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 wound­ed 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 salva­tion. 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 histo­ry. 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.