MARK 15

Mar 15:1  And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

* We don’t know all the details about the night of Jesus’ arrest, but we read here that He was in custody of the Jews until the next morning.
* After a night in the abusive custody of the Jewish elite, Jesus was led to the Roman governor Pontus Pilate.
* Who was Pontus Pilate?
  + Pilate was the 5th Roman governor of Judaea.
  + He was preceded by Valarius Gratis who had appointed Caiaphas as High Priest.
  + Historical records of his life and rule are sparse and many of the details of his reign are still debated.
  + Pilate had many run-ins with the Jews he governed which eventually led to his removal from office.
* Why did the Jews take Jesus to Pilate?
  + It seems they wanted the backing of the Romans before they committed a murder that might insight the people.
  + If the Jews had killed Jesus on their own and there had been an uprising, they might have been held responsible by their Roman overseers.
  + Or they may have wanted Jesus killed via crucifixion and needed Roman approval.

Mar 15:2  And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.”

Mar 15:3  And the chief priests accused him of many things.

Mar 15:4  And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.”

Mar 15:5  But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

* Pilate asked Jesus if He was the “King of the Jews.”
  + This would have been a politically important question because Herod (who ruled with Roman permission) had claimed the same title.
  + If Jesus also claimed the title, it might indicate an attempt at political subversion.
* Jesus doesn’t answer Pilate directly but responds with, “You have said so.”
  + Some think this was a statement of affirmation.
  + Others take it as a probing question meant to interrogate Pilate.
    - Similar, if not identical, to Jesus statement in John 18:34.
    - Joh 18:34 Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”
* The chief priests made sure to pile on plenty of accusations, even though, as we learned earlier, they couldn’t even find credible witnesses.
* To Pilates amazement, Jesus doesn’t respond to the accusations.
  + Accused criminals are usually quick to want to clear their name but Jesus remained silent.
  + This fulfilled a prophecy about Christ in Isaiah 53.
  + Isa 53:7  He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.
* Pilate probably knew many of the accusations of the Chief Priests were bogus and he was astounded Jesus didn’t try to make a defense.

Mar 15:6  Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.

Mar 15:7  And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

Mar 15:8  And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.

Mar 15:9  And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”

Mar 15:10  For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

* Apparently there was a custom at Passover that the governor would forgive a prisoner of their crimes and release them from prison.
* This may not have been dissimilar to governors and presidents handing out pardons around the holidays.
* It was up to the people who was released.
* Pilate gives the people a choice, “would you like Jesus or Barabbas?” (Matthew 27:17)
  + We are told Barabbas was a “notorious” prisoner.
  + He probably thought they wouldn’t ask for the release of a terrible person like Barabbas.
* It didn’t take Pilate long to realize why the Chief Priests had brought Jesus to him.
  + It wasn’t because He had committed a crime.
  + It was because Caiaphas (High Priest) and his friends were envious.
    - Caiaphas only held the high priesthood because Pilate allowed him to stay in office upon becoming governor.
    - Pilate evidently knew Caiaphas’ character on some level and could derive his motives.

Mar 15:11  But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

Mar 15:12  And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?”

Mar 15:13  And they cried out again, “Crucify him.”

Mar 15:14  And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.”

Mar 15:15  So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

* Whatever influence the chief priests and elders still had over the people was apparently enough to convince them to ask for the release of a hardened criminal instead of a man who had spent His days healing their sick.
* The crowd asked for the release of Barabbas and for Jesus to be crucified.
* Pilate had been backed into a corner.
* He asked them, “Why? What evil has He done?”
* The mob didn’t respond with a coherent answer, they just kept on shouting.
* How often do leaders relent to permit or even support godless things, not because those supporting the godlessness present a case based on evidence and logic, but because they yell and keep yelling until those in authority, worried about the security of their positions, relent?
  + At this point, Pilate had at least 2 confirmations of Jesus’ innocence:
    - (1) His own convictions after talking to Jesus.
    - (2) His wife’s dream (which could not have been a coincidence) (Matthew 27:19)
  + Even so, he didn’t want to incite the Jews for fear of their uproar becoming a stain on his political record, so he relented to the mob.
  + The same thing happens all the time today with political and religious leaders.
  + We need leaders with principle and backbone.

Mar 15:16  And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion.

Mar 15:17  And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

Mar 15:18  And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Mar 15:19  And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

Mar 15:20  And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

* Jesus was turned over to the Roman soldiers and when the whole battalion had been assembled, they mocked and beat Him.
  + The Jews and Herod didn’t want Jesus to be their king, they wanted to be in charge.
  + The Romans didn’t want Jesus to be their king, they wanted to be in charge.
  + The Jews and Herod played judge and condemned Jesus.
  + The Romans played judge and condemned Jesus.
  + Whenever men try to fill the role of judge and king, there will be corruption.
  + The Kingdom of Heaven has the only flawless Judge and King.
* APPLICATION:
  + Are all manmade government systems (executive and judicial) destined for corruption and failure?
  + Is history intended to teach us that there is only one King and one Kingdom on which we can place our confidence?
  + God is the only incorruptible Judge and King.
* They dressed Jesus up like a king and mocked Him.
  + Little did they know He would outlast Herod.
  + He would outlast Pilate.
  + He would outlast Caesar.
  + He would outlast the Roman Empire.
  + Jesus’ Kingdom is still present and active in the modern world while the kingdoms that mocked Jesus only exist in history books.

Mar 15:21  And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

Mar 15:22  And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull).

Mar 15:23  And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

* Cyrene was a city of North Africa
* Simon was probably in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.
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* You can imagine the pictures of crosses you’ve seen in crucifixes or history books and how heavy they must have been.
* The whole cross probably weighed over 300lbs.
* The crossbeam which many of the condemned were made to carry was likely 100lbs.
* That may not have been an impossible burden for Jesus on a healthy day but after the sleepless night, scourging, and other abuses, it would have felt like a 1,000lbs.
* There is some discussion about the wine and myrrh (gall) offered to Jesus but most believe the myrrh was a bitter additive to the wine which was offered as a slight painkiller.

Mar 15:24  And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

Mar 15:25  And it was the third hour when they crucified him.

Mar 15:26  And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.”

* 3rd hour = 9am.
* If there was ever a summary so abbreviated as to not capture the full emotion of a situation, it would be “they crucified him.”
  + Mark shares none of the horror of having nails driven through your hands and being lifted up in the air pinned to a piece of wood.
  + A first century audience probably didn’t need any explanation on crucifixion.
  + They were probably more familiar with the process than they wanted to be.
* The soldiers who crucified Jesus cast lots for His clothing.
  + It was not uncommon for prisoners to be crucified naked.
  + No doubt this would have added to the shame of the whole ordeal.
  + Casting lots is comparable to drawing straws, although it was sometimes guided by divine influence in the Old Testament.
* An additional insult, a sign reading “King of the Jews,” was placed above Jesus’ head.

Mar 15:27  And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.

Mar 15:29  And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

Mar 15:30  save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

Mar 15:31  So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself.

Mar 15:32  Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

* In His death, Jesus was associated with common criminals. Two thieves were hung beside Him.
* To make matters worse, the Jewish elite came by to mock Jesus one last time.
* Can you imagine the self-discipline it must have taken for Him to keep the 12 legions of angels in heaven?
* Jesus had the power and the right to come off the cross.
  + It was within His rights to come off the cross but He didn’t in order to bring good news to men.
  + This principle will appear in later epistles for Christian application.
  + Sometimes we surrender our rights to make a way for the gospel.
* The two thieves who were crucified with Him mocked Him too.
  + Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.
  + Mark’s gospel doesn’t tell us one of the thieves would later change his attitude and acknowledge Jesus as a King.

Mar 15:33  And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Mar 15:34  And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

* Miraculous darkness covered the land when the mid-day sun should have been shining.
  + 6th hour = 12pm
  + 9th hour =3pm
* Around 3pm, Jesus cried out “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,”
  + This statement is not Greek or Hebrew.
  + It is recorded in the common spoken language (generally referred to as Aramaic)
  + SIDE NOTE: There is a town in Syria where Aramaic is still spoken. If you would like to hear how Jesus may have sounded, visit this video link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e50qiS-IjJM&t=196s
* The meaning of the statement is provided as, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
  + There has been a tremendous amount of debate surrounding this verse.
  + What does Jesus intend to communicate in this?
  + I think the first thing to recognize is Jesus doesn’t pull these words out of thin air.
    - These words are a quotation from Psalm 22:1
    - Psalm 22 was written by David in a time of despair.
    - He begins by expressing his feeling of being abandoned by God but closes with the realization he has not been abandoned (Psalm 22:24).
    - Several other verses in Psalm 22 prophecy of Jesus (See Psalm 22:18).
  + If I said to you, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” where would your mind immediately go?
  + Psalm 23, right?!
  + If I am a 1st Century Jew familiar who knows the Psalms and someone said to me, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” where is my mind going to lead me?
  + Psalm 22, right?!
* Why does He want the people to remember Psalm 22?
  + (1) Jesus is showing the people Psalm 22 is being fulfilled on His cross, even verse 28, “For kingship belongs to the LORD, and He rules over the nations.”
  + (2) To reveal to the people that even in this moment when it appeared God had forsaken Him, God was worthy of praise, because as the psalmist wrote, “For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and He has not hidden His face from Him, but has heard, when He cried to Him (Psalm 22:24).
* My understanding is that Christ was not abandoned by God and He quotes Psalm 22 for the benefit of those listening who were under the impression they were observing a Godless scene.

Mar 15:35  And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.”

Mar 15:36  And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”

* Evidently, there were some who were confused about Jesus’ words.
* They thought He was crying out for Elijah.
* Several reasons have been given for this misunderstanding.
  + The similarity of “Eli” with the Elijah’s Greek name.
  + Jesus not articulating the words clearly due to His bodily weakness.
  + The people who misunderstood were foreigners visiting for the Passover and weren’t proficient in the language.
* Someone then took a sponge and filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed, and lifted it to Jesus’ mouth for Him to drink.
* Some of the crowd then waited to see if Elijah would show up to save Him.

Mar 15:37  And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mar 15:38  And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Mar 15:39  And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

* After hanging on the cross for hours, Jesus cried out with a loud voice and died.
* Jesus’ last words as recorded in the other gospels were “It is finished.”
* His death was accompanied by some significant events.
  + (1) The curtain in the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.
    - The Jewish Temple had two “rooms” inside, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
    - God’s presence dwelt in the Most Holy Place and only one man in Israel (the high priest) was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place once a year.
    - The rooms were separated by a curtain/veil.
    - Exo 26:31-33 - “And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy.
    - What is the significance of the curtain tearing?
      * After the death of Jesus, all men have access to God through Jesus.
      * You don’t need to be a special kind of priest to talk to God or “draw near” to Him.
      * The dividing curtain, the division between God and man, had been removed.
    - Its tearing from top to bottom may indicate this change came as a result of God’s action in heaven, not man’s action on earth.
  + (2) There was an earthquake.
  + (3) Some dead people resurrected (notice this occurred “after His resurrection) (Recorded in Matthew’s account).
    - We know Jesus had the power to raise the dead.
    - Like Lazarus (who we haven’t met yet), these people were called out of their tombs.
    - The resurrected appeared to many people in the city as evidence to Jesus’ own resurrection.
* Mark records a detail absent from Matthew’s gospel in his record of the centurion who stood at the foot of the cross.
  + Having only seen the events of the last few hours, it was enough to convince the centurion the man they had hung on a cross was the Son of God.
  + What could prompt a hardened roman soldier to confess Christ as the Son of God?
  + Apparently, it was the same things that changed the mind of a thief who mocked Christ one moment and confessed Him the next!

Mar 15:40  There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

Mar 15:41  When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

* When I think about Jesus’ ministry, I usually picture an all mail entourage.
* But here we have a great insight into the role women played in Christ’s work.
* Several women had not only followed Jesus during His Galilean ministry but ministered to Him (taken care of Him).
  + We know Jesus’ own mother was present.
  + Matthew 27:56 tells us the mother of James and John was present.

Mar 15:42  And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

Mar 15:43  Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Mar 15:44  Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead.

Mar 15:45  And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

Mar 15:46  And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Mar 15:47  Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

* It was the day before the Sabbath (a day on which no work was to be performed) so the disciples of Jesus wanted to get His body off the cross quickly (Luke 23:54; John 19:14).
* The text then introduces us to a new disciple, Joseph of Arimathea.
  + We don’t know a whole lot about Joseph but we know he was rich and had a tomb.
  + Luke 23:50 says he was a member of “the council,” which is probably a reference to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council comprised of Pharisees and Sadducees).
  + Joseph’s action in this passage may have endangered his position on that council.
* Joseph went to Pilate and asked to take Jesus’ body off the cross for burial.
  + Pilate was surprised Jesus was already dead.
  + It wasn’t uncommon for the crucified to remain alive on the cross for days.
  + When Jesus’ death was confirmed by a Roman soldier, Pilate gave his permission.
* Joseph took Jesus’ body and laid it in his own tomb (Mat 27:60).
  + This wasn’t a grave like you’d find in a modern cemetery, it was a tomb cut out of a rock formation.
  + A “great stone” was rolled in front of the mouth of the tomb to keep animals and grave robbers out.
* Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses accompanied Joseph at the tomb.