

# Gospel of Mark: Jesus, Crucified King

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're reading from Mark's Gospel, chapter 15, and it's found on page 1022 of the Church Bible.

And I'm reading verse 1 to verse 32. 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 turned him over to Pilate. Are you the king of the Jews? asked Pilate. Yes, it is as you say, Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again, Pilate asked him, aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of. But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. Now it was the custom at the feet to release a prisoner whom the people requested.

A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

[ 1 : 03 ] Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

What shall I do then with the one you call the king of the Jews? asked Pilate. Crucify him, they shouted. Why? What crime has he committed? asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, crucify him. Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace, that is, the praetorium, and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

And they began to call out to him, Hail, king of the Jews. Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

[ 2 : 03 ] And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put on his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. 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. They brought Jesus to the palace called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him, dividing up his clothes, the cast lots to see what each would get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice on the charge against him read, The king of the Jews.

They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. 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, come down from the cross and save yourself.

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. Let this Christ, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

[ 3 : 16 ] Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. Well, crucifixion was the most cruel and horrifying punishment.

The very mention of the word was designed to create fear and terror amongst the people. As one historian has pointed out, depending on the severity of the flogging beforehand, some victims survived on crosses several days.

Since no major arteries were severed, death came not by blood loss, but from hypovolemic shock, which is organ failure, or exhaustion asphyxia, which is where you drown in your own fluids, or heart failure, or a combination of the above.

It was a bloody and violent torture, causing the maximum amount of pain over the longest period of time.

And many people have tried to capture the depth of suffering involved of somebody on a cross, none more so than Mel Gibson in the film *The Passion of the Christ*.

[ 4 : 37 ] And in that bloody and graphic portrayal, we just see how gruesome the crucifixion actually was. The flogging that happened beforehand, with metal barbs at the end of each piece of leather, which exposed human flesh and bone right down to the entrails.

The constant beating on the body, which left the person swollen to an unrecognisable state. The long metal spikes that were driven through sinew and bone.

Horrifying, horrific. But when we get to Mark's account, this is what we read. Look at verse 24. And they crucified him. That's all he says. There's no guts. There's no gore. There's no graphic description.

There's no blood. Just a statement of historical fact. And they crucified him. So why doesn't he bother with all the detail?

[ 5 : 55 ] Well, you see, Mark wants us to get past the bloody, violent suffering. And he wants us to see the person.

He wants us to get past all the gore. He wants us to see that the person on the cross, the one who is being crucified, is God's king who has come to save.

He wants us to see Jesus. You know, the only words that Jesus speaks in this whole text is to identify himself as king.

Look at verse 2. Are you the king of the Jews, asked Pilate? Yes, it is as you say, Jesus replied. That's all he says. Through all the suffering and all the beating and all the flogging, through all the crucifixion, these are the only words that are recorded here of Jesus.

[ 7 : 01 ] Yes, it is as you say, I am the king. Of course, to claim that you were king was an act of treason, punishable by death.

As far as Rome was concerned, there was only one king. And that was the emperor Tiberius. He was the one who ruled with an iron fist. And any challenge to his throne was firmly dealt with. Which is why, look at verse 5. When Jesus made no reply to the accusations, when he made no defence to the accusations, Pilate was amazed.

Literally, he was stunned. He was shocked. Why on earth would somebody claim to be a king when they know they are going to be crucified and suffer a horrific death?

What would be the point of saying you are a king? What would it achieve? Well, again, Mark's concern is that we get past all the outer details that we see on film.

[ 8 : 15 ] He wants us to see that in the crucifixion of Jesus, we see these things. We see a king who exchanged places for us. We see a king who identifies with us.

And we see a king who proves powerful to us. So first we look at a king who exchanged places with us.

Look at verse 6. It was the custom at the feast, this was the feast of the Passover, to release a prisoner from the people whom the people requested.

And there was a man called Barabbas who was in prison with the insurrectionists, their terrorists, who had committed murder in the uprising.

Now Judea and Jerusalem, where all of this was taking place, was part of the Roman Empire. They controlled it. They ruled it. And the role of Pilate was to make sure that any signs of revolt or rebellion were ruthlessly dealt with.

[ 9 : 21 ] That's why he was stationed there. And Barabbas was one of these rebels who was always at the Roman Empire. He had led a violent uprising, we're told, terrorising and murdering people.

But now he has been captured and he's sitting on death's row, awaiting his crucifixion. But we're told in verse 8 that the crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

As a way of easing tensions amongst all the people and pacifying the crowd, Pilate would release a prisoner of their choosing. I guess something not unlike the Good Friday agreements.

Verse 9 Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews? asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priest had handed Jesus over to him.

But the chief priest stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. You see, Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent.

[ 10 : 31 ] And Pilate knows that Barabbas is guilty. So he begins to question their request in verse 12.

What shall I do then with the one that you call the King of the Jews? Pilate asked them. Crucify him! But why? What has he committed?

What crime has he done? Why would you want to crucify him? But they shouted all the louder.

Crucify him! You see, all who are involved in this trial, every single person knows the truth.

They know Jesus. They've seen him. He's lived a perfectly innocent life. Healing the sick. Caring for the poor. Defending the weak.

Never did he lose his temper. Never was there a cross word. Never was there a violent act. He was compassionate and he was generous.

[ 11 : 38 ] He was respectful to those around him. He loved his enemies. He was honourable to those who were above him. In contrast, look at Barabbas.

He's lived a destructive and a violent life. Causing terror, maiming and murdering. Driven by hate, motivated by revenge, an angry and ruthless and guilty man.

But look what happens. Verse 15. Wanting to satisfy the crowd.

Wanting to appease them. Wanting to keep the peace and make his job a little bit easier. Wanting to make sure that there was no more kind of outcries.

Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

[ 12 : 49 ] Now tell me, what kind of king is this? Kings have power and authority.

Kings come to judge. They are not judged. Kings come with authority to bring justice. They don't suffer injustice.

But look at this king here. What's it all about? It all seems so foolish. But what we see here in this king is a king who comes to exchange places with a guilty murderer.

This king does not plead his innocence. So Barabbas is released instead and Jesus is crucified in his place.

Jesus takes his place on death row and dies in place of him so that he can go free. Now I don't know what Barabbas thought about that.

[ 14 : 01 ] Did he ever reflect on it when he saw Jesus on the cross and thought, he's dying in my place? Did it even register with him?

We're not told. But what we are sure for from this is is that through this very act we are being painted a picture of what Jesus is about to do on the cross for you and for me.

For Jesus is the perfect, kind, generous, and innocent king. Sinless in all his perfection, in all his beauty, in all his wonder.

Yet we are sinful and we are guilty. We are the ones who deserve to be punished.

But on the cross, Jesus exchanges places for people like you and for me. He is treated as guilty and he suffers the judgment that we deserve.

[ 15 : 16 ] Jesus is the one who goes to death row for you and for me so that we can go free, so that we can be forgiven of our sins, so that we are no longer condemned, but that we are welcomed as his children, treated as innocent.

This is what Mark wants us to see as we see Jesus crucified. Second, we see a king who identifies with us.

Look at verse 16. The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace. That is the praetorium.

That is like the barracks. And they called together the whole company of soldiers. Now, company there is actually a military term and it's about 600 men.

So here we have Jesus standing in the middle. He's already weak and broken from the flogging that he's just received. And then in unison, these battle-hardened soldiers all begin to mock and laugh and jeer.

[ 16 : 46 ] And Jesus stands there alone in the midst of all the laughing and all that's going on.

Verse 17. They put a purple robe on him.

A sign of royalty. Then they twisted together a crown of thorns. Usually it was a gold wreath symbolizing military power.

But this time it's a thorny crown shoved into his head. Verse 18. And then they began to call out to him, Ha!

Ha! Hail! King of the Jews! Look at him! He calls himself a king! Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and they spat on him.

Falling on their knees they paid homage to him. You call yourself a king? What kind of king are you? You know when the Roman Emperor came into town he would come dressed in all his royal robes.

[17:55] Streets would be lined with all the people cheering crowds celebrating his military might. They would come and they would all bow down in honour to their great emperor and king.

Hail Caesar! And here they are before this king. The true king. Here they come before him saying you think you're a king?

It's painful. It's humiliating. It's a soul-destroying mockery. Verse 20 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. On and on the mocking went. The crowds hurling abuse as he made his way to the cross.

Verse 29 Even those who passed by hurled their insults at him. Verse 31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him.

[19:08] The end of verse 32 even those who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. You call yourself a king? You effing fool!

Look at the state of you! Who do you think you are? The innocent king suffering violent and verbal abuse.

But never once does Jesus retaliate. Never once does he threaten or answer back.

Never once is there a cross word. Just silence. And we look on at this and we say Why?

What's the point? What does it all achieve? Jesus is supposed to be the king. Kings are honoured. They're not mocked.

[20:11] People bow down to kings in worship. They don't spit in their face. But this is the kind of king he is. He's telling us that I am not immune or unmoved by your suffering.

Jesus knows what it is to face injustice. He understands the pain of mocking. He has felt the fists of abuse.

He has experienced being humiliated and shamed. so whatever act of injustice you may go through whatever abuse you may endure when people shut you out and mistreat you and laugh at you when you are there sitting alone in silence broken and weak when you feel you're outnumbered at work or within your own family look to the king who identifies with you when you get laughed at because you love Jesus when you get slagged because your husband or wife thinks what you do is silly when your college mates or your school mates think it's a load of rubbish remember he knows where you're at he has been there he is not distant and immune and unmoved to your suffering and as we come to him as now the risen king we find that he understands you he sympathises with you he is the refuge he cares for you and he will comfort you and he will strengthen you because he's been there he's been through it and he's risen again but don't you sometimes want to retaliate aren't there times when you just want to get your back your own back at people don't you wish bad things to happen to people who do nasty things to you well listen to what

Peter says remember Peter the one we looked at last week who had disowned and betrayed listen to what Peter now says as he reflects on Jesus being crucified you can look it up if you like in 1st Peter 1st Peter chapter 2 if somebody has a page number that would be helpful 1st Peter chapter 2 1 2 1 8 1 when you want to retaliate when you're feeling bitter and angry and you're wanting to get back at someone we're to look at Jesus being crucified and facing the mocking let's read these words 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 21 to this you were called because

Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth when they hurled their insults at him he did not retaliate when he suffered he made no threats instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that's the cross so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness by his wounds we have been healed do you see what Jesus did he didn't retaliate he entrusted himself to him who judges justly and one day this king who is now the risen king is going to return as the just judge and he's going to come with all power and all authority and he will correct every act of injustice done to you and he will put all wrongs to right the guilty will be held accountable nobody will escape but remember

[25:18] Jesus who suffered in your place and so we entrust ourselves to him in the knowledge that we will be healed of all of our pain all those scars that we have felt will all fade away there will be no more tears and every broken life will be restored to those who entrust themselves to him this is what we are to see as Jesus is crucified on the cross for you and for me third we are to see a king

who proves powerful to us look at verse 25 back in Mark's gospel chapter 15 it was the third hour about nine in the morning when they crucified him the written notice of the charge against him read the king of the

Jews and as we look now with the crowds at Jesus crucified on the cross there is nothing here to suggest that this is a king all we see is a broken beaten and bloodied body in fact everybody around him is just mocking and laughing verse 31 in the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves he saved others look at him he can't even save himself let this Christ you say you're the king of Israel well then come down from the cross so that we may see and believe and those crucified with him also heaped insults on him if you're really the king then get down from the cross if you say who you are then why don't you save yourself go on

Jesus give us some proof come on king do one of your miracles then we will believe you perhaps you're thinking the same thing you're wanting proof maybe you're doubting that he is powerful maybe you doubt he is good Jesus heal my sick child then I will follow you Jesus why don't you end all the violence in the world then I will trust you Jesus change the situation and my work then I will do whatever you want give us some proof Jesus that you're the king then I will believe you but the crucifixion is the proof the cross is the evidence that

Jesus is king you see look look back at all of this a minute as Jesus walked the earth he calmed the storms with a word he healed the sick people who had leprosy and every other kind of disease people who couldn't walk he just touched he just spoke and he made them well people who were dead he spoke to and they raised to life again he defeated evil that nobody else could overcome he fed thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and a bit of fish of course he has the power to come down from the cross but in the ultimate display of power ever he goes to the cross and he chooses to use his power to suffer and to die he willingly and lovingly gives up his life for us he chose not to resist arrest he chose not to defend his innocence he chose not to fight back here we see a powerful king serving sacrificing deliberately he goes to the cross to exchange places with you and with me he intentionally faces the mocking to identify with you and with me if

Jesus did come down from the cross think about it if Jesus came down from the cross we would be left facing God's judgment if Jesus did come down from the cross we would be left living without hope and without justice we would not have a king who was there to identify with us so Jesus says look at me as we see Jesus crucified on the cross he says look at me look at how I love you look what I have done for you see and believe let's pray God