



Unit .26

Session .05

Jesus Is Crucified

Scripture



Mark 15:6, 11-20,33-39

6 At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested. ... **11** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead. **12** Pilate asked them again, “Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews?” **13** Again they shouted, “Crucify him!” **14** Pilate said to them, “Why? What has he done wrong?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” **15** Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified. **16** The soldiers led him away into the palace (that is, the governor’s residence) and called the whole company together. **17** They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him. **18** And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” **19** They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying

him homage. **20** After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him. They led him out to crucify him. ... **33** When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. **34** And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” **35** When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.” **36** Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.” **37** Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. **38** Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. **39** When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Intro Options



Main Point:
**Jesus willingly took
upon Himself the
punishment for sin.**

Option 1

Split your students into two groups. One group will be called the Celebration Committee; the other will be called the Justice Judges.

The Celebration Committee works for a particular city. Their job is to create a celebration event to honor the city mayor and to make an event to honor her accomplishments and to look forward to another term. What do they do?

The Justice Judges have a different story. They are to imagine they are all judges with great reputations and long histories of fair and wise rulings. They've been called in for a particularly heinous case. The crimes are so atrocious that the normal justice system has been temporarily suspended, and they have called your students in to create his punishment. Anything goes; he could be sentenced to death by any means; he could be given any kind of suffering for any length of time and then assigned to death; he could be given physical punishments, psychological punishments, you name it. If the group can't come to any single decision, they can offer multiple suggestions.

Instead of doing two big groups, you could also let your students form small groups or even work individually and offer their answers for either of the above scenarios. Let students come up with a plan and then share it. See what they come up with.

The Celebration Committee is a teeny, tiny picture of the accolades Jesus deserves; He is a Savior and King far greater than any mayor. The Justice Judges have come up with something that we deserve; our sins against God are far more atrocious than anything we could do to a fellow human being. Yet, we'll see in today's lesson that the roles are reversed. The Messiah who should receive the welcome of the Celebration Committee instead receives physical, emotional, psychological, and even spiritual punishment from man and God: all in order to rescue us.

Option 2

As a group, come up with a list of movie genres: thriller, comedy, romantic comedy, action, horror, drama, etc. Split your students into small groups, with one group for each genre you came up with. They've been given the title and basic premise to the movie: *The Switch*. It's a movie about two people who somehow switch places in life and the consequences of that switch. Your students' job is now to come up with a pitch (a basic plot) for their movie in the genre they've been assigned. If they want to go for bonus points, they can act out a trailer of their film.

Let them prepare their pitches and then share them. See how their pitches are different based on the drama. In today's lesson, we'll see the ultimate switch: when Jesus is crucified for our sin. What genre would they assign this particular switch?

TEACHING PLAN

Read Mark 15:6,11-15.



While the Sanhedrin had sentenced Jesus to death, they lacked the judicial authority to actually carry out the execution, so they sent Jesus to Pilate, a Roman governor, and claimed that Jesus was a political threat to peace and order in the empire (vv. 1-5). Pilate found no fault in Jesus, but he found himself in the middle of a political dilemma. He wanted to let Jesus go and he needed to pacify the crowd. So in keeping with his tradition at Passover, Pilate offered to release a prisoner, either Jesus or Barabbas, a known murderer. Because Pilate was less interested in justice and more interested in his political future, he gave in to the assembly of citizens and condemned Jesus to a flogging followed by crucifixion (vv. 6-15).

In the criminal Barabbas we see an illustration of our own selves. While Barabbas was guilty of treason against the Roman Empire, we are guilty of cosmic treason against our Maker. Yet just as Barabbas was pardoned from his penalty and Jesus took his place, we who are in Christ by faith are pardoned of sin's penalty because Jesus took our place. In God's good and sovereign plan to save sinners like you and me, Jesus substituted His position as the innocent One for the position and penalty of a guilty one.

Barabbas had a cross with his name on it. However, in this crucial moment, a great exchange took place. The innocent One would be condemned and the guilty one would walk free. Barabbas was a guilty man set free to live his life. Jesus was an innocent Man sent to be crucified on a Roman cross as the Savior of the world.

- **How do you think Barabbas responded to this turn of events in his favor? How should we respond to Jesus taking our place?**

Read Mark 15:16-20.



We see one of the worst parts of human nature in this passage. Not only mutilated at the hands of men, the Messiah was then brutally mocked by them too. The Roman soldiers led Jesus into the governor's residence where they could have a bit of fun at Jesus' expense before His execution. Playing off the charge against Him, the soldiers dressed Him like a king and then made sport of Him. Their goal was not just to destroy His body but to break His spirit.

The Gospel of Mark highlights the people's sneering and disdain for Jesus. Soldiers mocked Him. Passersby mocked Him. Even the two criminals crucified next to Him mocked Him. Indoors, away from the crowds, soldiers draped Jesus with a purple robe—purple being the color of royalty—and gave Him a crown made out of thorns, which no doubt was pressed deep onto His head. With a stick, the soldiers hit His head, and presumably the thorny crown, to cause even more pain. With utter contempt, the soldiers spat on Jesus, and made show of saluting and bowing down before “the King of the Jews.”

- **How do the details surrounding Jesus' physical torture and crucifixion affect you?**
- **What are some ways Christians might be guilty of mocking Jesus in their lives today?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Mark 15

15. “Flogging was both a preliminary to crucifixion (perhaps to hasten death) and an independent punishment. It was a Roman punishment and must be distinguished from the much milder synagogue beatings of forty lashes less one. Bits of metal, bone, or glass were embedded in leather thongs; and the flesh of the victim was shredded, sometimes until bones or entrails appeared. Flogging was sometimes fatal. The flogging fulfilled Jesus’ own prophecy in 10:34.”¹

25-32. While on the cross, the charge against Jesus was placed for all to see: “The King of the Jews.” His current disfigured, bloody state and position on the cross made the charge an act of mockery. Every witness walking by would think, “This is a king?” So passersby and the chief priests and scribes jeered and taunted Jesus while He hung on the cross, saying He should save Himself and then they would believe.

The soldiers and others mocked Jesus as a king, but the irony is that their mocking actually served to reveal Jesus’ glory as the Messiah-King sent by God to save sinners (Mark 10:33-34). It was through His suffering at the hands of sinners that this King would rise again and reign over all things. Truly He is “the King of the Jews” and the King of the world—He is the King of kings!

Activity

Have your students get into small groups or work solo (whichever they would prefer). Assign each group (or individual) one of the three scenes from today’s reading:

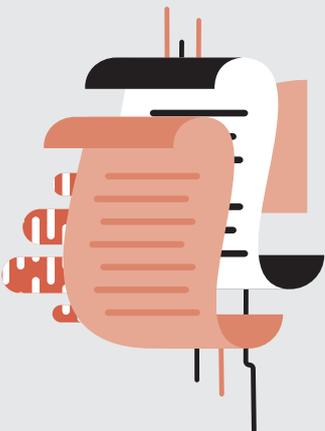
- Barabbas freed in Jesus’ place
- The Roman soldiers mocking Jesus as king
- Jesus crying out at being forsaken by the Father at the cross

Each group is to create a visual aid to answer the question “Why?” for their particular scene. Put another way, how does each group’s particular scene show how Jesus died for us? Whatever their idea, students should show it in some kind of poster, pamphlet, tract, or even a web banner (if they have access to some kind of graphic design). How might they use these visual aids to explain the significance of Jesus’ death to their families? To small children? To unbelievers? To missionaries who could use them on the field?

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 72, DDG)

Aspects of the Atonement

Christ’s substitutionary death on our behalf stands at the center of His atoning work. Without this work, there is no gospel (1 Cor. 15:3). While this substitutionary aspect is central to the atonement, His death also supremely demonstrates God’s love for sinners (John 15:13; 1 John 4:10). It shows us how seriously God takes sin. It satisfies every requirement for God to be able to forgive the failures of humanity. And it puts Christ’s cosmic victory over sin, Satan, and death on display through His resurrection (Col. 2:15). Every aspect of the atonement should inspire gratitude, praise, and a desire for obedience, because it is only through Christ that we are reconciled.



TEACHING PLAN

Read Mark 15:33-39.



By noon on Good Friday, a strange darkness would descend over the whole land, lingering for three hours. What we would normally consider the brightest part of the day became the darkest moment in history, both literally and figuratively.

This eerie and tense period of darkness was cut by a crisp cry from the wearied Messiah. In a few short bursts of mustered breath, he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

This cry heard from below confirms what the sky above signified: something of cosmic significance was happening here. God’s own Son, Christ the King, is experiencing something far deeper than physical pain. He is experiencing the wrath of the Father against our sin and wickedness. This is His agony in Gethsemane realized. It was a vision of this very moment that caused Him to collapse in the garden and crumble to the ground. Here on the cross it was no longer a foreshadowing but an actual shadowing. Jesus stood where no one had before and where no one has since—suffering as the object of God’s wrath against our sin.

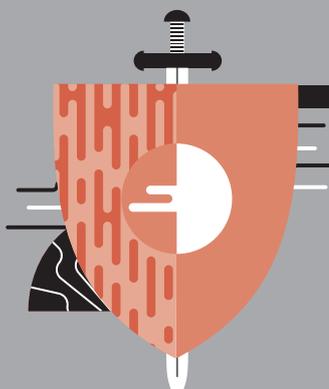
Jesus’ cry should have resonated in the minds of the onlookers. They are the opening words of Psalm 22, a psalm dripping with messianic meaning (vv. 1-2,6-8,12-18). Jesus was not calling upon Elijah, as the crowd supposed. He was identifying Himself as the One to whom the psalm pointed and demonstrating the horror of feeling forsaken by His Father. He was forsaken, so that we could be forgiven! He drank from the bitter cup and drained it dry, leaving not a single drop left.

Then, with another cry, Jesus yielded up His spirit in death. In that moment, heaven and earth could take no more. A creation subjected to futility began to quake, and earth and rock split. With it, the veil in the temple that separated heaven and earth was split from top to bottom, signifying that this act was accomplished from above.

- **How does it affect you to know Jesus was forsaken and rejected so that you could have forgiveness for your sins?**
- **What does the brutality of the cross tell you about the gravity of our sin? What does it say about the glory of God’s grace?**

No father should have to watch his child suffer and die. But this is the moment the entire life and earthly ministry of Jesus had been leading to. Jesus was born into a world broken and bruised by sin. But through His own broken body, His descent into death, and His resurrection from the grave, all would be made new.

In Defense *(p. 74, DDG)*



“Even Jesus’s disciples were offended by such talk. But Jesus explained that he was talking spiritually. Unaided by the Spirit, human reason cannot discern spiritual truth. The Jews wrongly believed study of Scripture (see 5:39) and doing “works of God” (see 6:27-29) were sufficient for spiritual understanding ... Many of Jesus’s disciples turned from him at this point, which is a watershed in John’s Gospel. But Jesus was not surprised by the defection.”²

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Mark 15

38. The minute Jesus died on the cross, the temple's thick curtain was mysteriously torn in two, confirming what Jesus had been hinting at in His final weeks—that He is the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

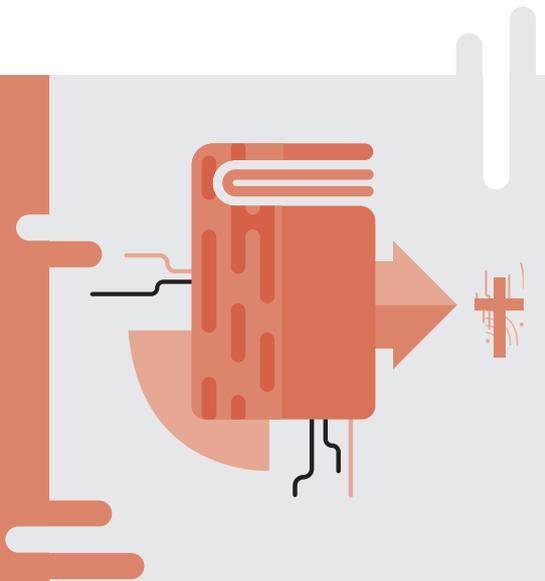
For centuries before Jesus, the glory of God was veiled in the holy of holies, in the center of the Jewish temple. Now God in the death of Jesus, the glory of God is freely accessible to all who come to Him through faith in Jesus. The dwelling place of God is no longer in a place, but a person (Jesus) and His people (the church).

39. This is the climax of the book of Mark. The disciples get that He's the Messiah, but their minds haven't quite wrapped around the fact that the Messiah is also, quite literally, "God with us" (they wouldn't get this point until after He rose).

The first person to come to this great realization is the centurion who stood guard at His crucifixion! This is John Mark's way of showing what it meant for that temple curtain to rip. The presence of God has broken loose. You don't have to be holy to be in His presence. You don't have to be Jewish. All you need is to be found in Jesus, the Messiah, through faith in Him.

(p. 73, DDG) Christ Connection

Unjustly condemned to death, Jesus willingly took up His cross and suffered the judgment our sins deserve. At the moment He died, the curtain in the temple sanctuary was torn in two, signifying that sinners have access to God through the blood of Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus is the center of history, revealing God's holiness and justice, our sinfulness and unrighteousness, and Christ's humility and love.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



How is the crucifixion good news in light of how horrific it was?

How does Jesus' sacrifice shed light on the nature of our sin?

Heart



How does knowing the extent of Jesus' sacrifice increase your love for Him?

How does it affect you to know Jesus bore the punishment our sins deserved?

Hands



Why is it important to talk about sin when sharing the good news of what Jesus has done for us?

Why should the love of Jesus displayed on the cross motivate us to sharing His message with others?

Main Point:
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Head

The cross and its message set apart Christianity from every other world religion. It's what makes the Christian message more than a mere ideology or philosophy of life. It is “good news,” in the fullest sense of that phrase—the good news that “Christ died for our sins.” We stand, with the rest of mankind, guilty in our sin. But God, in His grace and mercy, Has done everything to pursue us, to love us, to forgive us. Even though we were dead in our sins, rebelling against His truth and goodness, Christ died for us to make us new and bring us home.

Because of what Christ accomplished on the cross, we don't have to earn our way into the kingdom of God (which is impossible to do, by the way). By God's amazing grace, His kingdom has come down to us through Jesus Christ the Lord.



Heart

The narrative of the events leading up to and including the crucifixion certainly does not do justice to the full horror on display. Black print on a Bible's pages can never fully express the scarlet blood that flowed from a wounded back and pierced brow. A few paragraphs read in a matter of seconds cannot adequately convey the dread and shock of hours of torture Jesus experienced for the guilty. As Jesus marched to Golgotha, He did so not only in Barabbas' place, but also for all who would believe. He was crucified and condemned so that we might be ransomed and redeemed. He became sin so that we might become the righteous of God (2 Cor. 5:21).



Hands

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus is the King who willingly took upon Himself the punishment for sin. In light of this, we don't need to be afraid of talking about sin and calling people to faith. Our Father does not abandon us on our mission to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, through His Holy Spirit, He strengthens our faith and fuels our worship and witness.