



Mark 15

Mark 15
Tape #8043
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Chapter fifteen as we continue our journey through the Bible. Now in the fourteenth chapter, we had Mark's account of the last supper with the disciples, the passover feast, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas there in the garden, the trial of Jesus before the religious council and the chapter ended with Peter's denial of Jesus. So we are in that same day because the Jews, the day begins at six o'clock in the evening.

So in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and the whole council (15:1),

This is that entire religious council of the Jews including the priests, the scribes, the elders.

and they bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate (15:1).

The power for capital punishment was actually taken away from the Jews by the Roman government just about the time of the birth of Christ. In fact, when Jesus was just a young boy in Nazareth, the Roman government took away the power of the Jews to inflict capital punishment. The Jews interpreted this as the end of their reign, end of the kingdom and some of the Jews actually went in public with sackcloth and ashes mourning over the fact that God had failed to keep His promise. For the promise through Jacob to Judah was the scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh or the Messiah comes. And they interpreted the taking away of their power for capital punishment by the Roman government as the taking of the scepter, the power. And the Messiah had not come and thus, they were in the streets mourning over the failure of God's promise. Little did they know that right then in Nazareth the Messiah was growing up, just waiting for God's time for His revelation.

So they had to take Jesus to Pilate in order to get the death sentence. On other occasions, such as in the book of Acts with the case of Stephen, they stoned Stephen when they became angry and the Roman government would just sort of turn their head and look the other way. They allowed them to create a ruckus and stone people if they do desired. But they legally could not in a court of law sentence a person to death. That is why they brought Jesus to Pilate because they wanted to get a death sentence. In order to bring charges before Pilate, they had to bring political charges. They could not say He is claiming to be the Messiah. The Roman government could care less. So they accused Him of claiming to be the king, they accused Him of encouraging people not to pay taxes to Caesar and they were trying to frame criminal civil charges against Him against the Roman government so that Pilate would hear the case.

It is interesting that in bringing Him before Pilate, the Roman form of execution was crucifixion. The Jews usually just stoned the person to death and that was their form of execution. But with the Romans it was crucifixion and according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, He had to really be crucified in order to fulfill the prophecies. And thus, their bringing Him before Pilate was not really just a happenstance but it was a part of God's plan because again, He must be put to death by crucifixion in order to fulfill the prophecies of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52:13,14. So they brought Him to Pilate,

And Pilate asked him, Are you the King of the Jews (15:2)?

for this was one of the accusations that they had made against Jesus,

And Jesus answering said unto him [basically], You said it. [Yes, I am.] And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing (15:2,3).

In Isaiah chapter fifty-three, verse seven, we are told that "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." He did not defend Himself against the false accusations that were being made. Now this is an unusual kind of a situation. For an innocent man to be charged with a capital crime and false witnesses being brought, but He does not respond or answer the charges that are made by the false witnesses, He doesn't seek to defend Himself.

So much so that Pilate said, Aren't you going to answer? Don't you hear all of these things they're accusing you of? But Jesus answered nothing; so that Pilate actually marvelled [at the silence of Jesus].

Now at the feast (15:4-6)

It was the custom for the Roman government, that is the feast of passover, as a gesture of goodwill they usually released unto the people a political prisoner. And it was just to celebrate the passover and to give the Roman nod of consent and holding out an olive branch kind of a thing, and thus they chose a political prisoner that they would release to the people. Jesus was in fact being charged with political crimes and thus, He would classify for the release of a political prisoner at the feast time.

It's very possible that Barabbas had a group of friends who were there that morning specifically to seek the release of Barabbas. He was part of an insurrection. He actually was guilty of the things that they were falsely charging Jesus of, a rebellion against the Roman rule. This man was actually guilty, he have been with a band of men who had joined an insurrection against Rome and in this insurrection, he had murdered a person. But it could be that this group of zealots of which he was a part, it could be that they had gathered that morning specifically for the purpose of seeking the release of Barabbas who was being held as a political prisoner. So that they were already prepared to ask for the release of Barabbas because they are now asking Pilate to go ahead and to fulfill this custom of releasing a political prisoner. It could be that their being there for the release of Barabbas just really played into the hands of the high priest who had brought Jesus for the sentence of death. So now at the feast,

he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. [Mark tells us about this] one prisoner named Barabbas, who was bound with those who had made insurrection with him, who had committed the murder in the insurrection. And the multitude began to cry aloud for him to do as they had ever done to them (15:6-8).

In other words, they were crying for Caesar, Release to us the prisoner. Release to us.

So Pilate answered them, saying, Will you that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew [Pilate knew] that the chief priests had delivered Jesus because of envy or jealousy (15:9,10).

He knew that the charges that were being made against Jesus were spurious. And so, they're crying for the release of a prisoner, and he said, Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?

But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom you call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him (15:11-13).

So here the choice of the people. Interesting, isn't it? The choice is that of the law or the lawless. Jesus represented the law of God, Barabbas represented lawlessness. And the people chose the lawlessness over the law, people haven't really changed much through the years. If it were up for an election, you could be sure the lawless will win. There is that within people that lawlessness against God. And here they chose Barabbas so the question, What shall I do then with Jesus?

That was the question that Pilate was facing. What is he to do with Jesus who is called the Messiah or the King of the Jews? It's not a question that is just exclusively Pilate's. Actually, it's a universal question that every man must face. Tonight that question is just as relevant for you as it was for Pilate. You have to make the same decision, you have to determine what you are going to do with Jesus who is called the King of the Jews. You can confess Him as Lord and Savior. And He said "if you would confess Him before men, He would confess you before His Father which is in heaven." You can deny Him, deny Him the lordship of your life. You can rebel against Him. But He said, "If you deny Me before men, I will deny you before My Father in the presence of the holy angels" (Matthew 10:32,33). You can receive Him as your Lord and Savior but "as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Or you can reject Him. You can believe on Him and "whosoever believeth shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Or you can go on in unbelief.

In Revelation 21, it tells us the fate of the unbelievers. You can be for Him or you can be against Him but one thing you can't be is neutral. Jesus said, "He who is not for me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). So many people are trying to take more or less a neutral stand concerning Jesus but He has made such radical claims that leaves no room for neutrality. He either is the Son of God or He is a fraud, He is a deceiver, He is a liar, or more kindly, He's a lunatic.

But you have to make a decision, you cannot be neutral. And thus the question, "what then shall I do

with Jesus who is called Christ?” is the question that you must personally answer, someone else can’t answer it for you, you can’t ride in on someone else’s faith, your mother’s or father’s or family’s or grandfather’s. God has no grandchildren. It’s every man making his own decision concerning what he is going to do. Thus, the Roman judge is the one who is having his faith determined by his decision and so it is with all men.

You see, your decision doesn’t affect the faith of Jesus at all. But it does affect your faith. Your eternal destiny is determined by what you do with Jesus who is called the Christ or the King of the Jews. And your decision has its effects upon your future. So it is a very important question, in fact, the most important question that you will ever face is what you are going to do with Jesus who is called the Christ.

Paul the apostle said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). And he talked about death as just something that he was actually looking forward to; “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23); yet it’s necessary for me to stay around a little while to encourage and strengthen you. We who are in these bodies often “groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered from them, not to be an embodied spirit but to be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven.” Those who have made Him the Lord of their lives have found the life in Christ that gives them the hope for eternity.

Voltaire, that famous French atheist, one of his favorite phrases concerning Jesus was, Crush the wretch. It is interesting that when he came to the point of death, it was much different from Paul’s who said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, our righteous judge, shall give to me: and to all who love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7,8). But Voltaire on his death bed was screaming out, More light, more light, more light, and that was his last words. He went out into the darkness of eternity, without hope, without Christ.

So vital question, one that we must each one answer for ourselves. He asked the people and their response was, Crucify Him.

But he said unto them, Why, what evil has he done (15:14)?

Now you see that the whole judicial system has broken down. A judge is arguing with the crowd. You can’t really picture that, can you? A judge and here are the people in the courtroom observing the trial and they start calling out and rather than rapping and calling for order and getting the bailiff to take these people out of the courtroom, he’s starting to argue with them. Why, what evil has he done? But there is no rationale, they can’t point to any evil that he has done. And so when you have no rationale, you just shout louder and more vehemently. That’s exactly what they did,

they began to cry more vehemently, Crucify him, [let him be crucified]. So Pilate, willing to content the people (15:14,15),

and that’s an awful phrase, how many horrible things are being done in order to content the people? Giving in from what you and your heart know is right. Giving in against what your conscience is telling you. In your heart you know what you should do but not having the strength and the courage to do it. You succumb to the cries of the crowd, to the pressure of your peers and you are forced by this pressure to do things that you yourself know are absolutely wrong. Yet you succumb to that pressure. And this is the case of Pilate, in order to content the people, he

released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified (15:15).

It is interesting that the gospels really don’t play up the scourging. The scourging was a common practice by the Roman government in order to elicit confessions out of the prisoners. The prisoner was bent over so his back was fully exposed and they would use this leather whip with little bits of broken glass and bone imbedded in it that was designed to rip the flesh, so that when they were finished with the administering of this scourging, this beating, the person, his back would look like hamburger. Many times they died as a result of the excruciating pain and the loss of blood. Many times they went insane and they became raving maniacs as the result of the scourging. Sometimes the whip would whip around their face and there are records of their eyes being pulled out by the scourge. It was a horrible thing. And it seems so cavalier, he delivered Him to be scourged. Now the question is this, what does the scourging have to do with our salvation? Because I cannot believe that God would allow this to take place even plan for it to take place because in Isaiah chapter fifty, verse six, it said, “I gave my back to the smiters”; and in Isaiah chapter fifty-

three, it declares there that, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

There has to be a purpose for the scourging, God had to have a purpose in it. The cross, the shed blood of Christ we understand fully that there He was giving His life, the blood flowing out symbolized the life going out. And there as they put the spear through His heart and the blood and the water came forth, through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ we have forgiveness of our sins for He was dying as our substitute in our place as a sacrifice for sin. That we understand. But I’m afraid we understand very little about the scourging, they really don’t make much about it in the New Testament though it was a horrible, horrible experience.

And then the soldiers led him away into the hall, that is called the Praetorium; and they call together the whole band of soldiers. And so they clothed him with purple [the royal color], they platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, And they began to greet him, Hail, King of the Jews (15:16-18)!

Mocking, mockery and scorn. Interesting thing though, however, the crown of thorns, an interesting choice for a crown. For in going back to Genesis where did the thorns come from? You remember when Adam sinned God said, “Cursed be the ground, thorns shall it bring forth” (Genesis 3:17,18). Thorns are the result of the curse of God upon the ground because of man’s sin.

Years ago I was directing a YMCA camp in Arizona out near Oracle junction, in a place we dubbed Scorpion Gulch, for obvious reasons, and we had taken a group of the young boys on a hike up to an abandoned mine and went down the mine shaft and explained a little bit to them about the strata and showed them some of the veins that were being followed as they were pursuing after the gold. On the way back from the trip to the mine shaft, one of the little boys back behind me began to scream in obvious pain. And I went back to see what was going on and here he had this attroia (???) cactus just fastened into the back of his hand. It’s called jumping cactus but it really doesn’t jump. It though does break off very easily if you just brush it, it will break off and the thorns just sort of attach as it breaks off of the cactus, it just attaches itself. Now it’s just thorns all the way around and so you have to be careful in removing it. What I did is I got a couple of sticks and worked the sticks between the thorns underneath and then popped the things off. But as I was working, this sticks in and this little kid was just in a lot of pain with the thorns fastened in. As I was working it in, he said, That darn guy Adam! And I said, Where do you go to Sunday School? He said, The First Baptist Church. Well, you’re learning.

Thorns, the result of the curse. And thus, Jesus was dying to remove the curse of sin. And so I find it quite interesting that they would crown Him with thorns, thorns that resulted from sin and now He is taking away the sin of the world. Crowned with thorns.

They smote him on the head with a reed (15:19),

The night before He had been buffeted by the officers of the high priest, He had been beaten by them, they put a sack over His head and hit Him and said, Prophecy who hit you. And they had really treated Him unmercifully the night before. Now here the soldiers picking up on it and they are hitting Him on the head with a reed or a cane, a caning process. I think we’ve heard something about that recently.

and they did spit upon him (15:19),

Isaiah 56, I did not hide my face from those who spit on me.

and bowing their knees they feigned to worship him (15:19).

Hail, King of the Jews, in mockery, bowing and making a big sport of it as heartless men sometimes do. I find it extremely difficult to understand how heartless man can be to fellowman. We talk about civilization and civilized people and the Roman government was supposed to be a very highly developed civilization. And we’re supposed to be living in a highly developed civilization today but it’s amazing what civilized men can do to other men and to other human beings. And we don’t have to look very far back to see it. We look back at the holocaust in Germany. You read the accounts and it’s just unthinkable that man could do that to fellowman. But you read of the things that are happening in Bosnia and the atrocities on both sides and you wonder, how can a person do that to a fellow human being?

So we see them doing it to Jesus. And how? Because of sin. Because of Satan’s dominating their lives, their thought processes. And Jesus is dying for these kinds of people. People whose lives have been

pervverted as the result of sin. Less than human as the result of sin. The very ones for whom He is dying are those who are inflicting such pain, punishment and mockery upon Him.

And so when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put on his own clothes, and they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled one Simon a Cyrenian (15:20,21),

Cyrene was there on the point of North Africa right in the area of Libya. This man probably had come for the passover to Jerusalem. And while he was there, he heard the commotion, he saw the crowd, he saw the Roman soldier who was leading the crowd with the sign that said, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, because as they would make a procession to the cross, they would actually take a circuitous route through the city in order that as many people as possible will see the accusation and they will fear the power of Rome. So in front of the procession there would be four soldiers, one in front holding the sign, two at the side and one behind the prisoner who is carrying his cross to the place for the crucifixion. And so he saw the soldier marching with the sign, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, and one of the soldiers put his sword flat on his shoulder and that required him to carry the burden of that soldier for one mile. You couldn't argue, it was just Roman law. If a soldier would lay his sword flat-wise on your shoulder, that was just you became for one mile his slave. You'd have to pick up his luggage and carry it for a mile. That was Roman law.

That's when Jesus said, "If they compel you to go one mile, go two" (Matthew 5:41). Go the extra mile, that's where you get the idea. And he compelled this Simon to carry the cross of Jesus. No doubt at this point Jesus was already beginning to physically weaken. He had lost so much blood through the scourging, He had been beaten unmercifully the night before by the guards of the priest and now by the Romans themselves. And seeing Him beginning to lose strength, he probably tapped this fellow, Simon, to carry his cross.

It is interesting that he identifies Simon as the father of Rufus and Alexander where that doesn't mean anything to us, the fact that he inserts the names of the sons, probably means that it did mean something to the people to whom Mark was writing, that they knew Alexander and Rufus. It is thought that maybe the book of Mark was written first to the Christians in Rome and it is interesting when Paul writes his letter to Rome there in the last chapter as he is giving greetings, he said greet also Rufus and his mother and mine. In other words, Paul was saying she's like a mother to me, the mother of Rufus. So it could be that this is the Rufus and because they knew Rufus, it was his father Simon. When Simon got to Golgotha, he probably thought, Man, I'll carry it the mile then I'm getting out of here. But it could be that something intrigued him with Jesus. He was attracted to Him even as he bore His cross so that he waited there and as they were nailing the hands, he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And being intrigued by it, he stayed, perhaps lingered, long enough to become a believer in Jesus.

There was in the church of Antioch, Acts chapter thirteen, a man who had a prominent place in the church in Antioch whose name was Simeon which is another name for Simon, and it said they called him "Niger" which means "of swarthy complexion," African. And being from Cyrene, very possible that in Acts the thirteenth chapter, the Simeon that we have there is the Simon of Mark, that he was converted and was known then later to the church.

He was passing by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, and they compelled him to bear his cross. And they brought him unto the place called Golgotha, which, being interpreted is The place of the skull (15:21,22).

It could be called The place of the skull because of the appearance of the hillside and of course, in Jerusalem today, across from what they call Solomon's quarries, halfway between Herod's gate and the Damascus gate, standing on the wall, looking across over the top of the bus station, you see the top of Mount Moriah and you see on the side the caves that form to look like a skull, the hollow sockets of the eyes and the bridge of the nose, next to the cave that they call Jeremiah's grotto.

Or it could be that there were just a lot of skulls, that it was a place of crucifixion and there were just a lot of skulls around because as a rule, when a person was crucified, they did not bury the body but just took it from the cross and they allowed the vulture and the scavenger dogs to just eat it and left the skeleton there. So it could be that there were just a bunch of skulls around there and that's where it got the name, The place of the skull.

There they offered him to drink wine that was mingled with myrrh: but he did not receive it (15:23).

The wine mingled with myrrh was an anesthesia, it was to numb them so that they would not feel the pain. Actually there was a group of women in Jerusalem who felt sorry for those that were being crucified and they formed a guild and they would make up this concoction to give to the people who were to be crucified to put them into an altered state of consciousness so that they would not feel so intensely the suffering and the pain of hanging there on the cross. But they offered it to Jesus and He did not take it, He refused this anesthesia.

And when they had crucified him (15:24),

Once the cross was, they would lie it on the ground and then the prisoner would be placed on it and the hands on the cross bar, they would nail the hands and then there was this little wooden step upon which he would stand and with loosely tied and there they would hang until they died as they were hanging there. After a period of time as your muscles begin to give way, your body begins to go out of joint. As it does there's the excruciating pain, your body hanging there and gravity beginning to take its toll and begins to slip out of joints with excruciating pain. Of course, it's described in Psalm 22, the body being out of joints. Death usually came by suffocation. After the muscles would give way you just hang there and you'd finally just couldn't breathe anymore, death by suffocation. So they would strip the prisoner of his clothes and the common custom was just to divide the clothes between the four executing soldiers. But with Jesus,

they divided his garments (15:24),

but for His robe, His robe was a special robe, no doubt made by one of the women who accompanied Him. It was without seam, woven from top to bottom, and they said, this is too nice to just tear into four parts, why don't we cast lots for these. And so they parted His garments among them, but for His vesture they cast lots and thus was Psalm 22:18 fulfilled.

And it was the third hour [that was nine o'clock in the morning], when they crucified him (15:25).

Or when He was placed upright there on Golgotha.

And the superscription of the accusation that was written over the top (15:26)

They would take the sign, the guy would carry it through the streets and then they would nail it at the top of the cross so that as He was hanging there they would all see the crime that He was accused of or guilty of. It was written over at,

THE KING OF THE JEWS. And they crucified with him two thieves; one of the right hand, and the other on the left (15:26,27).

And so Isaiah 53:12 was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors" there in His death.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads (15:28,29),

And now you can get a picture of these people. Just screaming out, as He was hanging there, shaking their heads as they shouted their filth and their taunts.

and they said, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and build it again in three days, Save yourself, and come down from the cross (15:29,30).

When they asked Jesus for a sign, He said, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days" (John 2:19). And they said, We've been building this thing for forty, you say you're going to rebuild it in three days? Jesus was referring to the temple of His body. But they're bringing up this again. They're saying, Hey you that would destroy the temple and build it, come on down, save yourself.

Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save (15:31).

How true that is. You see, He cannot save Himself if He is to save others. If Jesus would have saved Himself, He would not be able to save you. "He saved others, himself he cannot save." I'm sure that the chief priests didn't realize how accurate was his statement that he was making. Now Jesus could have come down, we know that. He told Peter, "Don't you realize I could call for ten thousand angels to deliver me, but the cup that the Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it" (Matthew 26:53)? Thus, in staying there, hanging there on the cross, He proved the extent of God's love for you. God was willing to go all the way in order to redeem your soul from sin. Never ever should you question or doubt God's love for you. If ever you

begin to question it, look back at the cross. And there God commended His love or displayed His love toward you in that while you were still in your sins, Christ was dying for you.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). So never, ever question God’s love for if “God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how much more then shall he not freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32)? And so here we see God’s love being demonstrated in a very powerful way as Jesus was hanging there, taking all of this abuse while He hung there on the cross.

Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross [the scribes were saying], that we may see and believe. And even those two that were crucified with him reviled him (15:32).

Luke tells us that later on, one of the two had a change of heart. And when the first one continued with the mockery, he said, Don’t you fear God? Seeing we’re in the same boat as this fellow, we are here because we deserve to be here but this man hasn’t done anything wrong. And then he said to Jesus, “When you come into your kingdom, would you remember me” (Luke 23:42)? You remember that story, we’ll get it when we move into Luke’s gospel next.

Now when the sixth hour [or noontime] had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour (15:33).

This could not be explained as an eclipse of the sun inasmuch as the passover takes place at full moon. It’s impossible to have a total eclipse during full moon because as you know very well, at full moon it comes up as the sun is going down. A total eclipse is caused when the moon passes in front of the sun and it creates then the shadow and the darkness on the earth at that point where according to the time of the year, where it gets the full coverage. But impossible during a full moon so that you have to explain this phenomena of the darkness in another way than eclipse.

In Amos, a very interesting prophecy, chapter eight, verse nine, “And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth on a clear day:” (Amos 8:9). So it happened on a clear day, the earth was darkened. “And I will turn your feasts” (Amos 8:10),

Now this remember took place on the day of the feast of passover which was a feast of great rejoicing because they were rejoicing over God’s delivering their fathers out of the Egyptian bondage. “But I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins” (Amos 8:10),

The sackcloth was usually worn at death. “And I will make it as the mourning of an only son” (Amos 8:10). I find that very significant. “For God so loved the world He gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). “And the end thereof as a bitter day” (Amos 8:10). Fascinating prophecy of Amos and here we see the fulfillment as from the sixth hour or noon until the ninth hour when Jesus dismissed His spirit, darkness over the whole land.

And at the ninth hour (15:34),

three hours of darkness, it was as though nature wouldn’t look at this horrible scene. It was just, man’s sin magnified and exemplified in the death of Jesus Christ. The first sin was suicide of sorts because God had said to Adam that you’re not to eat of the fruit of that tree for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die. You will bring a death sentence upon you. And thus in eating he was committing suicide. The second recorded sin in the Bible is fratricide, when Cain killed his brother Abel. This is the sin of deicide, man attempting to kill God. Man has not ceased that attempt. There are many men today who are still seeking to kill God. They’re seeking to kill people’s faith in God. They have set themselves against God and they are determined to destroy the idea of God, the concept of God. Unfortunately, they have gained positions of prominence and power in our educational system, in our judicial system and thus are becoming quite effective in their attempt to eradicate God out of society, out of our national life. And they are working always, constantly trying to destroy God. Here it was in the crucifixion of Jesus, trying to destroy God. And it continues to the present day. “In the ninth hour,”

Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? that is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (15:34)?

We know that this is the first line of Psalm 22. Often when a rabbi was teaching, he would give the first line of the psalm because they were familiar with the psalms. All you had to do is give the first line and then that psalm would go through the minds of the people. And it could be that Jesus is calling attention to His disciples, more or less, go back and read Psalm 22. And if they would go back and read Psalm 22, they would understand what was going on. This is a fulfillment of prophecy. It's not out of control, God is still in control.

So many times the events of our life we feel that things are out of control. Not so, God is in control. God rules. And though the disciples probably felt that this is horrible, man's ruling over God, yet go home and read Psalm 22 and you'll find that this is part of God's determined counsel. This is the plan of God to reveal His love to the world. It is through the death of Jesus that salvation will come to all.

There will be a day that will come when all will acknowledge Him as Lord, the end of the Psalm goes on that the whole world will, even those that are down in the grave, will acknowledge Him as is prophesied later again in Isaiah, but spoken of by Paul where he said, "Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord" (Romans 14:11), to the glory of God the Father. And thus, it's all a part of God's plan. Go home, read it.

But yet, as you interpret it, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Going on in the Psalm, "why art thou so far from the cry of my roaring? I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not; in the night season, and am not silent." But then in verse three, He gives the reason why He was forsaken, For "thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of thy people Israel" (Psalm 22:1-3).

The holiness of God necessitated the break of fellowship when God laid on Him the iniquities of us all. At that moment, God placed upon Jesus your sin, my sin, the sins of the world. And as Isaiah cried out, "And God laid on him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). And God cried for the transgression of my people was He smitten. So in bearing our sins, when God placed upon Him our sin, He then suffered the consequence of sin which is separation from the Father. God's hand is not short that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. But your sins have separated you from God. That's always the effect of sin, separation from God. And when He took our sin, He was separated from the Father and thus, the cry, and what a plaintiff cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

He had told His disciples, All of you are going to forsake Me because you're all going to be offended. You're all going to forsake Me. Because the scripture says, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). And so He knew and expected them to forsake Him. But now even forsaken of the Father, alone He paid the price to redeem you from your sins. Oh what a wonderful Savior is Jesus, my Jesus. What a wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord. Willing to be separated from the Father for that moment that I would not have to be separated forever. Isn't that glorious? I don't have to be separated from God now because Jesus bore my sin, separated from God for me.

Some of them that stood by, when they heard it, they said, Look, he's calling for Elias (15:35).

Now you see, they were Roman soldiers. They did not know the Hebrew language, they did not know that the Elohi, Elohi was My God, my God and they thought, they had heard of Elijah and so they thought He's crying for Elijah. It is possible that they thought that He had gone into a delirium, into sort of a madness.

And so one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it to his lips (15:36).

Psalm 69:21 was fulfilled that in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. And of course, we are told in the other gospels that along with this cry, He did cry, I thirst. "And so one filled the sponge with vinegar, put it to his lips and"

The other said, No, no, wait, let's see if Elijah will come and help him out here (15:36).

Maybe we're going to have a drama here.

And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost (15:37).

The other gospels tell us what He cried. He cried, It is finished. In the Greek it's just one word, Finished, "Telestai". Finished. Redemption of man, cried with a loud voice, Finished. And He gave up the ghost or as the other gospels said, He dismissed His spirit. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (15:38).

Significant, it was God who tore the thing. And we are told in the other gospels there was a great

earthquake. The rocks were actually torn in the earthquake, and in the earthquake, this veil in the temple, this heavy, heavy veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies--from the place of God's presence, the place where man was not allowed to come, into the presence of a holy God; only the high priest could come and then only one day in the year and then only after many sacrifices, and then with a rope tied around his foot in case the bells in the hem of his garment would quit tingling, they would know that he was dead, that there was something wrong with the sacrifices and so they had a rope on his foot so they could pull him out. They couldn't even go to get him out and so the rope on his. And that would make you sort of I suppose tenuous in going in. The rope on your foot, you just hope everything's alright. Did I dot the i's and cross the t's, is everything perfect here? You're coming into the presence of God. But you see, common man couldn't do that. The priest would go in for the people.

But now God is saying, Look, entrance is available for all men. "Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of mercy, that we might find grace, in the time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). And so we have access now unto God, through Jesus Christ. "One God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). And He prepared the way that leads to God's abode. It's a way marked by love. But it leads us home to God. I love that that God just ripped it and said, Hey come on in. The way is now made, the way has been prepared through Jesus Christ. Your sins are not just covered, now they're put away. The Old Testament, they made the Kaphar, the covering for sin. But now through Jesus Christ, sin's put away and thus access unto the Father by all who will come through Jesus Christ.

*And when the centurion, which stood over against him (15:39),
More or less, overseeing the whole crucifixion,
saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off (15:39,40):*

John tells us that Mary the mother of Jesus was also with the women,
with Mary Magdalene and another Mary, here's Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (15:40);

these women that have followed Him from Galilee, these women that had traveled around with the disciples, who had prepared the meals and had just been a part, an intimate, integral part of the group standing there watching.

(Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem (15:41).

So there were quite a few of the women standing afar off, Mary His mother and Mary Magdalene were standing close enough that Jesus could speak to them from the cross. And John the beloved disciple was there nearby too because Jesus spoke to John and sort of committed to John the keeping of His mother, Mary. That's recorded for us in the gospel of John, we'll get that later.

Now when the even was come (15:42),

He died at around three o'clock in the afternoon. Now it's necessary that He be buried before six o'clock because the next day was the sabbath day, and it was the great day of the feast, it was the first day of unleavened bread which was a sabbath day, and again, a holy day. You had a double sabbath on this week and so, the preparation. They had to have everything prepared by six o'clock in the evening, the sabbath day begins and you can't do anything beyond that. So, it was evening,

the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which was also waiting for the kingdom of God, he came, and he went boldly to Pilate, and craved [or he begged] for the body of Jesus (15:42,43).

Pilate didn't know He was already dead. He was surprised to hear that He was already dead. He marvelled that Joseph was there; is He dead already?

And so he called unto him the centurion, and he asked him if he had been dead for any length of time. And when the centurion confirmed that yes, Jesus was actually dead, , he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of rock, and he rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre (15:44-46).

And then, Isaiah 53:9 was fulfilled where He made His grave with the rich. So Joseph of Arimathaea

burying Christ in his tomb. Today the Garden Tomb is one of the most beautiful sites in my estimation in the Holy Land, whether or not that is the actual tomb is just a matter of speculation but it surely fits the description and is a marvellous experience to see this tomb and surely it was, no doubt, one, if this is not the one, similar to this where Joseph buried Jesus, a tomb that was hewn out of the rock. And of course, you find a lot of them around Jerusalem and you find the rolling stones in front of them. There's several of them, the King's Tomb, and also over near King David Hotel what they call Herod's Tomb and these tombs that are hewn out of the rock.

Someone said, How in the world could this man, very costly, only the wealthy really were entombed. The others were just put in sarcophagus, these flesh-eating coffins. Only the wealthy were buried in tombs and how is it that the guy would go to all of the expense. There in the Garden Tomb there is a cistern for the water to keep the garden and a lot of elaborate expense. Doing that all to prepare a tomb for himself, how could he just give it over to another man? Someone said, Well, it was only for the weekend.

We are told in the close that,

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses followed, they knew where the tomb was (15:47).

So that that sets the stage for the next chapter, the resurrection of Jesus.

Father again we're so grateful for Your love, so rich, so full, so complete. And we stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene. And we wonder how He could love us, sinners, condemned, unclean. O how marvellous, how wonderful Your marvellous love for us. Thank You Lord, thank You Lord, for taking our place, dying in our stead that You might give us life, eternal life. And Lord as we look at the question, What shall I do with Jesus who is called the King of the Jews? May we this day crown Him the Lord of life, the Lamb upon the throne. And may we bow our knee before Him and kiss the scepter as we pledge our hearts, our lives, our all in allegiance unto Him. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.