

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Lecture 23, Mark 15:1-32, Pilate, Passion, and Crucifixion

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This is Dr. Mark Jennings in his teaching on the Gospel of Mark. This is session 23, Mark 15:1-32, Pilate, Passion, and Crucifixion.

Hello, welcome back to the study of the Gospel of Mark.

We're now almost to the end. We're at Mark chapter 15, which is the final whole chapter, and then we'll go into Mark chapter 16, and the verses there at the start, and I'll speak a little bit about chapter 16 when we get there. With Mark chapter 15, we now move, remember, in 14 it was the trial of Jesus before the Jewish council, before the Sanhedrin, and how that was happening concurrently with Peter's denial, which Jesus had predicted.

With Mark 15, we're beginning to move into the crucifixion proper itself, and of course, at the front of 15 comes the hearing before Pilate. Now, Mark gives the least amount of detail of Jesus' hearing before Pilate. Don't mistake what I'm saying.

He gives a lot of detail. We have a lot of information about this particular event from Mark, but we don't have such things, for example, as Pilate's wife, petitioning Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus because of her unsettling about Jesus' innocence. We don't have Pilate and Mark, we don't have Pilate sending Jesus to Herod Antipas and ask him, since he has jurisdiction over Galilee, if he wants to make a ruling on this.

We also, unlike John, don't have that exchange, that long conversation between Pilate and Jesus. We have a much briefer account, but it is interesting that one of the things that is perhaps a strong historical certainty, in fact, might be one of the strongest certainties we have from ancient history, is that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. We have that not only recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but we have, as we've talked about in the past, other documents that refer to Pilate's role in this.

So, we're dealing with something that is a historical fact, and even the account in front of Pilate and Mark presents a lot of information, if you will, about this. Now, it's interesting that being said, even though the historicity of Jesus' crucifixion is hardly disputed, there is some discussion over whether the depiction in the Gospels themselves is historically accurate, meaning there's some debate that happens out there that does Mark create a little bit of a fabric of a story regarding Jesus and Pontius Pilate, and typically the reason being that the argument of Mark's historicity

falls on two accounts. One, what we know of Pilate seems very different than what we see here in the Gospels.

By that, I mean, when you look at Philo, you look at Josephus, you look at other accounts of Pilate, and it's very clear he is a very cruel person. He was a person who had no difficulty in upsetting the Jewish population. We talked a little bit about this already.

He was an individual who would often be at odds with the Jewish leadership and was comfortable with that. In fact, he had a couple of occasions, we know from outside of the Gospels, he had committed acts that were considered blasphemous involving the temple and Roman standards and that sort of putting in of Roman deities in places that should have been only honored to God, and that had caused significant unrest, including a protest to Rome. Pilate seems very willing to say no to the Jewish leadership, in other words, and very willing to stand against them. And there's some reputation for how his meanness, his cruelty of character, so when people look at Mark, and they see a Pilate that almost is trying to get Jesus off, trying not to crucify him, trying to plead with the crowds to not crucify him, it seems completely out of character.

The second challenge, historically, is the release of Barabbas. Now, as we'll read about in the Mark account, the release of Barabbas, mind you, is in all four Gospels, but Mark talks about how, as is customary during this time for Pilate to release a prisoner during the Passover, well, the challenge is we don't really see a lot of evidence of how that was a custom, how that was expected or something that happened over and over. Outside of the reference to Barabbas, it doesn't seem to be; this was an expected reality, and so one of the challenges becomes, how is it that we have a Pilate who is a ruler that seems very cruel, now kind of capitulating to the Jewish leaders, and even capitulating to the Jewish crowds, and even instituting some sort of gracious mercy act by releasing a prisoner, and so it's often argued that that was a creation of the Church, that whole bit, not that Jesus was crucified under Pilate, but the conversation and even the release of Barabbas.

Well, I think there's some response here that makes historical sense that would explain it. One of the things, first of all, that speaks to the historicity of what we have going on here is the fact that Barabbas is mentioned in all four Gospels, and if there wasn't something that had occurred like this if this incident or this event had not happened, why would the Gospel writers or the Church sort of develop a tradition of this Barabbas character and insert it, especially citing that this was a custom? If Mark is being written fairly close to the events at hand, for him to say that there was a custom or tradition that was being followed would seem to be strongly opposed, especially if Mark is writing to a church in Rome, which would have had some understanding maybe of how these different rulers were working. Second, also keep in mind that it wasn't uncommon for rulers, for example, especially conquering

forces or occupiers, or kings who had a bit of unrest, to do this very thing of releasing prisoners.

It wasn't an uncommon act. We see references to it, and even in the first century and the second century after, even the Mishnah kind of referenced this idea that a king or ruler, if there was some sort of unrest or displeasure with him, and a people would release some prisoners as a way of maintaining good relationships, that's not an uncommon act. And even the sense of, as was his custom or has been his custom, doesn't require an entrenched practice over decades.

It could have been something that had just developed sort of recently during that period, but which people knew Pilate would do. It would make sense that he would do it during the Passover as well if there's this festival that even has kind of this release some bondage idea. But I think even speaking a little bit more about the historicity of it all is the cruelty of Pilate, the fact that Pilate had stood up to the religious leadership before, and this is why.

Because Pilate had had, and we know on many, on two or three occasions, a run-in, if you will, with the Jewish leadership, and that they had complained all the way up to his bosses. Pilate might have felt that his current seat of being governor wasn't as certain, especially because we know the man who appointed him, who history tells us had a strong anti-Semitic stance, was himself being his seat was very uncertain, and depending if this is 30 A.D. or 33 A.D., may or may not even have been in power at the time. If it's a little bit later, there actually might have been a changeover in rulership.

But if we have, you can easily see this picture, if we have ruling Jews, and some of which we know on one occasion went all the way to the emperor to voice their complaint over Pilate's rule, Pilate might feel a little bit unsettled, having been rebuked or chastised over his treatment of the Jewish leadership, and so might have put in place a practice such as the releasing of Barabbas, or also kind of been much more likely to want to make sure there isn't any more unrest, or that there isn't a heavy complaint that's levied against him, that his own past cruelty now is determining why he has to act a little bit differently because he simply wants to keep his job. He's not wanting to be, you know, for a lot of favor in Rome. So, what we know out of history, whether we look at Josephus or Philo, and what we see in the Gospels, actually doesn't have, isn't combative.

And let's also keep in mind before we create a pilot that somehow, in Mark, is a gentle, thoughtful soul, and he still does crucify Jesus. He still, even though he recognizes Jesus hasn't done anything but is a pawn of the Jewish leadership, you know, is someone that the Jewish leaders themselves want to use Pilate to kill, recognizes all of this, and he still hands him over to be crucified. So, before we begin

to think Pilate was somehow a gentle player in this passion play, let's not lose sight of that.

The last little bit of historicity that I think speaks to that is the whole title, King of the Jews. You'll notice Pilate, in the conversation, refers to Jesus as King of the Jews, and when he crucifies Jesus, he uses the title over as King of the Jews. And King of the Jews was not a term that Jesus used for himself.

King of the Jews was not a term that the early church used for Jesus. If this was a creation of the early church, we might have expected to see titles they liked, perhaps even Messiah. They didn't use King of the Jews, but yet King of the Jews would have been a very understandable Roman way of understanding this Messiah figure.

And so, the fact that Pilate here is using King of the Jews I think speaks to the historicity of it. It'd be unlikely for the later church to use King of the Jews and insert it into the story. And so I think that speaks a little bit to the authenticity.

Finally, I think it speaks in favor of Jesus himself making messianic claims, that however Pilate understood Jesus, there was some connection between Jesus and this Messiah figure, and that King of the Jews is the way he best understands this. Well, let's get into it. Let's look at the first 15 verses of Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 15.

Mark 15, starting with verse 1. 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. And Pilate asked him, are you the King of the Jews? And he answered him, you have said so. And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you?" But Jesus made no further answer, so Pilate was amazed. Now, at the feast, he used to release one prisoner whom they asked.

And among the rebels in prison who had committed murder and the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them saying, do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews? For he perceived it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd and gave him release and gave and had him released them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, then what should I do with this man you call King of the Jews? And they crowd out again, crucify him. And Pilate said to them, why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, crucify him.

So, Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them. And having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. It's interesting to look at this passage here.

Of course, as we talked about last time, the Sanhedrin could not execute Jesus. They didn't have the authority to kill. By saying they didn't have the authority, one of the things that that means is that it was very common for Rome to allow the local population to make decisions about the rulings and the judgments but to withhold capital punishment.

Rome would usually not allow capital punishment to be a judgment that the local bodies could do. So, the Sanhedrin could not execute Jesus. And as we talked about last time, they worked to find a viable way, a charge that they could then take to Pilate.

Of course, Pilate is currently in Jerusalem. Typically, he would be at Caesarea Maritima, where his fortress and palace would be.

But during the festival time, especially because Jerusalem would increase its population, Pilate would come and stay in Jerusalem. He usually would stay at Herod's Palace. And wherever Pilate would stay, that place immediately became the imperial house, the quarters, the praetorium, etc.

That's how that would be titled. And so, he most likely didn't stay at a fortress. He probably stayed at Herod's Palace.

That changing of location title by way of Pilate being there is very similar to what we do in the United States with our president. If whatever plane our president happens to be on, that plane's call sign becomes Air Force One. So, if we have a jet that we call Air Force One, and it has all the stuff for the president, but it's called Air Force One because that's the president's jet.

But if the president were to leave that jet and go on to, let's just say, a passenger airliner, well, that passenger airliner now's call sign would change to Air Force One. So, whatever plane the president is on is called Air Force One. That's similar here.

Whatever palace that Pilate goes to then all of a sudden gets known as the Roman presence there just because he is there. So here he is in Jerusalem. So they're able to bring Jesus to Pilate relatively quickly.

And so, they take him to them, which incidentally, if you notice, this is the passion prediction that Jesus had been given throughout Mark, one that he would be handed over to the Jewish leaders, but also that he would be handed over to Gentiles. And

this is, of course, what we're seeing have happened. So, the chief priests begin accusing him of many things, and Pilate asks of him, this is in verse four, have you no answer to make? And it's interesting because there's a very, I think, beautiful sort of subtle statement about the power of Jesus in this moment.

In verse five, Jesus gave no further answer. He stays silent in the face of all these accusations, just as he stayed silent in the face of most of the accusations in front of the Sanhedrin. He is staying silent here.

We can assume these accusations are probably more of the nature of against Rome than of the nature of violating the law of the Jews. So, these accusations that they're bringing to Pilate probably have to do with he claims to be king, insurrection, disturbance of the peace, riots, of that nature. Notice that, in verse five, Jesus made no further answer, so Pilate was amazed.

Now we've seen amazement as a reaction throughout the Gospel of Mark in response to what Jesus does. You know, you think about that, what was that first day in Capernaum and all the way through Jesus' ministry, if he would do a healing or he would cast out demons or even his preaching, his speaking, his teaching, we were constantly told that the crowds were amazed. The crowds were amazed at the teaching he did and with what authority.

The crowds were amazed that he spoke and the demons were silenced. The disciples were amazed, who is this who can speak into the wind, into the water, and they are calmed and stilled. Here, it's interesting because it isn't Jesus' actions or his actual words that are causing amazement.

It is his silence. Pilate is amazed that Jesus is silent. That the authority, in other words, that we so readily associate, the amazement we so readily associate in the Gospel of Mark with what Jesus says now comes with the fact that he doesn't speak.

I think it makes this moment in verse 5 in itself seem like a moment akin to the miracles. You know, as if there was such an expectation here that Jesus would reply, but he does not. Then, you know, Pilate asks him, of course, are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus' answer is very interesting.

You have said so. When asked directly, Jesus does respond to Pilate. Not unlike when asked directly by the chief priest, Jesus responds.

But his response is interesting. You have said so. And it's trying to figure out exactly what that means is a little bit challenging because it's not a denial, but it does seem to be a qualified yes.

It doesn't seem to be as strong as a statement of affirmation. And maybe that's the correct way to understand it. He's saying yes in terms of words and yes in terms of power and authority, but not in the way that Pilate means.

Maybe it's a yes in terms of words but a no in terms of meaning. Maybe that is the answer. So then when they go through this piece and Pilate, you know, having been amazed, now sees this opportunity to maybe perhaps release Jesus because of the Passover and goes to the crowds and says to them that he's going to do what they are asking of him, which is to release the prisoner.

He asks if they want him to release the king of the Jews. Now my sense is because the motivation is that he asks the question, in verse 9, do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? Verse 10, the motivation, for he perceived it was out of envy that the chief priest had delivered him up. My assessment of that is he actually expects the crowds not to want Jesus to be kept prisoner, but to want Jesus to be released.

The envy that Pilate is perceiving is the envy that these religious leaders are jealous of Jesus, jealous of his popularity, jealous of his influence, and the very fact that Pilate offers Jesus as an option for this release probably means he didn't see Jesus as a threat. That the charges of insurrection, that the charge of starting a revolution, that the charge of a riot against Caesar, perhaps even that the charge of a big disturber of the peace, that none of that he garnered as a threat or else why would he sort of offer up this figure? I mean, Pilate probably is going to have to be able to account for the people he releases. It would be unlikely for the Pilate to feel comfortable releasing someone who might actually try a revolt against Rome.

That just seems completely illogical. So, the fact that he offers Jesus as an option probably means he thinks he's safe to release. He's not worried that Jesus is going to lead an armed band against him.

And he realizes jealousy and envy that this is the reason it's happening. And so, when he presents Jesus to the crowd and says, do you want me to release the king of the Jews? My sense is he probably expects them to say yes. They would want this, which would be a great win if you're Pilate because, on the one hand, you can't say you didn't listen to the charges, and you ignore it.

But on the other hand, you're able to also maybe tweak the noses a little bit of the leadership and have the crowds themselves on your side and be able to even stand in front of your superiors and say, what I did, I did because I wanted to make sure the crowds would not be upset. But of course, the story changes because the chief priest has stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. We don't know a lot about Barabbas.

We do know that he had been arrested and tried in connection with an insurrection that involved murder. The language isn't as clear in the Greek if Barabbas had committed the murder or had been part of an operation of which murder had been committed. But regardless, he'd been associated with this.

The chief priest had stirred up the crowds for this. Now, I think the sense would be that the stirring up probably means the crowd didn't come as a lynch mob, if you will, demanding the crucifixion of Jesus but had been stirred up to it. Maybe one of the works the chief priest had done was to create a scene of which Pilate would be pressed, if you will, to acquiesce against the crowd.

And so, they say they don't want Jesus, they want Barabbas instead. And then I find verse 12 interesting. It's almost as if Pilate is having trouble really understanding the response of the Jews here, of the crowd.

Because then he asks, but okay, if you want Barabbas, what should I do with this man you call king of the Jews? And they cried out, crucify him. And then Pilate seems to want a conversation. Why? What evil has he done? But there was no debate to be had.

They shouted all the more, crucify him. And then, in verse 15, Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, acquiesces. This is not the first time we've had the crowd determining an action.

Think back to Herod, when Herod all of a sudden finds himself trapped in his own making with John the Baptist. And he doesn't want to kill John the Baptist. He enjoys listening to John the Baptist.

And there's something about John the Baptist's purity and his holiness that is drawn to Herod. And yet, he creates this grand setting and makes these oaths by which he's bound and trapped. Not wishing to upset his dinner party guests, he has John the Baptist killed.

There's a parallel here. Pilate sort of sets up this trap of his own making and his own cleverness, trying to find a way perhaps to release Jesus and use the crowds to do it, has actually had the reverse happen. The crowds have now sided with the religious rulers and are demanding the crucifixion of Jesus.

Pilate now has two choices. Does he stand and say he's not worthy, and therefore, I'm not going to crucify him? Or does he acquiesce to the crowds? He chooses to acquiesce to the crowds. This is interesting because the crowds themselves were the very reason the religious leaders were hesitant to arrest Jesus to begin with.

They didn't want to arrest Jesus in the temple because of all the crowds. And they wanted to find a private place. And here, the crowds are the ones actually now in the public sphere directing the action.

We've seen the crowds throughout the Gospel of Mark be a very fickle bunch. They have been amazed at Jesus' teaching but have never really been followers. They've been one of the characteristics we saw in the first seven or eight chapters, and the crowds always sort of got in the way of people trying to get to Jesus.

And here the crowds are playing a role in the crucifixion. So, for political gain and for social peace, Pilate agrees to crucify a man that he knows is simply there because the religious leaders are jealous of him. And so, he agrees, and he hands him over.

He relieves Barabbas. He had Jesus scourged, which is a whipping process that would have occurred, and he delivered him for crucifixion. And then we come to the crucifixion, of course, with verse 16 and this process leading up to it, verses 16 through 32.

Look at a little bit of it here in some chunks, and then we'll walk through it. So, let me just read a small portion of verse 16. The soldiers led him away inside the palace, which is the governor's headquarters.

This is what we're referring to, how the name of the place has changed. And they called together the whole battalion and they clothed him in a purple cloak and twisted together a crown of thorns and they put it on him. They began to salute him, hail king of Jesus.

And they were striking his head with the reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him and stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him, they led him out to crucify him. Verses 16 here through 20 is a mockery of a coronation.

It has all the vestiges of a victory parade by an emperor or the installation of a new emperor, of course, now here done in mockery. They have the purple cloak put on him. Of course, purple would have been the color of royalty.

They have a laurel, if you will, put up on him, but it's a laurel made out of thorns. Instead of the cry of hail Caesar, emperor, which was a common cry that often when Caesar would enter in, especially in a parade or a victory procession, you would yell, hail Caesar, emperor. Here it's, hail king of the Jews.

The beating of a reed, when we look at what Matthew has to say in trying to think through this picture, it might be very well that this reed was a scepter that they had

him hold that now they're using to beat with him. It's a full contempt and insult. Notice the language here of the soldiers.

They dress him up in this king picture, this coronation if you will. Then they begin to hit him continually and spit on him, which incidentally is a passion prediction coming true, the third passion prediction. If you look at the suffering servant motif, which we've been talking about all along, how it's present, Isaiah 56:7 talks about the continuous insults and the continuous spitting happening.

We have all of this beginning to take place. I think it's important to realize what Mark tells us about the people involved in the crucifixion, that there is no comfort being given, that there's insult coming from all quarters. I think that's useful as we get further into Mark chapter 15 and we'll notice some of the events that happen that make you wonder, is it insult or is it comfort? Well, Mark would have you understand it as insult because there's nothing that occurs here throughout in Mark's presentation of which Jesus draws any personal comfort for it.

So, after the soldiers have proceeded with the beating and the mocking and kneeling down in homage to him right again, you can just feel the sarcasm and the vitriol and the meanness of it. Jesus now begins to walk to where he's going to be crucified. And as you're aware, usually on a crucifixion, first of all, crucifixions only happen in very public settings.

Rome would use the method of crucifixion as a message. It was a very long and painful way to die. One typically didn't die from bleeding to death.

They often died from suffocation, the inability to breathe because they would just become so weakened hanging on a cross that to breathe, they had to pull themselves up to allow their chest to expand. Or they would die of starvation or dehydration. But it was a long process, and usually, during that process, they would begin to be eaten by birds and by wild dog packs and beasts.

It was done in a very public setting because it demonstrated the power of Rome, that this was what Rome could do to anyone who stood up against them. And it was as much a message as it was a judgment. If capital punishment was simply the judgment, then there are much more efficient ways to kill someone.

Indeed, if you were a Roman citizen, you were afforded the honor of a less shameful death. Crucifixion was a very shameful position to be in. Not only were you powerless even over your own death, but you were often naked when one was crucified.

It had all of the social and physical aspects that would be associated with a very shameful position. This is why when Paul speaks, for example, to the Corinthians, he

draws the stress between what is honored and what is shame and reminds the Corinthians that we proclaim Christ and him crucified, which is the ultimate display of shame from a world standpoint, yet the clearest picture of God's victory. And so, they would have these public places where they would usually have the vertical beam still always kind of in place if you will.

And then you would, as the condemned, would carry the horizontal portion of the cross to that location. And so, this would be kind of a process of parading or walking up to your point, where you would then be mounted onto the vertical beam. In this, we pick up verse 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.

Now, this is a very interesting reference. It's a very brief reference. And the historicity of this, though, I think speaks to the fact that it is mentioned and names are given.

Notice we have three names that are given. We have Simon, but we also have the name of his two sons, Alexander and Rufus. And the naming of the two sons is a fascinating bit here because it's not something that would be common unless those names had significance.

So you could find maybe the name of Simon being given just because of the historicity of the moment his name was remembered. However, actually giving the names of the two sons not only speaks to historicity and eyewitness testimony but may also speak to the importance of those two figures. Of course, one of the speculations is that Mark is writing to a church in Rome, and we know from Romans 16:13 that there's a Rufus at the church in Rome.

And so some have wondered if this mentioning of Rufus somehow isn't connected with the Rufus of Rome, if maybe even the same figure. Now, the fact that they conscripted someone to carry the cross isn't uncommon. One, it speaks to, of course, the authority of Rome to have someone do this, but it also speaks to now the physical state of Jesus.

He's been whipped. He's been beaten. He's been, you know, keep in mind, he's been on trial in some sort of hearing for hours, even up prior to this, whether it's from the Sanhedrin and then to the Romans.

And so at this point, you can see his weakness; he's almost unable to carry the cross. And, of course, Rome would not want their victims to be unconscious. They wouldn't want them to die on the way.

I mean, that would take away the very vehicle of why they have the cross, which was to show the agony and the power of the government. And so they conscript

someone, and brought him to a place called Golgotha, which means place of the skull. I always wondered why we would refer to this place as Calvary.

A lot of the great hymns of the church are referred to as Calvary, and I always found that strange. And I remember trying to figure out, trying to come up with some solution. But really, it's Golgotha, which means place of the skull.

If you put the place of the skull in Latin, you come up with Calvary a locus. And so that's what Latin has for the place of the skull. And so, thus, Calvary sort of became the name of this location.

So, they go to the place of the skull, and there's been a lot of debate about where this location is. Why is it called the place of the skull? Is it because the hillside itself from a distance looks like a skull? Is it because it had ominous death characteristics? And there are some other options as well. I think one of the things, though, regardless of where exactly it is, and we have some thoughts, it would have been a thoroughfare.

It would have been a place where people would pass by. Indeed, what we see in Jesus's crucifixion is a lot of people coming and going. And so, they bring him to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. Now, remember what I said earlier: these are the soldiers who are bringing him here. So, this wine mixed with myrrh, there's a lot of debate, what is this? Is it a sedative? Is it some sort of sedative to help dull the senses? Or is it bitter, something that would taste really, really bad? If it's the former, then it's a form of comfort.

If it's the latter, then it's even an extra edge of insult. Because of how Mark has presented the soldiers, I think we're right to take it as an added form of insult, not as a sedative, not as something that would bring comfort, but as someone that would actually cause distress. Taking advantage of a man's exhausted state at this point, the dehydration, the sense of weakness, you would almost want to drink anything.

Here would be an ideal opportunity to have wine tainted with a bitter taste. Of course, I think this might be more mockery, but Jesus refuses. Several reasons have been offered for this. This may go back to Jesus saying, "I'm not going to drink of the cup."

He's not going to drink anything, and this is part of his fasting. If it is a sedative, then maybe Jesus is making sure he doesn't want to be dulled, that he wants to feel the full experience of the suffering. But regardless, I think of the answer to that, it does show you the clarity still of Jesus' mind.

At this point, even though he's exhausted, Jesus has the mental capacity and control of will to say no to it. Say no to it, maybe even when he physically would have desired it. Last little bit, and then we'll finish for this session.

They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. They crucified him, dividing his garments among them, casting lots for them to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him.

The dividing of the garments and the casting of lots, of course, comes into play here in a little bit. In the next session, we'll look at the psalm and the cry of dereliction. We'll talk about that in a second.

But that method itself wouldn't have been uncommon. Typically, people are crucified naked. There is some thought here that Jews might have been crucified still with some sort of cloth around them just because of their, um, as a gesture of the Romans towards Jews in terms of the shame of nudity.

But the garments, again, are still clearly taken, and often, they would be distributed among the soldiers. They would take and have owned them. And then the third hour, roughly around 9 a.m., is probably the third hour we're talking about here, that reference.

Keep in mind time is fluid a little bit. At least I should say it's not as accurate. When we think of time, third hour, 9 a.m., we have a very specific time in mind and a specific minute.

This could refer to the period of time that is sort of governed by the 9 o'clock hour, if you will, that section. So, you could talk about the third hour and it could be anywhere between 9 a.m. and sort of the next block of three, which would have been you know, the sixth hour. I mean, there's a little bit of fluidity.

But you get the sense it's morning. I mean, I think that's clear. So early, mid-morning, not at the dawn.

It's interesting, last comment here, how little Mark says about the actual act of crucifixion. We've gotten mostly the people's response to Jesus, the mockery, the spitting, the cloak, the thorns, the casting of lots. We haven't got a lot of information about the method of crucifixion itself.

And that's not uncommon. Crucifixion wasn't described in detail in many of the ancient documents. In fact, if you look at our Gospels as a whole, we get more about crucifixion there than we have in a lot of places.

It was often decried by the philosophers and the teachers as such cruelty. And I wonder, too, as you think about it, maybe there wasn't always a need to describe in detail what happens when one is crucified because it would have been something readily known and understood. But also, I think it speaks to the fact that it isn't the gore of the moment that is the subject of the event.

It is the authority of Christ here laying down his life as the sacrificial suffering servant, as an atonement. The Gospels clearly let that stand more than the blood and the pain. We'll pick it up again next time as we work through Mark chapter 15.

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