

The Gospel According To Mark

Part Nineteen

Mark 15:1 [New King James] *“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.”*

Why did the Jewish leaders send Jesus Christ to Pilate, the Roman governor?

The Romans had taken away the Jews’ right to inflict capital punishment, so in order for Jesus Christ to be condemned to death He had to be sentenced by a Roman leader.

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus Christ to be executed on a cross, a method of death that they believed brought a curse from God, [Deuteronomy 21:23].

They hoped that Jesus Christ would be cursed by the people not adored as He was because of His good works.

The Jewish leaders knew that the charge of blasphemy, insulting God, was **not** a charge they could use before Pilate, they knew he would have nothing to do with such a charge.

So when they brought Jesus Christ before Pilate they charged Him with perverting the people, and forbidding them to give tribute to Caesar, and calling Himself a king.

Luke 23:1-2 [New King James] *“Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.’”*

They had to evolve a political charge or Pilate would not have listened.

They knew that the charge was a lie, and so did Pilate, [verse 10].

Mark 15:2 [New King James] *“Then Pilate asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered and said to him, ‘It is as you say.’”*

Pilate asked Jesus Christ one of the charges against Him, “are you the King of the Jews?” The answer that Jesus Christ gave was neither yes or no, but “it is you who say so.”

What Jesus Christ was saying was “I may have claimed to be the King of the Jews, but you know very well that the interpretation that my accusers are putting on that claim is not my interpretation. I am no political revolutionary,” [John 18:33-38].

Mark 15:3-5 [New King James] *“And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!’ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marvelled.”*

It would have been futile for Jesus Christ to answer Pilate, the time had come for Him to give His life to save all humanity.

Such silence shows His self-assurance and peace, nothing would stop Him from completing the work He had come to earth, and become a human being, to do, [John 19:10-16].

Isaiah 53:3-10 [New King James] *“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not*

esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked, but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.”

Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb was fulfilling what Isaiah was inspired to say about this part of his life.

Mark 15:6-15 [New King James] *“Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.”*

Barabbas was arrested for his part in a rebellion against the Roman government, and although he had committed a murder, he was a hero among the Jewish people, for they all hated Roman rule.

They hated paying taxes to support the despised government and its pagan gods.

The Jews hated Pilate, but they wanted a favour from him to crucify Jesus Christ, Pilate could see this was a “*frame-up.*”

Crucifixion was the Roman penalty for rebellion against the state. Only slaves or those who were not Roman citizens could be crucified.

If Jesus Christ died by crucifixion, He would die the death of a rebel and slave, not the King He claimed to be.

This is just what the Jewish religious leaders wanted, the reason they whipped up the mob into a frenzy. In addition, the crucifixion would put the responsibility for Jesus Christ’s death on the Romans, and thus the crowds could not blame the religious leaders.

But in reality everyone was guilty of Jesus Christ’s death, [**Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8**].

Pilate saw **no** guilt in Jesus Christ, **no** reason to condemn Him to death, but Pilate wavered in his judgement when the Jewish crowd threatened to report him to Caesar, [**John 19:12**]. Such a report, accompanied by a riot, could cost him his position and hopes of advancement.

Mark 15:16-20 [New King James] *“Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.”*

It was during the period of time that the cross was being prepared that Jesus was in the hands of the Roman soldiers who mocked Him. Remember Jesus Christ had already undergone the agony of scourging before this “horse-play” of the soldiers began.

The punishment of scourging usually preceded crucifixion. It was a brutal torture, inflicted with whips of leather loaded with metal or bone.

Just one infliction of scourging often proved fatal.

John seems to suggest that Pilate resorted to scourging in the hope it would satisfy the Jews, [**John 19:1-16**].

Mark 15:21-24 [New King James] *“Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.”*

Colonies of Jews existed outside of Judea, Simon who made his way to Jerusalem to keep the Passover all the way from Cyrene in North Africa. Simon’s sons are mentioned here probably because they became well-known in the early Church, [**Romans 16:13**].

If a man is identified by the names of his sons, it means that, although he himself is not known personally to the community to whom the account is being told, the sons are.

It is almost certain that Mark wrote his gospel account to the Church of Rome and he knew that the Church at Rome would know who Alexander and Rufus were.

What a terrible day this must have been for Simon, he was a Jew who had saved for a long time to come to Jerusalem from North Africa to keep the Passover. Simon arrived in Jerusalem excited about keeping the Feast in Jerusalem, when suddenly he was impressed into Roman service, finding himself carrying a criminal’s cross on the way to their crucifixion.

How resentment must have filled his heart because of this terrible indignity!

But something must have happened on the way to Calvary, this chance encounter with Jesus Christ changed Simon’s life forever.

This personal experience caused Simon to share his feelings with his wife and sons.

The names of Alexander and Rufus are common, but they are mentioned in many events in the early Church, [**Acts 11:20; Acts 19:33**].

Mark 15:25-32 [New King James] *“Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!’ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.’ Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.”*

The sign stating the condemned man’s crime was often placed on the cross as a warning to others. As Jesus Christ was not found guilty of any “crime” except being King of the Jews this is what Pilate caused to be written.

The Jews protested against this but Pilate was firm and would **not** change the wording, [John 19:19-22].

Although Mark records that those who were crucified with Jesus Christ heaped insults on Him, Luke mentions that one repented and asked Jesus Christ for forgiveness and mercy.

Luke 23:39-43 [New King James] *“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”*

This passage **cannot** be used as a proof text that all Christians go to heaven after death. The original text does not include punctuation and if we move the comma to between “today” and “you” this will cause this scripture to harmonise with many others that refer to existence after physical death.

Mark 15:33-37 [New King James] *“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, ‘Look, He is calling for Elijah!’ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.’ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.”*

To get a fuller record of the final moments of Jesus Christ on the cross, we have to include the account found in Luke and John.

These accounts show the love that Jesus Christ had for all people even when He was facing the crucifixion and also on the cross.

Luke 23:26-30 [New King James] *“Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”””*

Jesus Christ’s concern for those who would very soon experience the horror of the destruction of Jerusalem, in AD70, [Hosea 10:8].

Luke 23:34 [New King James] *“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.”*

Asked God the Father to forgive the very Roman soldiers who were crucifying Him.

John 19:25-27 [New King James] *“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”*

Concerned for the future of His mother and His disciples.

John 19:31-37 [New King James] *“Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and*

broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.'"

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a total spilling of all His life blood, the result of this spear thrust that opened up the side of His torso, a large enough wound for Thomas to put his hand into, [John 20:27].

It was after this death blow that Jesus Christ cried out *"It is finished"* and surrendered His life to God the Father, [Luke 23:46].

Mark 15:38 [New King James] *"Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."*

Symbolically this curtain separated a Holy God from sinful people. The room behind this curtain was only entered by the High Priest and only on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, as he made sacrifices for the people to gain forgiveness for their sins.

When Jesus Christ died, this curtain was torn in two, from the top, showing it was an act from heaven to the bottom, giving complete access to the Holy God the Father as a result of the death of His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

A fuller explanation of this event is found in **Hebrews 9:1-28**.

Mark 15:39 [New King James] *"So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!'"*

This was a Gentile who had been influenced by the way Jesus Christ died, knowing that Jesus Christ was more than just another human being being crucified but a man of God.

Mark 15:40 [New King James] *"There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome,"*

Jesus Christ was supported financially in His ministry by many dedicated women.

Mark 15:42 [King James] *"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,"*

This Sabbath was not a regular weekly Sabbath but a *"high day"* [John 19:31], the preparation day before the Passover.

All four gospel accounts agree that the crucified Jesus Christ was laid in the tomb on the preparation day which was Nisan 14th immediately before the *"high day"* Nisan 15th [Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14].

This was the day on which the Lamb of God was crucified just as the lambs were killed ready for the Passover meal.

Therefore, Jesus Christ must have been crucified on a Wednesday, so that He was in the grave three days and three nights to be already resurrected on the Sabbath before Mary Magdalene and the other Mary found the tomb empty, [Mark 28:1].

[Please download and study our article *'Three Days And Three Nights'* listed under sub-title *'Religion'* for a full explanation.]

Mark 15:43-47 [New King James] *“Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marvelled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph observed where He was laid.”*

Although a member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus Christ, and risked his reputation to give a proper burial to Jesus Christ.

The bodies of criminals would normally end up being burnt in the Valley of Hinnom to the south of Jerusalem along with refuse of any sort, and is “Geena” in Greek and “Gahenna” in Latin and English, used as a synonym for hell.

Mark 16:1-11 [New King James] *“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.’ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.”*

The women purchased spices after the High Sabbath was over but after preparing them to anoint Jesus Christ’s body had to wait until after the weekly Sabbath to go to the tomb, just before dawn, [**John 20:1**].

The angels did not roll away the stone so Jesus Christ could get out but for the disciples could get in to see for themselves that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead just as He had told them.

The resurrection is vitally important for many reasons –

- 1) Jesus Christ kept His promise to rise from the dead, so we can believe He will keep all His other promises.
- 2) The resurrection ensures that the Ruler of God’s Eternal Kingdom will be the living Jesus Christ. A reality not just an idea, hope or dream.
- 3) Jesus Christ’s resurrection gives us the assurance that we too as true Christians will be resurrected at His Second Coming, [**1 Corinthians 15:12-23**].

Fear and disbelief was the reaction of the disciples to the announcement of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, in spite of His continual assurance of His resurrection.

Mark 16:12-13 [New King James] *“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.”*

This meeting is expanded by Luke and shows just how the disciples still did not believe that the promised resurrection had happened, [**Luke 24:17-35**].

Mark 16:14-18 [New King James] *“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’”*

Baptism is not essential for salvation only faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but it is an outward sign for others and a reminder for ourselves that we have killed off our old way of living in the waters of baptism, [Romans 6:1-14].

As Paul’s teaching to the Church at Rome tells us, we have to be baptised by total immersion to liken our being buried in death with Jesus Christ.

The signs that are mentioned are only special on special occasions, otherwise we would be tempting God as Jesus Christ refused to do, [Matthew 4:5-7].

Occasionally God did give special powers to people, Paul handled a snake safely [Acts 28:5] and the disciples healed the sick, [Matthew 10:1; Acts 3:7-8].

We should never put ourselves in dangerous situations to test God.

Mark 16:19-20 [New King James] *“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”*

Jesus Christ continues to direct His work on earth through faithful disciples today as they are guided by the Holy Spirit which He has sent to work in His people, [John 14:15-18].

The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth, [John 16:13] and fulfil the work of salvation through us, [John 16:5-8].

Mark’s gospel emphasises Jesus Christ’s power as well as His servanthood.

Every true disciple of Jesus Christ will use the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives to serve other people.

Using every opportunity to help others come to know, worship and serve their Saviour, which will then bring God the glory and thanks He deserves.