



# Sacrificed

*Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.*

## **MARK 15:24-39**

Have you ever ordered at a drive through speaker, only to discover when you arrived at the window that the person in the car ahead of you had paid your bill? It's an awkward feeling, accepting food for which you didn't pay. The first reaction of many people is to pay for the car behind them. Grace has a way of making us more apt to give, not more apt to take from others.

- **What are some other ways you have seen grace extended in our society? Why do you think some people have an awkward feeling about receiving grace? Why does it cause some people to pay it forward?**
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# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**


## **MARK 14:53–15:47**

After Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, He was taken before the Sanhedrin. Though the Sanhedrin thought of their power as autonomous, the Roman governor exerted influence over them. The Sanhedrin did not have the authority to condemn people to death (John 18:31), which accounts for the later trial before Pilate.

As the trial before the Sanhedrin took place, Peter stood on the outskirts trying to see what would happen to Jesus (Mark 14:66-72). Three times he was asked if he knew Jesus, and each time he denied knowing Him. This was a fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy of Peter's denial in Mark 14:30.

When morning arrived, the Sanhedrin turned Jesus over to Pilate, and the charge changed from blasphemy to sedition (15:1-5). Jesus was accused of saying He was the King of the Jews, which threatened the Roman sensibilities in Jerusalem. Pilate directly asked Jesus if this were true, but Jesus did not answer. Though Mark does not mention that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, the story is recorded in Luke 23:5-12. He tried to shift the blame because he did not believe Jesus was guilty of the charge. Then, he determined to release a prisoner in keeping with a custom associated with Passover (John 18:39). He offered the rebel Barab-bas, but the crowd called for Jesus to be crucified.

Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers, who scourged Him and led Him away to be crucified (Mark 15:16-23). Scourging was a severe form of punishment inflicted as the victim was tied to a post and flogged by a soldier. Deuteronomy 25:3 set the number of strokes to forty, but it was later reduced to thirty-nine. It was not unusual for the victim to die during the scourging. Jesus, of course, survived. Jesus took the cross-beam and carried it as far as He could toward Golgotha, the place of the skull, but fell and Simon of Cyrene carried it the remainder of the way.

 **As you read Mark 15:24-39, identify the different people and groups who were present at the crucifixion and their reactions to Jesus.**

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# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **CRUCIFIED** (MARK 15:24-27)

<sup>24</sup> Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get. <sup>25</sup> Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The inscription of the charge written against him was: **The King of the Jews.** <sup>27</sup> They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left.

### **VERSES 24-25**

Mark was incredibly restrained when he described the details of Jesus's crucifixion. Most people in his day already knew the horrifying details of physical torture a person endured during this form of Roman punishment. After the scourging (Mark 15:16-20), Jesus already was in a weakened condition. He then was stripped naked or at least to a loin cloth and nailed to a cross. The victims of crucifixion died slow deaths as exhaustion took over their bodies and they no longer were able to push themselves up to breathe. Most would die of suffocation.

The detail about **casting lots** for Jesus's clothes was an allusion to Old Testament Scripture. Psalm 22:18 says, "They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing." This is only one of several parallels between Psalm 22 and Jesus's death on the cross. In a process similar to the rolling of dice, the soldiers took the last garments in Jesus's possession and gambled for them at the foot of the cross. This happened at **nine in the morning**, or the third hour in the Jewish day which began at sunrise.

### **VERSE 26**

Above Jesus's head hung an **inscription of the charge written against him**. This was a practice the Romans used to discourage others from committing the same crime. They would often hang a placard around the neck of the one being led to crucifixion and then would hang it at the top of the cross.

The specific charge against Jesus was written with the words, **The King of the Jews**. It appeared in three languages—Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (John 19:20). In all three languages, so any passerby could read the charge, it was clear that Jesus was accused of high treason against the Roman government. Ironically, the claim was not a false claim. The charge contained truth. Jesus was the King of the Jews but was more; He is King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

## ○ How was the charge against Jesus a declaration of the truth?

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### VERSE 27

The Romans crucified **two criminals** with Jesus. The Greek word used here is the same word used of Barabbas, denoting a rebel or insurrectionist. Perhaps Jesus's cross was originally the one intended for Barabbas. It is a clear reminder of Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore, I will give him the many as a portion, and he will receive the mighty as a spoil, because he willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels." The disciples had wanted Jesus to grant them the honor of sitting at his right or left (Mark 10:35-45); Jesus asked them if they could drink the cup that He was drinking. As the criminals hung on his right and left, they were experiencing the same physical death as Jesus.

## ○ How are the criminals hanging next to Jesus representative of all sinners everywhere?

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### MOCKED (MARK 15:29-32)

**<sup>29</sup> Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, "Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup> save yourself by coming down from the cross!" <sup>31</sup> In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! <sup>32</sup> Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.**

### VERSES 29-30


Since crucifixion took place in public areas, people **passed by** where Jesus was hanging. As they read the charges above His head, they began **yelling insults** at Jesus. The word used is the Greek word for "blasphemy." Ironically, Jesus had been accused by the Sanhedrin of blasphemy (Mark 14:64). The crowds were committing the sin that the religious leaders had

accused Jesus of committing. As they passed by, the people were **shaking their heads**. This was a sign of contempt. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah revealed that Israel's neighbors shook their heads in scorn because of the moral condition of their land (Jer. 18:16).

The crowds revealed their misunderstanding of one of Jesus's teachings. He had said that He would **destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days**. Some had used this against Jesus during His trial (Mark 14:58). After the cleansing of the temple, Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days" (John 2:19). John revealed that "he was speaking about the temple of his body" (John 2:21). Evidently, rumors had spread that Jesus would tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days. Ironically, the passersby were witnessing the fulfillment of Jesus's words because He was speaking of His own death and resurrection. Again, these actions were clear allusions to Psalm 22:7, which said, "Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads."

**“The irony is that Jesus wouldn’t have saved Himself or others if He had come down from the cross.”**

The scorn of the people who misunderstood Jesus's teaching stemmed from the fact that they expected Him to tear down and rebuild the temple in three days, and yet He did not even **save** Himself. Because they saw Him nailed to a cross, they thought Jesus couldn't even deliver Himself from His enemies, much less destroy and rebuild the temple. The irony is that Jesus wouldn't have saved Himself or others if He had come down from the cross. The crowd didn't understand that Jesus was there by the divine will of God.

 **How might the words of the crowd have been an extension of Jesus's temptations in the wilderness?**

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### **VERSES 31-32**

The **chief priests with the scribes** joined in the **mocking**, echoing the words of the crowd, **He saved others, but he cannot save himself!** What did they mean, *he saved others*? This was not an admission that Jesus was the Messiah, saving people from their sin. Rather, it was likely an admission of something they could not deny—Jesus had healed many people who were distressed with various kinds of illnesses. Though they

called Jesus, **Messiah, the King of Israel**, and implored Him to **come down now from the cross**, they did not do so from a posture of faith. They claimed they would **see and believe**, but faith must believe and then see (John 20:29). The scorn was made complete when **even those who were crucified with him** began to ridicule Jesus as well. No mention at this point is made of the one who repented (Luke 23:39-43).

○ What does the fact that Jesus stayed on the cross demonstrate about Him?

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## DEAD (MARK 15:33-39)

<sup>33</sup> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá’ ‘sabachtháni?” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” <sup>35</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.” <sup>36</sup> Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

## VERSES 33-34

The soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross at nine in the morning, and at **noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon**. Darkness was the ninth of ten plagues God brought upon Egypt and a sign of His judgment over the land (Ex. 10:21-23). The prophet Amos had described a day when He would “make the sun go down at noon” and He would “darken the land in the daytime” (Amos 8:9). This too was God’s judgment for Israel’s disobedience. The **whole land** did not imply that the whole world was in darkness, but the area around Jerusalem. The darkness reflected the agony and grief of the moment.

At three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in Aramaic, **Eloi, eloi, lema sabachthani**. The words, **My God, my God**, again appear in Psalm 22:1. No doubt this psalm was heavy on Jesus’s mind as He hung on the cross. However, Psalm 22 does not end in defeat but rather in victory: “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD. All the families of

the nations will bow down before you, for kingship belongs to the LORD; he rules the nations . . . They will come and declare his righteousness; to a people yet to be born they will declare what he has done” (Ps. 22:27-31).

The cry of Jesus from the cross, ***why have you abandoned me***, was a reflection of the separation Jesus experienced from the Father on the cross. God had made the One who did not know sin to become sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and holy God could not dwell in the presence of sin. The Scripture had declared that those who hung on a tree were cursed (Deut. 21:23), and Jesus embraced the curse of sin so that He might atone for the sin of others. God’s wrath toward sin had fallen on Christ in that moment, and He felt the abandonment. But He also knew how Psalm 22 ended!

 **How does God’s abandoning of Jesus point to the greatness of our sin?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** Dig deeper into the New Testament’s inclusion of an Old Testament quotation.

Read through Psalm 22 several times. Identify the parts alluded to in the crucifixion account in Mark 15:24-39. How does reading those verses in the context of the entire psalm help you better understand what Jesus experienced on the cross?

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### **VERSES 35-36**

Those who heard Jesus’s words misunderstood Him. They thought He was ***calling for Elijah***. *Elijah* was believed to be the forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5; Mark 9:11-13). Perhaps some believed this would be the defining moment of whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah. But Elijah

did not come to rescue Him, because that is not what Jesus was asking. Someone brought a **sponge** filled with **sour wine** to offer to Jesus. Maybe they thought that with a moistened throat they would better understand His words.

**“He breathed His last breath not with a cry of defeat but a cry of accomplishment.”**

### VERSES 37-39

**Jesus let out a loud cry** as He neared death. This cry could have been synonymous with John’s witness that Jesus uttered, “It is finished,” just prior to His death (John 19:30). He breathed His last breath not with a cry of defeat but a cry of accomplishment. He had fulfilled the will of the Father that He had struggled with in Gethsemane the previous night. At this moment, the **curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom**. This was the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Previously, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year through that veil. Now it lay open, ripped from top to bottom, indicating access to God by His initiative through the death of His Son (Heb. 6:19-20; 9:3; 10:19-22).

#### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. (See Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6.)

The **centurion** supervising the crucifixion saw the way Jesus died and declared Jesus was the **Son of God**. To this point in Mark’s Gospel, no other human had declared Jesus the *Son of God*. God had twice made that pronouncement (Mark 1:11; 9:7). Demons had also twice mentioned this (3:11; 5:7). A Roman soldier was the first in Mark’s Gospel to make this declaration. Mark had begun his Gospel with the words, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). As he brought the gospel story to a conclusion, a Roman soldier entered into that same confession. Jesus had paid the price for sin, and already people were recognizing the divine moment.



# APPLY THE TEXT

- + People can know with confidence that Jesus is the Messiah.
- + People can be assured that Jesus has the power to save.
- + People’s sins are forgiven because Jesus died on the cross.

○ Discuss as a group the various ways people respond to the account of Jesus’s death on the cross. Identify people who do not know Jesus as Savior. What can the group do to help them recognize that Jesus paid the penalty for their sins on the cross and to respond to Him in faith?

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○ Reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for you. Thank Him for going to the cross for you. If you have not put your faith in Jesus for salvation, review the information on the inside front cover and reach out to your Bible study leader.

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## PRAYER NEEDS

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