

## Gospel of Mark Chapter 15 – John Karmelich

1. My single word title for this is "rejection". That is because this chapter deals with Jesus being rejected during the events leading up and including Jesus' crucifixion. My goal in this lesson is not only to think about how Jesus was rejected, but hopefully to learn a few things the next time you or I have to deal with the issue of rejection. Yes, this is not the happiest topic in the world, but it is the one we have to deal with in this chapter and in our lives.
  - a) What we as Christians have to remember what Jesus told His disciples about rejection: "He who listens to you listens to me (Jesus); he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16, NIV).
  - b) Jesus is saying because people rejected Him, they will also reject us. That deals with the issue of being a witness for Him, but it also has to deal with the fact that if we live our lives in a Godly way, we can expect rejection from others.
  - c) This lesson is not encouraging us to suffer. It just means that rejection is part of life and it is definitely part of the Christian life. Therefore, we should learn what Jesus has to say about rejection and learn the proper way to deal with that issue.
  - d) I remember a pastor once telling me that the Christian life is all about "Being joyful, having a positive outlook and constantly having to deal with problems". What we are to learn from Jesus' trials is not only history, but lessons on how to deal with life's problems.
  - e) Just as "resurrection day" is one lesson away (i.e., the next lesson), we have to remember that whatever bad thing we have to deal with in this life can, at the worst, only last as long as this life exists, which is "nothing" in comparison to the length of eternity.
2. I also want to say that this is one of my most serious lessons. There will not be a lot of happy parts and there are few "smiley" faces. I am not saying that to depress you. It is just that this lesson covers the time of darkness where Jesus is rejected and sent to the cross.
  - a) If you can make it through this lesson, you are going to love the "resurrection" message that ties to the next and final chapter of the Gospel of Mark.
  - b) With that brief but depressing introduction complete, I can now focus on this lesson.
3. Chapter 15, Verse 1: Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.
  - a) When we left off in Chapter 14, there were two major scenes being played out. One was Peter denying Jesus and the other was Jesus being tried before a Jewish council. Now in this chapter we move on to Jesus' trial before the Romans.
  - b) If you study all four gospels, you will figure out that Jesus had three appearances before a Jewish council (the Sanhedrin) and three appearances before a Roman council (two before Pilate and one before King Herod).
  - c) My point here is that none of the four gospels give a complete account of Jesus' actual trials. One has to read all four to get a complete story. So why didn't Mark's gospel or any of the gospels give a complete account? That was not the gospel's purposes. Each gospel tells the story of the events leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection. Each account is there to make points for us to learn from these events. Mark's emphasis is on Jesus who was our "servant" in that He died for the sins of mankind.
    - i) The way Mark's Gospel is organized is that one section (Chapter 14) focused on the events of Jesus' trial before the Jewish courts and another section (Chapter 15) focuses on the events around Jesus' trial in front of the Roman courts. The reality is that Jesus went back and forth to both groups during the times of these trials.
  - d) With that said, let us return to Verse 1. The first thing we read is that this is the "early in the morning". This is the morning after as the Last Supper and the arrest of Jesus.

- e) The important point here is that the Sanhedrin reached a decision regarding Jesus. They decided He deserved the death penalty and since only the Romans could enforce the death penalty, this group brought Jesus, tied up, to the Romans. Pilate was the Roman governor in charge of the Israelite territory that includes Jerusalem and "southern Israel".
  - f) Probably the main point to get out of Verse 1 is that the Jewish court (again called the Sanhedrin) found Jesus guilty of "blasphemy" as Jesus claimed to be God and now the Jewish council is handing Jesus over to the Romans for punishment.
  - g) So given all of that, how does any of this stuff apply to my life today?
    - i) Let's face it a lot of people reject the Gospel Message as they refuse to believe it is the only way to heaven. Therefore, whether people realize it or not, when they are rejecting Jesus and they too, are saying in effect "crucify Him", so they can rid their life of the belief that Jesus is the only way to eternal life.
    - ii) I find that most people respect Jesus as a teacher or as a person who suffered unfairly, but most people won't accept the idea that He is the only way to heaven.
    - iii) The personal application is when we want to do things our way as opposed to God's way. At that moment, we too are rejecting Jesus whether we say so or not.
    - iv) Meanwhile, it is now time for Jesus to face the Romans.
4. Verse 2: "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.
- a) The Jewish religious leaders told Pilate that Jesus claimed He was the "king of the Jews". So why is that? Why didn't they just say Jesus claimed to be God? The answer is the Romans believed in multitudes of gods, so a claim that Jesus is God would not hold any weight in a Roman court. However, if Jesus claimed to be "King of Jews", that means He is a threat to the Roman government, and that is a death sentence.
  - b) That is why the first question asked by Pilate, the governor is in effect, "Jesus are you guilty of this charge?" or "Are you the king of the Jews"? Jesus said yes.
    - i) Think of that question this way: Has Jesus ever made any attempt to overthrow the Roman Government? No, He has not. Has Jesus ever made any attempt to overthrow the religious Jewish leadership? Yes He accused the religious leaders of being corrupt, but never attempted to overthrow them.
      - a) And your point is? Even though Jesus never made an attempt to overthrow those who are in power, Jesus did say, he is "King of the Jews".
    - ii) So how is Jesus the "King of Jews"? For starters, the traditional belief about the Messiah is that He will rule the world from Jerusalem. That is correct and applies to His Second Coming. That would make the Messiah "King of the Jews".
    - iii) When Jesus was born to Mary, an angel told Mary that Jesus would sit on "David's throne". (See Luke 1:32). That means Jesus would rule the earth from Jerusalem.
    - iv) This reminds me of a classic Jewish joke. They say that when the Messiah comes, they will ask Him, "Is this your first visit or your second?" The idea behind that question is whether or not the future "reigning Messiah" is also Jesus.
    - v) My point of all of this is that Jesus did not lie when He said He was "King of Jews". When Jesus returns on some future date, it is to rule the world from Jerusalem.
  - c) OK John, you have convinced me that Jesus is also "King of Jews". What does that have to do with my life today? When Jesus does return to rule the world as King of the Jews, that also means that all of the world at that time would be subject to His rule.
    - i) Meanwhile, we are focusing on Pontius Pilate and his dealing with Jesus.
  - d) What I suspect, but cannot prove, is that Pilate at this point, thought of Jesus as some sort of nut case who claimed He was "somebody" but has not committed any sort of crime. Pilate knew that the Jewish religious leaders handed Jesus over to them out of jealousy. Pilate got the idea that Jesus was popular and he understood that Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious leader's practices.

- e) If you recall from the last lesson, I stated that every human has to decide about whether Jesus is God, a liar or a "nut case" about being the Son of God and one's payment for sin.
    - i) I suspect Pilate was one of those thinking "nut case" about Jesus.
    - ii) Like I also said in the last lesson, God holds us accountable for the knowledge we do have about Jesus. Pilate should have had enough knowledge to know that Jesus is an innocent man that should have been set free.
    - iii) Pilate also has a "political problem". It was the job of Pilate to keep peace in this territory and therefore, he needed to respect the Jewish leadership. At the same time Pilate understood that Jesus was innocent of these charges. Pilate couldn't get out of "the deal" in order to keep the peace and that became his downfall.
    - iv) In other words, sometimes the failure to do the right thing becomes our own downfall. That too, is the price of rejection in terms of doing the right thing.
5. Verse 3: The chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup> So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." <sup>5</sup> But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.
- a) At this trial, members of the Jewish "Sanhedrin" were making their case for the death of Jesus, but Pilate was more amazed by Jesus' silence than the charges made against Him.
    - i) I suspect the Jewish religious leaders were telling Pilate that Jesus threatened to destroy the Temple mount area, which in effect treason, because they were saying Jesus wanted to cause damage to the Roman rule over this territory.
    - ii) Jesus understood that it was His destiny to be crucified, so in that sense, it is a waste of time to respond to the charges against Him. The second point is that Jesus knew He was innocent of the things He was accused of and His silence spoke a lot louder than any words Jesus could say to defend Himself.
  - b) The issue gets us back to the topic of "rejection and accountability". Pilate may have been used by God to carry out His will to have Jesus crucified, but Pilate was still accountable for his actions and his failure to do the right thing.
    - i) When we reject Jesus in some fashion, we too are held accountable for that fact. Does that mean when we get to heaven we are "weighed" in terms of our good deeds versus the times we rejected God's will? No, there is no condemnation in heaven for the believer. (See Romans 8:1). However, I do believe we have to suffer in this lifetime for the mistakes we make and our failure to trust in God.
6. Verse 6: Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. <sup>8</sup> The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.
- a) Remember this whole event took place during a big feast period. The City of Jerusalem was crowded as most Jews were in town for a series of holidays. Even though the text says the "Feast", what is really happening is that Jerusalem is crowded as "everyone is there" for a series of holidays.
  - b) This leads me back to the issue of Rome's relationship with the Jewish people. One has to remember that even though roman soldiers had swords, those roman soldiers were far outnumbered by the local Jewish population. Rome's main goal for all of the governors was to keep the peace within their region and have everyone pay their taxes.
    - i) It does not surprise me that the Roman governor (Pilate) had this tradition to release one prisoner on this holiday. This is a gesture to keep the locals "at peace".
  - c) Most of us also understand how politicians work. Given a large crowd, politicians love to get in front of that crowd and say in effect, "Here is what I am going to do for you". That is what Pilate is doing by making this gesture to release a prisoner on this holiday.
    - i) Among those prisoners was a man named Barabbas who was guilty of murder in some sort of uprising against the Romans as stated in Luke 23:19.

7. Verse 9: "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate,<sup>10</sup> knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.
- a) Pilate did understand that Jesus was no threat to his power. Pilate also understood the fact that the Jewish leaders were jealous of Jesus' fame. Pilate was also thinking like a bureaucrat. In other words, Pilate was probably thinking about Jesus, "How can I get out of situation without taking the blame?" That is why Pilate yelled out to the crowd "Do you want me to release to you the King of Jews"? Pilate understood Jesus was popular and he was hoping to get out of this situation by having the crowd yell for Jesus.
  - b) This leads me back to my point how every person has to make his or her own decision about Jesus. Our eternal destiny depends upon our decisions we make regarding our life with Jesus being in charge of our life. Even though Pilate did not believe Jesus was God, Pilate also understood that Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against Him.
    - i) This also leads to our relationship with Jesus. The decisions we make in life are in effect, choosing to do things "our way" or "God's way". What if we don't know God's will for our life at this moment? Let's assume we have already prayed about it. The short answer is to do the "most logical thing", keep moving forward and don't do any thing that violates biblical commands for our lives. That is how God leads us. Meanwhile, back to Pilate.
  - c) Pilate needed to do a "balancing act" by making the Jewish leadership happy, the crowd happy, and at the same time showing that he is in charge. This is why, for the moment, Pilate went along with the charges brought against Jesus.
  - d) My point of this whole section is that there is no "neutrality" allowed with Jesus. I believe Pilate is in hell not because he had Jesus killed, but because he refused to examine the evidence about Jesus. In other words, he is in hell for the same reason everyone else in hell, for refusing to look to Jesus for payment for his or her sins.
8. Verse 11: But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.
- a) I wonder how the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to release Barabbas instead of Jesus? Were members of the Sanhedrin standing in the crowd chanting Barabbas and then the crowd went along with that chant? That is how I picture it.
  - b) So why would they pick Barabbas? Verse 7 tells us that Barabbas was a murderer. I suspect this man rebelled against the Roman Government, and by the crowd yelling out Barabbas, it was the crowd's way of showing their hatred of having the Roman government over their lives and are looking for any excuse to have them overthrown.
    - i) I figure the reason the crowd turned on Jesus is that they saw Him beaten up and figured that "He can do mighty healing miracles but He won't overthrow Rome and that is what we really want at this time." That is why they yelled "Barabbas".
  - c) I can't leave this section without giving the "Gospel according to Barabbas". No, there is not a secret gospel written by Barabbas. ☺ This the Gospel message as seen from the perspective of Barabbas. It's a great story to share with nonbelievers at Easter time.
    - i) Here was Barabbas in jail, waiting to be executed. I suspect that Barabbas heard his name being called out by the large crowd saying, "Release him".
    - ii) The next thing Barabbas hears is the crowd rejecting Jesus to be released. I doubt Barabbas heard Jesus name from jail, but he did hear the crowd saying, "Crucify him". Therefore, all Barabbas knew is the chant changed from "release him" to "crucify him". Barabbas thought for sure at this point he was a "goner".
    - iii) The next thing Barabbas knows is he is released from jail and that he is forgiven of his crimes because someone named Jesus was taken in his place. In other words, Jesus paid the price of sin so that Barabbas can be set free. That in effect, is the Gospel message: Jesus paying the price for our sins so we can be set free.
  - d) Meanwhile, we still need to deal with the crowds rejecting Jesus.

9. Verse 12: "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. <sup>13</sup>"Crucify him!" they shouted. <sup>14</sup> "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"
- a) Pilate was still trying to get out of the situation of dealing with Jesus. Pilate understood that Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against Him, but Pilate needed to keep the multitude of people calm. It may help to understand that in John's gospel (19:12), it mentions that the Jewish leaders threatened Pilate by saying in effect, "If you don't condemn Jesus we will write to Rome and say that you are not loyal to Caesar."
    - i) In other words, the one power the Jewish religious leadership had over Pilate is that they had the power to tell Rome that Pilate is not "keeping the peace".
  - b) Here is this large crowd of Jewish people listening to a political speech by a Roman governor and they can't stand Roman rule. If this crowd thought that Jesus would overthrow Rome, they would accept Him. Seeing that Jesus would not do what they wanted (overthrow Rome), the crowd asked for someone who was guilty of rebelling against the Roman government.
    - i) Here is where I am going with this: We as a society are always looking for human solutions to our political problems in life. We think that if "just the right person or group were in political power" then we could have a peaceful and successful society. Without accepting Jesus into one's heart, one can truly never know peace.
    - ii) Yes, different political powers may give us less corruption in our society for a while, but real peace comes through Jesus, not through a new political leader.
      - a) How does that peace come? It comes from knowing we are saved for eternity as long as we believe Jesus died for our sins and is God.
    - iii) This crowd is in effect saying, "We want to do things our way" and not God's way. That is why we reject Jesus and want to crucify Him.
  - c) OK John, I understand that most people reject Jesus ruling over their lives, but I have chosen to follow Jesus. How does these verses apply to me?
    - i) It is about discovering the aspects of our lives where we still like to do things "our way" versus Gods' way. That is when we in effect are saying to God, I want Jesus "crucified" so He is not ruling over this aspect of my life.
    - ii) There is an old Christian expression that maturity is telling God, "I see in this situation how You (God) were right and I was wrong". We should examine our own lives and contemplate the areas that we are displeasing to God. Christian growth is learning to hate sin equally much as "loving the sinner".
10. Verse 15: Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.
- a) Verse 15 is a good summary of the chapter in one sentence. Pilate ignored the right thing to do which is to have Jesus released, but instead did what the crowd wanted.
  - b) That is the classic mistake of politicians all through history. It is ignoring what is the right thing to do and instead, do what is pleasing to the crowd at the moment. This is also the classic mistake we make when we ignore what God calls us to do and we instead do what is popular at that present moment in time.
  - c) In the meantime, Jesus is suffering for the sins of the world. Let me briefly explain the literal aspect of "flogging" and "crucifixion".
    - i) Flogging is to whip somebody so painfully that in many cases they die from that whipping. It rips open the flesh from this punishment.
    - ii) The Romans did not invent crucifixion, but they did "perfect" the act. The original idea was just to impale someone on a tree. The Romans added the nails in the flesh to increase the pain. It was a slow and painful death and usually took 1-2 days for a person to die by such an action.

- d) Here is what I wondered: If Pilate believed that Jesus was innocent, but still wanted to satisfy the crowd, why didn't Pilate agree to a more humane punishment for Jesus?
    - i) For starters, the crowd yelled out for Jesus to be crucified and in that sense, Pilate was just giving the crowd what they wanted as opposed to doing the right thing.
    - ii) So why did Pilate order the "flogging" prior to the crucifixion? I suspect that too, was part of Pilate "giving into the crowd". It is Pilate saying in effect, "You want Jesus' blood, fine then, I'll give you Jesus' blood."
  - e) OK John, I know all of this, and I am not a politician that is influenced by the crowd. How does this apply to my life? Stop and think about the times we may have agreed to do something because our friends or co-workers asked us to go along, but we just knew it was not God's will for us for that moment to go along with that crowd.
    - i) Sometimes doing God's will requires us to not follow the crowd. The point is that we need to seek God's will for the situation of the moment and not just jump at the chance to be popular with those around us and immediately say "yes".
11. Verse 16: The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup> They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup> And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup> Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. <sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.
- a) These five verses all point out that those in charge of hurting and killing Jesus first picked on Him. They did things to mock Jesus, including making a crown of thorns and putting a purple robe (color of royalty) on Him. When they finished mocking Jesus, they put His own cloths back on Him and lead Him away to be crucified.
  - b) OK, onto the important question. Why did they do this and why should I care?
    - i) Let's face it, the soldiers could have just followed orders and had Jesus whipped and taken out to be crucified. I believe the point of these verses is to show what happens to people after the make the decision to reject Jesus.
    - ii) Many people who reject Jesus don't simply choose to walk away. They take that rejection to the next level and even pick on the concept that Jesus could rule over their lives. It is amazing how much "stuff" is out there that picks on the concept of Jesus ruling over one's life or making fun of biblical teaching.
    - iii) It is not enough for some people to just say, "I reject Jesus". They say in effect, "I reject Christianity so much, I am not ashamed to rub it in the face of those who take this seriously as I don't believe anything will happen to me."
    - iv) Remember from my introduction that Jesus said in effect, "If they reject me, they will reject you". (Luke 10:16.) It is important for Christians to be aware of what happens to people who do reject Jesus. I'm not saying we have to attack such people, just be aware that such criticism exists.
    - v) OK John, most of the people I know don't make a big deal about their rejection of Jesus, but just go about their lives. My response to that point is to watch people's lifestyle. It is usually pretty easy to tell if you watch a person for a while if they choose to live a life fearing God or not. The point is that when people choose to reject God, they rarely stop at that, but usually their lifestyle follows that rejection.
12. Verse 21: A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.
- a) The actual place where Jesus was crucified was outside of the city of Jerusalem. The place where Jesus was mocked and whipped is probably the guard station that was on the same hillside area where the Temple was located. From here, it was tradition for people who were sentenced to be crucified to carry their cross out past the city gates where the crucifixion was to take place.

- b) What I suspect happened here is that Jesus was so weakened from His beating that the Roman guards picked a person to carry Jesus' cross for Him. It is an interesting side note that the person who carried the cross for Jesus was the father of an early Christian mentioned by Paul in one of his letters. (See Romans 16:13).
    - i) It just goes to show that with Jesus "nothing is an accident". Even the person who was asked or who volunteered to carry the cross was influenced by Jesus to the point that we know that his two sons were earlier followers of Jesus.
    - ii) To put it another way, whether this man realized it or not, he carried Jesus cross for Him, as symbolically speaking, it was his sins that Jesus died for on the cross.
  - c) So why mention this fact? Was it to give recognition to the man's two sons? I don't think that was it as much as it was to simply show there are no coincidences when it comes to people having an encounter with Jesus.
13. Verse 22: They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).<sup>23</sup> Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.
- a) There is debate over the place where Jesus was actually crucified. Most believe it was "Gordon's Cavalry" (named after a general who identified the place in the late 1800's). This hillside area does resemble a human skull as observed at a certain angle. The point is Jesus was lead outside of the city gates to a particular hillside area.
  - b) Verse 23 says that Jesus was offered "wine mixed with myrrh". This drink was designed to help dull the pain of dealing with crucifixion. Jesus did not take this wine. The point is Jesus refused to accept anything that would make this process of dying for the sins of mankind any easier. In other words Jesus felt the "full force" of being rejected by His people (the Israelites of that generation).
  - c) I like to think of the crucifixion this way: If Jesus is God, He in effect, could come down from that cross at anytime. He didn't stay there because He was nailed there, He stayed there due to the love that He has for people and He was willing to pay the price for sin. On that pleasant thought, we can go back to the painful events of this day.
14. Verse 24: And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.
- a) The reward for the soldiers in charge of crucifixion was that they got to keep whatever the condemned person owned as service for performing this act.
  - b) The idea of "casting lots" in that they were gambling to see who would get Jesus' clothes.
15. Verse 25: It was the third hour when they crucified him.
- a) The term "third hour" means 9am in "Jewish time". I have to admit I wondered why Mark bothered to mention that fact. All I could consider was that Mark wants to show us that Jesus died in a short time span. When people got crucified, it usually took one-two days to die. We will read that Jesus died at the "ninth hour", (Verse 33) which is 3pm.
  - b) This information would also support the idea that Mark had first hand information about the time that Jesus was crucified. It is a good argument against "late dating" this Gospel.
16. Verse 26: The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- a) Pilate ordered this specific inscription written. John's gospels tells us that Pilate ordered it to be written in three languages (Roman, Greek, and Hebrew). (See John 19:20.) The next verse of John also points out that the Jewish religious leaders were angry because they wanted the crime listed against Jesus to say, "He claimed He was king of the Jews".
  - b) Let me expand upon why that sign was so important. When somebody rejects the concept of Jesus as their king, they often don't even want to be reminded of that fact. People resent even being told in effect that Jesus is God or He is in charge.
    - i) My point is the fact that the hatred felt of this sign posted on Jesus' cross did not end 2,000 years ago. To this day, there is public resistance to any sort of display that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

17. Verse 28: They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.
- a) This verse is here to show that Jesus was not treated any better than other criminals who were tried at that time. Yes there is the story of one of those two robbers getting saved, which is recorded in Luke 23:42-43. That is separate from Mark's point in this gospel. Mark wanted to emphasize the rejection of Jesus. By the Romans treating Him as a common criminal, it was another sign of Jesus' rejection.
18. Verse 29: Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,<sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!"<sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!"<sup>32</sup> Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.
- a) OK, so why mention these verses here? It is to show the extent of the rejection of Jesus.
  - b) One has to remember that it was less than a week ago that a good percentage of the crowd (on "Palm Sunday") did honor Jesus as the Messiah. Now that people saw Jesus all beaten up, they are rejecting Him.
  - c) I also see a more Satanic purpose here. Since Jesus is God, He could have used His power at any time to come down off the cross. I believe Satan is making one final attempt to get Jesus to avoid paying the price for sin by showing Jesus how people are rejecting Him.
  - d) Again, it gets back to my main theme of dealing with rejection. Let's face it, when we are down, it feels like the whole world is falling apart around us. Unfortunately, during such times, often others will come and "rub it in". That is what Jesus is facing here.
    - i) This gets me back to my point how Jesus choose to stay on the cross despite the rejection He felt from the crowd. The point for us is to stick with what God calls us to do no matter what the "popular crowd" is saying otherwise.
19. Verse 33: At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.<sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- a) The main point of Verse 33 is that darkness came over the land of Israel. I don't know how wide spread this darkness was, but I suspect it covered a large area.
    - i) By the way, this darkness could not have been a solar eclipse. The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle and a new month begins when there is no (a new) moon. Passover is always on the 14th day of the month of Nissan, or in lunar-terms, the 14th day of a 28-day cycle, which is a full moon. My sole point here is that it was a full moon when Jesus was crucified, so however this darkness occurred, it was not a solar eclipse, as that is not possible on a full moon.
  - b) The next point to consider is this three-hour time period is when God the Father "rejected" Jesus. In order for Jesus to pay the price for sin, Jesus literally had to become sin. (See 2nd Corinthians 5:21.) I believe the reason there was darkness over the land is symbolic not just like one of the 10 plagues of Egypt (when darkness was over that land, see Exodus 10:22) but it also ties back to the beginning of the creation story.
    - i) Let me explain: In Genesis, Chapter 1 Verse 2, the text says the "earth was in effect, formless and empty. Then Verse 3 of Genesis Chapter 1 mentions a light that shines. Whatever that light is, it is not the sun, as the sun was not created later in the creation story. This is some other form of light, and bible experts tie this light in Genesis to God "shining" over His creation.
    - ii) My point as it ties to the Gospel story, is that for this three-hour period we have the opposite of God's light shining on mankind, as there was "pure darkness" as Jesus was paying the price for sin.



- c) Which leads me to my next strange point. Why was it dark for three hours? Why was it dark that length of time and what does that have to do with my life?
- i) God could have demonstrated Jesus being "separated from Him" over a period of three minutes or three years or whatever length of time God would choose.
  - ii) Going back to Verse 34, Jesus says, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me"? This is the only time Jesus does not call God the Father "Father" as Jesus was truly separated from Him in every aspect of that term.
  - iii) So why is that so important? Let me put it this way: The literal concept of hell is about the eternal separation from God the Father. It is telling God in effect that one does not want to live by His rules on earth and therefore, that desire to ignore God will continue for all of eternity.
  - iv) That darkness (separation from God) is shown here in Mark's gospel by the three hours of darkness wherein Jesus was separated from God the Father.
  - v) OK, so why a three-hour period? The truth is we have theories, but it is just that. Part of the reason that God the Father wanted to have a long enough period of time so that everyone living there at that time would notice the darkness.
  - vi) Why wasn't it dark for three days, which is the total period Jesus was dead, or six hours, the total time of Jesus on the cross? I suspect it is because God wanted us to notice the pattern of "three's" in that there was three hours of darkness and that Jesus was dead for three days. This three-hour period represents a bad thing (a rejection) as God is rejecting sin and the three-day period represents a bad thing as it was during that time that Jesus was not in the world. The end of these three's represents a good thing (the resurrection), but that is the topic of the next lesson.
  - vii) Let me end this with another thought. Most Christians go through times where God feels absent and in spiritual terms, we feel our life is "dark". It is usually during such times God wants to increase our trust. Just as Jesus trusted that dark time was not forever, so we have to trust that there will be an end to such a time.
20. Verse 35: When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."
- <sup>36</sup>One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.
- a) In these verses, we have someone who misheard Jesus and tried to help ease Jesus' pain by offering some wine on a sponge. This man wanted to see if Elijah would help Jesus.
  - b) OK, what is going on here, and why should I care?
    - i) Back in Verse 34, Jesus literally said "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" The reason that one line was not translated is so that the reader would understand that somebody standing near the foot of the cross thought Jesus said "Elijah" instead of "Eloi".
    - ii) Just so you know, "Eloi" means "My God" as in God in the singular form.
  - c) So why should I care that Jesus didn't say "Elijah" and Jesus refused to drink some sort of wine on a sponge (which we assume was given to help Jesus alleviate some of the pain of dying on the cross).
    - i) The idea is for us to know that Jesus did not receive any help from God the Father or any angel, or any human, but He had to bear the pain alone. That is also why Jesus refused any sort of wine that would help alleviate the physical pain.
    - ii) Does that mean we should do "likewise" and not get any help when we have to deal with pain? Of course not. Jesus paid the price for sin once and for all, so it has nothing to do with us getting any sort of help in dealing with pain. It also shows us that Jesus can relate to any and all pain we go through as it is still "less pain" than what Jesus suffered at this point.
    - iii) These verses also mean we don't have to suffer in heaven for any and all sins we have committed. The complete price for sin was paid for, once and for all.

21. Verse 37: With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.
- a) The point of this short verse is that Jesus' pain of paying the price for sin is at an end.
  - b) So why does the text say Jesus gave a loud cry? Let me put it this way, a lot of guys like to pump their fist as an emphasis when they have accomplished some great goal. I believe the idea here is similar. It is Jesus saying in effect, "Good news everyone, it is all done, and I have accomplished what God the Father has sent me to do". Hopefully, this is something we can all say on our deathbed, that we have made a difference for Him.
  - c) Let me come back to the issue of why was Jesus on the cross for six hours and there was "only" darkness for three hours? In other words, that does not sound like a lot of eternal suffering. Most of us know of pain that has lasted a lot longer than that. How is that suffering supposed to help me deal with some long term suffering issue in my life?
    - i) First of all, Jesus suffering on the cross is not supposed to represent the worst form of human suffering in terms of a time frame. It does represent the worst form of human suffering in the fact that Jesus was separated from God the Father.
    - ii) This believe it or not, leads me to a discussion of "what is heaven"? I was thinking this week about why this suffering was so bad, and it led me to that question. The point of heaven is we get to spend eternity in a deep personal and intimate relationship with God the Father. We only get that relationship because the price for sin has been paid. That is why separation from God the Father was such a bad thing. It represents the worse type of suffering in that we don't get the access and the protection of God during that time frame.
    - iii) That is why Jesus can relate to all of our suffering no matter how bad it is, because Jesus felt the worse type of pain one can have, the separation of the love between God the Father and us. That suffering on Jesus part gave Him the ability to relate to whatever short term or long term pain we have in our lives.
    - iv) John if that is true, why was Jesus on the cross for half a day (six hours)? I believe Jesus had to suffer through enough physical pain to convince people that He really did physically die and not just "faint" due to the pain. In other words, enough physical suffering was necessary to prove Jesus rose from the dead.
22. Verse 38: The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
- a) Verse 38 seems like a strange transition verse. Why go from the exact moment of Jesus death to mention the fact that the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom?
    - i) It is God the Father's way of showing that the price for sin has been paid. There was a special curtain in the Jewish temple that separated the most holy place of worship within that temple from where the Jewish priests did most of their work.
  - b) In other words, the tearing of the veil is God the Father's way of showing that the price for sin has been paid for, and now those who accept Jesus as payment for their sin, can approach God the Father "freely" as sin is no longer a barrier between God and man.
    - i) If that is true, why should we still confess our sins to God? The answer is for us to realize what we are doing wrong and live the way God wants us to live. It no longer has anything to do with permanent sin forgiveness.
  - c) Let me discuss the actual ripping of the temple curtain. The curtain of this temple was nine inches thick, so tearing it was not something that could easily be done by human strength. The fact that the curtain was torn from "top to bottom" is another indication that only God the Father could perform this act.
    - i) So if none of the disciples were in the temple, how was this known? I suspect it was reported later to the disciples and it was inserted at this point in the story to show that the "separation" between God and man has been removed and this curtain ripping symbolically shows that removal of separation.
    - ii) The book of Acts also mentions that some of the Pharisee's became Christians (See Acts 15:5) and I suspect the curtain evidence did the trick.

23. Verse 39: And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"
- a) Meanwhile, back at the cross, there was a Roman guard stationed there. A "centurion" is an army leader and he had a lot of men under him.
    - i) So why was a higher ranking centurion standing guard? I suspect that the religious Jewish leaders were afraid of the disciples stealing Jesus body so they could "falsely claim" Jesus rose from the dead and therefore, he kept watch.
  - b) Personally, I am convinced the centurion was saved, as he understood that Jesus was God at this point. (This lesson is way overdue for a little bit of good news. ☺)
    - i) The real point is not that this centurion was there, the point is that he realized Jesus is God based on watching the events of the crucifixion.
24. Verse 40: Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.
- a) So, why were these women here at the cross and not the disciples? I suspect it because the disciples feared for their lives based on the previous night when Jesus was arrested. These women were "braver" and did not have that fear that the disciples did
  - b) Notice who was missing: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Technically, she was there earlier as John's gospel reports (John 19:26-27) that from the cross, Jesus told John (the disciple) to take care of Mary. If Jesus had half-brothers and sisters, why ask John to take care of "mom"? The answer is John was a believer and Jesus' half siblings were not at this point.
  - c) OK, and why should I care that some of the female followers of Jesus were watching from a distance? It is for us to know what happened to the female followers of Jesus. It is also to show that not everyone abandoned Jesus at this time. My theme for this chapter deals with rejection and it shows that not everyone rejected Jesus during this time frame.
  - d) In other words, hooray for these women who were braver than the actual disciples.
25. Verse 42: It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath).
- a) Here is where scholars debate over the day of the week. Those who argue this day was a Thursday argue that the Friday was a holiday and a "second Sabbath". Those who argue this was Friday argue that the next day was a normal "Sabbath". The "Saturday" (or whatever it was called back then) is the 7th day of the week, where all religious Jews take a "Sabbath" from work activities. In other word, no Jewish people worked on this day.
    - i) One has to remember that on a Sabbath no work or even cooking is permitted, so all the Sabbath preparation is usually done the day before the Sabbath. The point is while Jesus laid dead on the cross Jewish people were preparing for the Sabbath
26. Verse 42 (cont.): So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.
- a) In this final story, we have a new character named Joseph of Arimathea. This was a prominent local Jewish person and a member of the Sanhedrin. A logical assumption is that he was not at Jesus trial as everyone at that trial voted against Jesus.
  - b) The point is this man was a secret follower of Jesus. He asked Pilate for permission to bury Jesus body in his own family gravesite.
  - c) The classic joke is Joseph said to Pilate, "What's the big deal of Jesus using my grave, it's only for the weekend?" (No, Joseph of Arimathea never really said that, that but we need a good joke here to lighten the heavy mood of this chapter. ☺)

- d) Verse 44 is where we learn that Pilate was shocked that Jesus was already dead. Jesus died in about six hours time and it usually takes 1-2 days to die on the cross.
    - i) In John's gospel, Pilate ordered soldiers to kill whoever was still alive on the cross, as the Jewish leaders didn't want bodies hanging there on the Sabbath. (See John 19:31.) That is why Pilate knew that Jesus was already dead, as it was reported back to Him when the soldiers went to kill whoever was still alive on the cross.
  - e) The main point of these verses is to teach us how Jesus got from the cross to this grave. There is a prediction in the Old Testament (See Isaiah 53:9) that Jesus would be buried "with the rich". That came true in that Joseph had a private family tomb. Convicted criminals were usually buried in a "common" grave and not a family's private tomb.
  - f) OK, John, what do these final verses have to do with rejection? (PS, make it quick as we are starting to run long.)
    - i) Joseph of Arimathea was too scared to follow Jesus publicly. I don't know if this means that Joseph believed Jesus was God, but this man did believe that Jesus did not deserve this death sentence. Therefore, Joseph, who was too afraid to say anything to the Jewish council about Jesus. However, he did get up the courage to ask for Jesus' body and put it in his own grave.
    - ii) I think the point is, when people have only a "tiny" bit of faith like this Joseph person had, God can work with it. He was too afraid to publicly support Jesus as he would lose his place on the Sanhedrin and he was probably afraid to lose his good standing in the community. However, "when push comes to shove" he knew what was the right thing to do and did his part remembered for eternity.
    - iii) So what does that have to do with rejection? The answer is that Joseph of Arimathea had too much fear to publicly take a stand for Jesus. Here Mark shows us that even if we do have such fears, even if we have a little faith in Jesus, God can use that little faith and increase it to use it for God's glory.
27. Verse 47: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.
- a) This final verse is a transition verse to the "Easter Sunday" chapter of 16. The point is that two of the women who were Jesus followers not only watched near the cross, but also traveled to where Jesus was buried and observed that whole procedure. It is a way of saying there were followers of Jesus who witnessed the whole thing.
28. Let me wrap this up with some thoughts on how we should deal with rejection.
- a) As I stated in the opening of the lesson, almost all people at some point in their life have to deal with rejection. One point to remember here is that Jesus can relate to whatever pain we feel from rejection as Jesus too, understood what it was like to be rejected.
  - b) Next, it is to remember that our purpose in life is to do God's will, and at times, that will include being rejected by people who want us to do something that for a lack of a better term, is not God's will at that time. So, given that, how do I deal with rejection?
    - i) For starters, pray to God to give us the strength to deal with that rejection. Remember how hard Jesus prayed prior to these events. That should be our attitude, that we ask for God's help prior to whatever this day may bring.
    - ii) We have to remember that whatever pain we have to deal with, at the worst, it will only last "one lifetime", which is still nothing compared to eternity.
  - c) Let me end this lesson with a reminder (as given by Pastor Ray Stedman, paraphrase) that the Christian life is about 1) always being joyful, 2) always seeking God and 3) always being in trouble. In other words "trouble" is normal part of life we have to face and asking God's help during such times makes it a lot easier to deal with that pain.
29. Let's pray: Father, we don't know what you have planned for us today, but we do know that the best way to face whatever is going to happen, is through Your help. Give us the strength and courage to do your will, no matter what is "in front of us". Help us to make a difference for You in all that we do, as we live for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.