

## The Man in the Middle

Mark 15: 22-32

Today we begin the most sobering and somber section of Mark's gospel, dealing with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ our Lord. I am well aware that this was God's plan for our redemption. I am thankful for the cross and the willingness of our Lord to take our place in order to provide for our salvation. However, this section records the greatest injustice known to man.

As I considered this passage, I was reminded of the imagery it portrays. We are all familiar with the cross. In fact, I am ashamed of the westernization of the cross. By that I mean, our culture has reduced the cross to little more than a piece of jewelry to be worn around the neck or an image hung on the wall for decoration. While I am not opposed to such displays of the cross, I fear we have reduced the significance of the cross and become desensitized to its enormity. Jesus bore our sin and faced the righteous judgment of God in our place on the cross. There He paid the penalty for our sin, dying in our place! The events of Calvary and His following resurrection are the defining moments in human history. No other person or event compare to their significance!

As we examine the [facets](#) of that faithful day, I want to consider: [The Man in the Middle](#).

**I. The Crucifixion of Jesus** ([22-25](#)) – While none of the gospels record a lot of detail regarding the crucifixion, Mark provides enough to understand what happened that day. I would encourage you to read the other gospel accounts in order to gain a better understanding. We discover:

**A. A Place of Notoriety** ([22](#)) – [And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull](#). Mark, along with Matthew and John record the place of crucifixion being known as Golgotha, the place of a skull. Luke referred to the hill as Calvary. This was a hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, that would have been well-known in that day. It was a place reserved by the Romans to carry out executions by crucifixion. Some believe it was named Golgotha, Hebrew for the place of a skull, due to the likeness of a skull in the rocks surrounding the hill. Some argue it was so named simply because it was a place of death. Regardless of the reason for the Hebrew name, Golgotha was notorious for death and suffering.

**B. A Place of Atrocity** ([23](#)) – [And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not](#). One cannot possibly imagine the degree of pain and suffering those subjected to crucifixion endured. It was the cruelest means of execution known to man, devised to inflict as much pain and misery as possible, while ensuring a slow and miserable death. Often those subjected to

crucifixion would languish in extreme pain for days before their legs were broken, preventing them from the ability to breath, resulting in death from asphyxiation.

- We find that Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh to drink, which He refused – willing to bear suffering and death without assistance. Luke declared that the soldiers offered this mixture to Jesus. This was the fulfillment of prophecy made in [Psalm 69:21](#). It was interesting to discover this practice was done as a means to dull the senses and ease the pain of the condemned. One could view it as a means of sympathy for those suffering crucifixions, but I see it as a means of mockery and hypocrisy. While it may have offered a slight relief from the pain, these soldiers were not sympathetic for the condemned. Clearly, they were not concerned for their well-being or the pain they were forced to endure.

**C. A Place of Opportunity** (24) – [And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take](#). This was a common practice among the soldiers who stood around the crosses during crucifixions. These would gamble for the garments of the condemned. Garments like the one Jesus wore, being woven completely from top to bottom, would have been valuable. The soldiers would sell the garments for gain to anyone willing to purchase them. They even extorted those who suffered such a miserable death.

**D. A Place of Indignity** (24) – Our westernized culture has skewed the harsh reality of the cross. As the garments of the condemned were gambled for and sold for profit, those suffering crucifixion were forced to endure the horrors of the cross completely naked. The physical pain and suffering would have been unbearable without having been made a public spectacle, having one's dignity removed and forced to bear an open shame.

**E. A Place of Sovereignty** (25) – [And it was the third hour, and they crucified him](#). Like the other gospels, Mark simply declared they crucified Jesus. It was at the third hour, 9:00 am. No doubt the Sanhedrin and those who hated Jesus rejoiced. Their devious plot to kill an innocent man seemed to be going as planned. These failed to realize that Jesus was not the victim; in fact, He would soon prove to be the Victor! The events of that day were orchestrated and planned before the foundation of the world. Jesus had submitted to the Father's will and would provide atonement for our sin.

**II. The Identification of Jesus** (26-28) – Here we discover how Jesus was identified as He was crucified. Notice:

**A. The Declaration** (26) – *And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* As Jesus was crucified, Pilate ordered an inscription to be placed above Jesus on the cross, stating He was the King of the Jews. It was written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. This was not an acknowledgement of Pilate, nor was it an acknowledgement of the Sanhedrin. In fact, they were angry and wanted Pilate to declare that Jesus merely claimed to be their King. This was done as a means to declare the reason Jesus had been convicted and condemned. He was accused of insurrection against Rome, seeking to lead the people away from Pilate's rule and authority. This was actually done as a jab from Pilate against the Jews, seeking to identify the man they hated with them.

- While these scoffed and sneered at Jesus being a King, God used the order of Pilate to declare to the world that Jesus was in fact King. This inscription proclaimed the deity and lordship of Jesus! The world continues to reject Him, but that doesn't alter His deity.

**B. The Association** (27-28) – *And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.* <sup>[28]</sup> *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.* Jesus was crucified between common thieves, criminals who had committed crimes deemed worthy of death. I am convinced Jesus was crucified on the cross Pilate intended for Barabbas. The innocent, holy, sinless, compassionate Son of God hung among the lawless and condemned on Calvary. He died among those He came to save and redeem, those whose lives were wrecked and marred by sin. The sinless Son was numbered among the transgressors, as He hung upon the cross for our sin. *Isaiah 53:12 – Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

**III. The Humiliation of Jesus** (29-32) – Being crucified naked upon the cross, in an open shame, would have been humiliating enough, but the humiliation continued. It was caused by:

**A. The Skeptical** (29-30) – *And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,* <sup>[30]</sup> *Save thyself, and come down from the cross.* Those who denied Jesus as the Christ, having heard His claim of raising the Temple in three days, challenged Him to come down from the cross and save Himself, if He was who He claimed to be. They rejected His deity and refused to believe His words. These mocked and sneered as Jesus hung upon the cross between two thieves. These *railed* on Jesus – literally *blaspheming Him and saying evil things about Him*. They wagged their heads to show their displeasure and unbelief in Jesus. They taunted Jesus to come down if He were able to do so.

**B. The Self-righteous** (31-32a) – Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. <sup>[32]</sup> Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. Like the skeptical, the chief priests and scribes mocked Jesus also. These should have recognized Him as the Christ, and yet they denied and rejected Him. Still angry about the inscription of His being their King, they challenged Jesus to come down from the cross so they could see and believe. They scoffed, “This man had the ability to save others, but He is unable to save Himself.” Knowing a miracle had been performed in the resurrection of Lazarus, these continued to deny Jesus as the Christ.

- Of all those who denied Jesus, these were in the worst condition. They felt as if they had done God a favor by ridding the world of one they considered a blasphemer. They felt they were right with God and rejected the sole means of salvation. Many today view themselves as good enough to merit God’s favor, apart from any need for Christ. However, the Bible is clear – He alone provided salvation, and apart from Him we have no hope of forgiveness of sin or reconciliation to God.

**C. The Sinister** (32b) – And they that were crucified with him reviled him. Even those who hung on either side of Jesus reviled Him. These also taunted the Lord and scoffed at His being the Christ. Isn’t that amazing? These were condemned to death for crimes they had committed, and yet they felt the need to belittle and taunt one who was being crucified along with them. We do know that one eventually saw his need and stood up for Jesus. He asked the Lord to remember him and was promised paradise that very day. What grace our Lord extended, even as He hung on the cross! He was dying to provide atonement for sin, and that included the sin of thieves.

**Conclusion:** This passage was one I approached with fear and reverence. It has dealt with a holy moment that forever altered the path of humanity. I am thankful for the Man in the middle, the One who assumed my sin, endured the judgment I deserved, and tasted death in my place. Because of His great sacrifice, I had the opportunity to be forgiven, reconciled, and receive eternal life! Do you know Christ as your personal Savior? If not, come to Him in repentance and faith. If so, rejoice for the great provision that was made on your behalf and the blessed assurance you received in Him!