also under the power of sin. Later he confessed in 1 Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

Second, they crucified "THE KING OF THE JEWS" (21). In the second part the Pharisees torture Jesus, calling him, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." They condemned Jesus as guilty of blasphemy. But from God's point of view, they were right, and they were in the process of fulfilling God's will for world salva-

tion. They thought that they were mocking Jesus by saying, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." But they were not mocking Jesus. They were being used as the agents of the devil.

As we know, Jesus had been tried and beaten up and he was dehydrated. So he was too weak to carry the rugged cross. The Roman soldiers grabbed a certain man from Cyrene, known as Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was passing by, on his way in from the country. They say that Simon was from Cyrene, Africa. Many holy pilgrims hoped to participate in and eat the Passover Feast one time in Jerusalem. As soon as Simon arrived in Jerusalem, he was picked to carry the cross of Jesus to Golgotha. Let's think about Simon. At first Simon was scared. Then, something happened in his heart. Simon could not eat the Passover Feast, but he felt that the blood of Jesus was circulating in his soul. He felt that all of his sins were cleansed. He could see God in the tortured Jesus. He was assured that he has eternal salvation and the kingdom of God in Jesus. Simon saw "THE KING OF THE JEWS" in Jesus (Ro 16:13; Ac 13:1).

We must think about why Jesus was crucified. We sin every day. Sin is small. But it accumulates like a mountain. Because of our sins we must be tortured and nailed to a cross. We have to be lifted up after crucifixion to reveal all our sins to the world. We are sinners who deserve a crown of thorns and nailing on the cross. But our precious Jesus took our place and bore all our transgressions and iniquities. Praise Jesus!

Third, Jesus did not take wine mixed with myrrh (22-24). Look at verse 22. "They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull)." The routine of crucifixion was to take the longest way to the place of execution so that many might see the condemned man as a warning to others. Following this routine, Jesus looked too pitiful to look at. Some of them felt terribly sorry. So they offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh to relieve the pain of his tortured body. Look at verse 23. "Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it." Jesus refused it when he was

thirsty. Jesus refused to drink wine mixed with myrrh in order to participate in all our sorrows and pains as our High Priest. Jesus also did not take wine mixed with myrrh in order to obey God's will thoroughly. We are sinners who eat deep-dish pizza and drink a diet Coke. Jesus could take the wine, but he refused to drink the wine in order to fulfill the divine purpose.

As soon as they arrived at the place of execution, the soldiers placed the cross flat on the ground and they stretched Jesus upon it. They nailed his hands and his feet with hammers. They projected a ledge of wood between his legs, then they raised the cross upright and set it in its socket. At this moment of crucifixion, the soldiers gambled for his clothes, for it was their share to take the clothes of the executed criminals. They don't look like human beings. They are like a mountain dog and a tiger cub, which are biting their prey to death.

Fourth, Jesus did not save himself (25-32). In verses 25-32, Mark describes how Jesus died on the cross so that he could somehow help us to see who Jesus really is. Look at verses 25 and 26. "It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS." The chief priests and the teachers of the law fabricated the charge, trying to make Jesus a political criminal opposing the Emperor of the Roman Empire. Such a rebellion deserved the death penalty. They crucified two robbers with him in order to humiliate Jesus by making him equal with two robbers. Humanly speaking, his death was a most shameful one. But from God's point of view, it was the death of "THE KING OF THE JEWS." Jesus gave his life in order to give us eternal salvation and the kingdom of God.

When Jesus was in the anguish of soul on the cross, the crowd of people who passed by insulted him. They shook their heads, saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" (29b,30) They mocked Jesus, saying, "He said that he would build the temple in three days, when it took others

forty years to build it. Then why did he not save himself with the power to build the temple in three days!" Yes, Jesus had power to bring his angels from four corners and destroy all the enemies (Mt 26:53). But Jesus did not save himself in order to save us from our sins.

In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!" They did not know that Jesus did not save himself in order to save others. They did not know that Jesus was the Messiah. In their ignorance, they heaped insults on Jesus, saying, "Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross." The religious leaders were eager to save their skins by every possible means. As a result, the servants of God turned out to be the devil. Pilate the governor was ready to compromise in order to protect his position and his kids. Jesus had the mighty power of God to save himself. But he did not save himself so that through him we might be saved. Here we learn that those who save themselves first and next want to save others would never save even one lost soul.

Fifth, Jesus cried out... (33-38). The death of Jesus on the cross was the most unjust error done by men. The Jews' injustice darkened the world. Look at verse 33. "At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour." Even the sun could not endure the injustice of the world and stopped working.

Look at verse 34. "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'--which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Why only me? The death of the Son of God was sorrow to all men, even to the sun and moon. The sun did not shine its light. Probably the sun was too sorrowful to work as usual. Jesus' last cry is too deep to understand. But when we meditate on the words he spoke, we see that he is crying because his love relationship with God was broken. Up to now, he had suffered everything that life could bring him. He had endured the failures of his disciples, the hatred of foes, the malice of enemies. He had

endured the most searing pains that life could offer when his hands were nailed to the cross. When the crown of thorns was set on his head, he said nothing. John 19:25 says that near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, weeping. On the cross, Jesus had many things to say or cry. But Jesus did not cry. But when his relationship with God was broken, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" As long as his love relationship with God was right, Jesus could bear any kind of suffering. Jesus was always sure about the love relationship between God and himself. But when God cut his love relationship because of man's sin, Jesus felt abandoned by God. Of course, Jesus believed that his love relationship would be restored after his resurrection. Still, Jesus was very sorry that his love relationship with God was broken even for a while. Jesus thought that the love relationship with God was most important. Here we learn that we don't have to cry for anything. But we must cry to maintain a love relationship with God. Suppose a man and a woman marry. Then they stay together as long as they live. But there are so many broken families and broken-hearted children caused by divorce. There might be many reasons. But the main cause of divorce is that a couple do not think the love relationship with God is most important.

At the moment Jesus breathed his last, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Read verse 38. "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Animal sacrifice in the temple was no longer necessary. Jesus died for us once and for all. All we have to do is go to Jesus just as we are, believing that he died for our sins.

Sixth, a Roman centurion saw God in tortured Jesus (39-41). Look at verse 39. "And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'" Maybe the centurion was in charge of the execution squad, and had seen many a man die. He must have hardened his heart when he stood by the cross of Jesus. It was because the general principles of a Roman officer were, first, "only victory and no defeat." Second, Roman officers are called for world conquest. Therefore, for the sake of world conquest, Roman officers must be

men of valor and pitiless. This centurion saw and heard what Jesus had done during the time of his trial and crucifixion. The centurion found that Jesus was quite different from ordinary people. In his experience, those who were dying were paralyzed and wanted to live even ten minutes more. They were filled with sorrow and terror. But Jesus did not think of himself. Rather, he clearly manifested that he is the king of the Jews. To the centurion's eyes, the Pharisees and teachers of the law and Pilate the governor of the Roman Empire and the people on the bottom of society are all equal. There is no distinction. To his eyes, only Jesus looked different. Jesus looked like the Son of God. Probably, this centurion was one of the executioners. Maybe not. Anyway, he saw God in Jesus and was moved by tortured Jesus. When the centurion surveyed Jesus, he could believe in God. When he surveyed Jesus, he was convinced that he had eternal salvation and the kingdom of God in Jesus. Moreover, his troubled heart was appeased. So he cried out publicly, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" His testimony was short. But it is recorded at the most important part of the gospel accounts. The centurion saw one of the criminals crucified by evil men. But he saw the death of the Son of God.

The women were watching from a distance (40,41). Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. Though they were poor women they cared for Jesus' needs and for those of his disciples. Luke 8:2,3 says that some of these women were from the bottom of society, some were prostitutes and some were from the slave class. And some were aristocratic women who had a connection with the palace. They were women who received the grace of forgiveness. They were women who received eternal salvation and the kingdom of God. They supported Jesus and his company a great deal. Most importantly, they followed Jesus to the end. Finally they stood beneath the cross and cried. Those who had received the grace of forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation cannot be separated forever from Jesus.

II. Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph (42-47)

In these verses, Mark declares that the burial of Jesus is a fact in histo-

ry. Look at verse 43. "Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body." Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council. But he despaired when he thought of his upcoming death. The honorable Joseph could not contact Jesus in the past because of his social standing. But he had heard about Jesus' healing the sick and preaching the kingdom of God. When he saw the death of Jesus, his faith in the kingdom of God was confirmed. When Pilate gave him the body of Jesus, Joseph took down the body and wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock which was prepared for himself. Joseph gave his grave to Jesus. He rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. In this way, Jesus died and was buried. Why did Jesus have to be buried? Here we must understand the spiritual meaning of Jesus' burial. Spiritually speaking, burial refers to extreme punishment. Isaiah 53:9a says, "He was assigned a grave with the wicked...." God crucified his one and only Son for our sins. Finally God buried him among the wicked. This was to punish his Son in our place. We are the ones who should be punished severely. Those who lived a life of sin should be put in a terrible place. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." The punishment will be eternal punishment under God's condemnation. This is the reason we must fear God. Our Lord Jesus Christ was punished in our place. Thank God. In this way Jesus gave us eternal salvation and the kingdom of God.

In this passage we learn that Jesus suffered much and died on the cross for our sins. But his death was the death of the Son of God.