

Mark 15:16-43
November 21, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

Mark maintains his consistent theme leading into the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Jesus is a King but not like the other kings of the Earth. His disciples recognize Him as a King but still do not understand what His kingdom is like. They now stumble and fall but Jesus prevails, even on the cross, as the King of the Jews.

Mark continues to reveal contrasts to us, contrasts revealed in irony. The disciples all flee, failing to confess Jesus as the Christ, now. But a Roman soldier at the foot of the cross confesses that Jesus was the Son of God. The disciples flee but a group of faithful women witness the death of Christ and also become the first witnesses of the Resurrection. The disciples flee but even secret disciples of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, come to confess their loyalty to Jesus.

Jesus is the King of the Jews and of the Jewish Kingdom, the nation of Israel. But Jesus is taken from Israel, by the leaders of Israel, and through envy, He is given to the Romans. The soldiers worship Him in mockery but Jesus makes a show of them openly in the cross triumphing over them in it. Soon, their worship shall be in spirit and in truth. Truly, this man was the Son of God.

His robe is taken from Him and also given to Roman soldiers. So, the King of the Jews becomes the King of the World. And thus, the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

EXEGESIS

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the

purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

Mark's version of the suffering of the mocking and suffering of Jesus is not particularly detailed. He tends to be brief and to the point, sparing his words for his particular purpose. That purpose is maintaining the theme that Jesus is King. But having said that, we should not over look the great suffering our Lord undertook on our behalf. This is especially true given the mocking that was hurled at Him. Jesus could have put a stop to all of this. He suffered willingly and unjustly.

The clothed Him in purple, the color of Kings. They wove a crown of thorn, placed it upon His head and He was beaten, driving the thorns into His scalp and making Him a bloody mess. The soldiers spat on Him and bowed before Him, mocking the charges that were leveled at Him.

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

Take up your cross and follow Jesus. Simon is forced to do this but we must all do so freely.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. 23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

Golgotha is Calvary, both words mean skull. It was a barren hill that looked like a skull where they did crucifixions.

He does not take the wine mingled with myrrh. There were women who ministered to those suffering crucifixion by giving them a drugged drink of wine. Jesus refuses. However, He later takes wine on the cross to fulfill the fact that His Kingdom has come.

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Jesus is stripped of His garments and His beautiful one piece robe is taken by the soldiers. The robe represents authority and power. Thus, the

power that Jesus had and was present in Israel was taken from Him, taken from Israel and given to the Romans. The blessing is rent from the Jews and judgment falls upon Jerusalem.

Jesus is crucified naked, completely exposed and humiliated before the world.

He was crucified at 9am on a Friday morning.

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

Mark makes sure that we recognize the accusation against Jesus and the fact of Jesus. He was crucified as the King of the Jews. The other gospels tell us that the leaders in Israel protested. It should read, that He said He was the King of the Jews. But Pilate responds, I have written what I have written. It is possible that Pilate believed that Jesus was the rightful King of the Jews, which would have only increased his desire to see Him dead.

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. 29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

These are not just two thieves. They are brigands, or malefactors. It is likely that they were part of the insurrection with Barabbas. Given the fact that there were three crosses already prepared for an execution, insinuates even more strongly that Jesus was a replacement for Barabbas. Jesus dies on the Barabbas's cross. One of the brigands mock Jesus. The other gospels tell us that one of the brigands rebukes the other one and calls upon Jesus for mercy. That was great faith, greater faith than anyone in Israel had ever shown.

So, even though the Kingdom is taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles, there is still yet hope for Israel. There are those in Israel who show great faith. There is yet hope for them.

He was numbered with transgressors fulfills a prophecy of the Messiah. Is. 53, the suffering servant.

Save thyself and come down from the cross is also a fulfillment of prophecy. Ps. 22:8

It is ironic that they should quote the fact about destroying the Temple. It would take great power to do that as well as to rebuild it in three days. We know that Jesus was speaking of His body. Now, it takes great power, great restraint for Jesus to stay on the cross. He could have saved Himself but that was not His goal. Because He desired to save others, He stayed on the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

The chief priests mock Jesus but they are also congratulating themselves. We have Him now. He cannot save Himself. That is not true. Their statement about Christ the King of Israel descending from the cross is not true. They would not have believed had He come down. It is possible, perhaps probable that some of the leaders believe that He really is the Christ but that they have now killed Him. We know that we will not believe if He is saved at the last minute because they do not believe when He is raised from the dead, which is even a greater miracle.

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

At NOON, when the sun should be brightest, darkness covers the land. The darkness is real and physical but it is also accompanied by a dread, darkness of evil. We do not know what the physical cause of the darkness was but the spiritual cause was the suffering of the Christ, the

separation of the perfect man from God and the representation of the separation of God's people from Him.

The light returns after Jesus dies. Why is this? It is because He gained victory on the cross. We tend to think of His victory only in the Resurrection but the Bible tells us otherwise. Jesus defeated His enemies when He died on the cross. He became the perfect sacrifice for His elect, thus accomplishing what He came to do.

The quote is from Psalm 22, which expresses the torment of separation but ends in victory. Jesus understood this and was facing this hour of trial in faith that God, the Father would answer and rescue Him.

The Jews believed that Elijah must come before the Messiah could be revealed. Jesus teaches that this is true and that John the Baptist was the spirit of Elijah. Given the circumstances here, the darkness, the claims of Jesus, the accusation on the cross, think Jesus is calling for Elijah. The Hebrew is Eli, or we might hear it as the name Eli.

This is the occasion for the darkness but Jesus does not quote this Psalm without the knowledge and the hope the rest of the psalm.

Read Psalm 22:26-31.

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

Jesus has come into His Kingdom, He has drunk wine. We are not certain if this one who gave Him drink is still mocking or is filled with a bit of hope. Either way, the giving of wine was an act of kindness.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Jesus cried with a loud voice and He gave up His life. He cried out, "Father, into Thy hands, I commend my Spirit. It is finished!"

The veil is torn, ending the need for the sacrificial system. All men can now see into the holy of holies through the shed blood and perfect death of Jesus Christ. The other gospels tell us this was an earthquake that caused this. We no longer need the blood of bulls and goats or copies of the

heavenly things because Jesus has entered into heaven itself, there to intercede on our behalf.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

A Roman centurion becomes the first to confess Christ as the Son of God after His death. The way Jesus died and the signs that accompanied His death was enough to convince this Roman soldier but the wicked rulers of the Jews still do not believe. Or if they know that Jesus is the Christ, they are basking in their victory over Him.

The kingdom of God will be given to such as believe like this Roman soldier. He is a good representative of all that the leaders of Israel and the zealots, like Barabbas, despise. No doubt, they would have been indignant for him to believe in the Son of God.

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

These women are on the scene, watching from a distance. They prove more bold and faithful than many of Jesus's other disciples. We know that John came and spoke to Jesus on the cross but the other inner circle disciples are not mentioned at all. The Shepherd is struck and the sheep have scattered.

The two Marys, Salome, Mary the mother of Jesus and many other women. This is an elevation of women. They are there and they are witnesses.

42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

The rulers of Israel have gladly seen Jesus crucified. The disciples have fled and the Kingdom has been torn from Israel. However, a Roman looks upon Jesus on the cross and believes. A Jewish malefactor believes. Now, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, rulers on the council, desire to do honor to Jesus. Perhaps they still only possess a dead Jesus but at least they are willing to confess Him as a friend and desire that He be treated with dignity and respect.

EXHORTATION

We end here with Jesus dead, taken from the cross and put into a sepulcher. The hopes are cast down. But some believe. Some realize that Jesus is the Son of God. The worst of the Jews believes, a malefactor on a cross. The worst of the Romans believe, a soldier that partook of the death of Christ. The worst of Mark's telling believes, the leaders on the council. So, God is at work, winning the world through the death of Jesus.

Psalm 22 is sounding in our ears. The world shall know what God has done. Jesus was crucified on the cross meant for Barabbas, one who had committed murder.

In a very short while, we will see Jesus as the Lord of a wicked persecutor, the young man named Saul.

The death of Jesus is the point at which our sins were nailed to the cross. We do not know exactly what this means until the Resurrection and Pentecost but the victory is already ours. Jesus routed His enemies on the cross. That is why He uttered the victorious cry, It is finished!

An obvious application is to simply look at Jesus on the cross, like the thief did, like the soldier did, like Joseph did, and believe. Even that horrid death was a good thing, part of God's plan to win the world for Himself. It was I that deserved it but it was only Jesus that was able to be the perfect sacrifice to satisfy divine justice. And in that sacrifice, I am perfectly free to come to the Father without sin and shame. The obvious response is deep gratitude. Lord, thank You that you paid for my sins. Thank You that I was not left to think that I could pay for them myself. Thank you for the gift of grace and mercy. I gladly receive Your pardon.

Another application is to realize the victory that we gain in all of our little deaths. We call them trials. They are a result of sin in the world and

death through sin. They are the result of general sins, say sickness for example, and our own particular sins that bring trouble into our lives. But these humiliations and deaths are a means of God's grace. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. Shall we then continue in sin? God forbid. But there is always enough grace for our sins. And that means that those sins are and can be nailed to the cross with Christ. They are always part of His perfect sacrifice and thus we are freed from them and made to partake in the victory of Jesus. Every time you confess and repent, you gain victory and life, triumphing over your enemies, sin and death and living to righteousness and life. Thanks be to God.