

It Was the Preparation

Mark 15:1 – 37



~ Peter was weeping in repentance as we concluded our last report from our Spiritual Safari; weeping because he had denied the Lord Jesus. We saw Jesus hold Peter; and it certainly is good to be held coming into this chapter because, while all Scripture is profitable and meaningful for us, this passage that we find ourselves in has a particularly frightening relevance for us in this hour in which we live. Before we conclude this report, the Lord Jesus will be dead on the cross. Remember, everything happens extremely fast in the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus is now in the hands of His enemies and His apostles have been scattered. One has betrayed Him; another has denied Him. The rest have run away. This was nothing but a night of sin. Sin is trying to destroy Jesus and Jesus is simultaneously providing a remedy for sin by dying for it! The cross of Christ is one of myriad paradoxes of the Christian faith. See, the Word of God is, at once, the most tragic event of the ages and the single most glorious event of victory to ever happen to the earth or Heaven.

We don't come to this chapter in our study with a feeling of defeat or sympathy for the Sufferer. We will walk softly and reverently through these scenes with our hearts crying out to God for mercy and pity; yet in thanksgiving for so great salvation. The tragedy is inescapable as we see the injustice and unnecessary suffering of an innocent Lord Jesus Christ. Clovis the barbarian exclaimed upon first hearing the Gospel read to him, "... if only I had been there with my soldiers!" Well, God doesn't want our army coming to His rescue; God wants us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in faith so we may be saved. If we confess that we believe in the Lord Jesus in our hearts, that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. God wants faith - not sympathy.

So, our action Gospel sets forth the supreme nature thereof today. The crucifixion is the point of this section of Scripture. It is the purpose of creation and that purpose expands out into all eternity right here. This is where the Gospel is translated into action. Paul will say later, "... I delivered unto you that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day." The Gospel is NOT something God is asking you to do; the Gospel is something He did for us! In His actions – not yours or mine – are where we receive salvation and eternal life. You and I are in no position to offer anything that would be acceptable to God in any fashion. Our righteousness and goodness are completely unacceptable for our salvation. God provides the only righteousness we have and that is IN Christ! He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification....

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

~ The Sanhedrin had already condemned Jesus to death at this point, but they did not have the authority to carry out the execution itself; only a Roman court could authorize that. That's why they delivered Him to Pilate. Pilate was, of course, the Roman ruler who just happened to be in Jerusalem for the holidays. Pilate didn't really care to hang out in Jerusalem, but he had to be there at this time. Pilate's headquarters were in Caesarea on the sea. The feast days were heavily guarded because Rome didn't permit protests or marches. There were no anti-Herod meetings happening, and Pilate was personally in town to make sure they didn't. Intolerance of any insurrection is one reason Rome stood as a world empire for almost a thousand years. The charge the religious rulers of Israel brought at the Sanhedrin, however, would not stand up in court before Pilate, so they're meeting now to fabricate some charges that will carry a death penalty under Roman law. What they are really trying to do is make legal all the illegal actions they had committed the night before!

Well, because expediency takes place over justice in Pilate's life, he is ever the typical, cheap, vacillating politician and crowd pleaser. Pilate had no roots in the moorings of honesty, integrity or honor. Pilate tried to ride

both sides of the fence and please everyone which, of course, pleased no one. Pilate honestly did want to free Jesus for many reasons, though: he knew this was all bunk; he didn't really care for the Jewish religious rulers at all – in fact, he hated them! His wife had a bad drunken conscience about this, and it was causing problems around her social scene. Jesus is not one to cooperate, friends; not in the least. See, everybody does things His way – every time – you may be absolutely sure. Lost or saved - you WILL glorify Christ....

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

~ Pilate is not used to people staying quiet at this point. I imagine most prisoners had a whole lot to say, whether it be pleading for leniency or a defense of some sort. Jesus doesn't say a word here. Luke tells us there is quite a bit of verbal interplay between Pilate and the crowd and Pilate and Jesus. Pilate takes Jesus inside for a private talk and then they came back out and Pilate took Jesus back in again for a second private talk. Pilate was looking for cooperation so he could free Jesus. Pilate found out this was his day to stand on his own two feet and make a decision about the Lord Jesus Christ for himself.

Every man and woman will make that choice at some point in their lives. Pilate thought he could control this situation by crowd pleasing. Barabbas was a notorious criminal who had likely victimized many of the people there, and Pilate thought for sure there was no possible way they would

call for that murderer to be released over Jesus - Who had done miracles and, it seemed was, actually, well-loved. Pilate was absolutely stunned and shocked when they called out to crucify Jesus; and Pilate's dilemma grew even worse. You will recall we are told in other Gospel accounts that Pilate "... washed the blood from his hands" of this deed and declared he wasn't going to be held responsible. I guess Pilate missed a spot. You will make a decision for or against the Lord Jesus Christ - or not, friends. Have you already made that decision? Well, Jesus died on Barabbas cross for you, I'm sure of that....

7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

~ A most remarkable and unusual incident is playing out in our safari right before our very eyes today here in the streets of Jerusalem. Roman justice has been aborted here. It's obvious that Pilate wasn't stupid, so he knows these charges are false. Pilate didn't hold a court of public opinion when he dealt with other prisoners. The mob didn't stand out in the street and make his decisions for him, you may be sure. Here we have one outstanding criminal, Barabbas. Pilate makes the comparison and, again, Pilate never

dreamed they would dare ask that this murderer be set free. Pilate underestimated the depths that even religion will go to when they hold hate in their hearts. Pilate is the judge and he is so startled by what's happening he has to ask the crowd, "... what shall I do with Jesus?" The mob didn't even give a reasonable answer because the mob rule mentality is never prepared to deal in good judgment. Can you imagine this world ruler in this uncertain state asking his subjects how he should proceed? This is what happens when we hate Christ, and this is mob rule with a vengeance; an innocent man is going to die. But let's just wait one moment because Jesus is taking our place on that cross and we're certainly not innocent....

14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

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

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

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

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

~ Any condemned criminal became a play-thing to the guards in those hours leading up to their crucifixion. That's what they did with the Lord Jesus. I think they beat Him beyond recognition. They had to get someone to carry His cross because they likely beat Him half to death at this time. I don't care how muscular and fit you are, these guards will break you down into a quivering bruised spot. This should read, "... and AFTER they had crucified Him" because none of the Gospel writers are going up on that cross. There's simply nothing here for the sadistic curiosity of a literary sensational thrill seeker. An idle mind cannot occupy itself with the details of Christ on the cross, thank God! It's just too horrible....

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

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

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

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

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

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

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

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

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

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

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

~ We must consider all four Gospel accounts to get the complete picture and inscriptions. Mark gives us the crucifixion clock. At the third hour He was put on the cross. At the sixth hour darkness came over the land and at the ninth hour Jesus dismissed His Spirit. During the first three hours there was physical light and during the second three hours there was physical darkness; during the first three hours there was spiritual darkness and the last three hours there was spiritual light. During the first three hours man did his worst; during the second three hours - God did His best!

Christ was reviled, even by some of those hanging there with Him on their own crosses; both thieves mocked Christ at first. The rest are marching around under the cross ridiculing Him! Everything is man-made in that first three hours and man did his absolute worst! In the last hours, the last three hours, during the time of physical darkness, there was spiritual light as God was working. In the first three hours, Jesus suffered at the hands of man; during the last three hours He is suffering FOR man!

In the first three hours on the cross Jesus was dying for our sins. During the last three hours Jesus was dying for the sins of the world. Sin did all it could do to destroy Him during the first three hours, but during the second three hours Jesus is making His soul an offering for the sins of all people. So, that is our safari chronological account of the crucifixion. During the last three hours Christ was made sin for the world which means He was made sin for you and me. Christ was forsaken of God; yet, even at that time, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. If you can explain that – please do!

I think the crowd misunderstood what Jesus said because they thought He was calling for Elijah. After everything that had happened, when Christ called out, I think most of them were half expecting Elijah to show up! I think most – if not all – suspected Jesus really was the Messiah. I think God puts something in the human heart that makes that recognition whether people show it or admit it or not. I'm sure something told them this was the Messiah. Well, our safari concludes this leg of our expedition in the Book of Mark in our next report ~

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