

Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Mark 15:33-41 | The Last Three Hours on the Cross
December 19, 2021

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 15:33-41
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we studied the first three hours of Jesus' crucifixion.

~~Today, we'll study the last three.~~

In the process, we met a man named Simon. He was from Cyrene.

He lived in what is today—Libya.

Libya is a long way from Jerusalem.

This man walked over 1,200 miles to celebrate Passover.

We learned how this Simon from Cyrene had a divine disruption to his entire life as he walked into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

We also witnessed the scorn and humiliation of Jewish laypeople and the religious elites as Jesus was hanging from the cross for the first three hours.

KEYPOINTS:

- Your life must be filled with times of suffering.
- It's because Jesus refused to save Himself that He was able to save sinners.
- Runaway from religious people.

I wanted to follow up briefly on that last point. — Caught some of you off guard.

Religious people are those who insist that you have to follow the rules to earn God's favor.

^{But}
In fact, Scripture says the very opposite.

Romans 8:1—Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

I think I may have caught some of you off guard with that statement—to run from religious people.

Many of you have been raised in a church atmosphere of legalism.

"Do this and not that.

You should be doing this— and you shouldn't be doing that."

In other words, you can't have fun anymore.

Why? You're a Christian!—you are dead to fun!

Is that what God says in His Word?

"Thou shalt not have any more fun and be baptized in pickle juice."

No. God says in His Word—That God Himself came from Heaven, in the person of Jesus Christ.

He lived a perfect life and yet died a criminal's death. ^{by obeying the rules} because of it.

^{Pause -} Did Jesus do all that for you to keep rules?

No, Jesus is the one who kept the rules—that's why He's the perfect substitute for our sin.

I wanted to share all this with you before we start this morning because if you grew up in that legalistic church environment—I'm sorry.

And please know this, you most likely have been taught to be a “good” Christian.

I don't even know what a “good” Christian is. Either you're a Christian or your not.

You either believe that Jesus is God, or you don't.

Galatians 5:1—For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.

What's the yoke of slavery? Religion.

If you have not signed up for our Galatians Bible Study taught by my dear mentor and friend, Dr. Cameron Wold, please do that before you leave.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're going to see God the Father visit Golgotha.

We're going to study the last three hours of the crucifixion.

Today's text—is the high point of salvation history.

The message that I submit before you this morning is too good, it's too beautiful, and it's truly too holy for me to teach—but I'm going to try.

In today's Scripture passage, we see how Jesus Christ saves the world.

And it's not how we picture it.

In fact, it's the complete opposite.

Jesus is not some make-believe superhero with spandex and a mask.

He's not a morally upright person who battles evil.

Jesus is the one true living God, who became the Lamb of God to offer Himself in our place.

And we dive into "that place" today.

The place where every sin of every Believer-- is now cast ^{upon} on Jesus.

Last week we saw Jesus endure the physical pain and the continued emotional shame from the world.

Today, we see how Jesus endures The Father's wrath for our sin.

What does that even look like?

What does that mean?

What supernaturally transpired during these three hours?

Let's find out.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 15:33-41 CSB

Mark 15:33— When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.,

Mark 15:34— 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?",

Mark 15:35— When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "See, he's calling for Elijah."

Mark 15:36— 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."

Mark 15:37— Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mark 15:38— Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:39— 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!",

Mark 15:40— There were also women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

Mark 15:41— In Galilee these women followed him and took care of him. Many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem.

PRAY:

*Help me understand your instruction,
and I will obey it
and follow it with all my heart.*

(Psalm 119:34)

EXEGESIS:

Mark 15:33— *When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.*

Jesus had already spent three hours on the cross when at 12 noon, darkness covered the entire land during the brightest part of the day.

This darkness was not a short amount of time, and Mark is precise here— for three hours.

There is a debate on whether the darkness was local—meaning in Israel— or worldwide.

I would submit to you that the darkness was worldwide.

First, because sin is worldwide.

Romans 3:10— *There is no one righteous, not even one.*

Romans 3:11— *There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.*

Romans 3:12— *All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.*

In other words, the whole world is guilty of sin.

Second, all the Gospel writers say this darkness was extensive.

Not only do we know this from Scripture, but other external records confirm it as well.

Some of the early church fathers, Tertullian and Origen, suggest that the darkness extended throughout the Roman Empire.

Secular writings also confirm the darkness.

A Greek scientist was living in Egypt, Dionysius (Die-On-E-See-E-Us), reported experiencing this darkness while visiting in the city of Heliopolis. (He-Le-Op-O-Lis)

The irony is that the Greek name Heliopolis means “The City of the Sun.”

And yet “sun City” was blacked out.

A second example comes from a man named Diogenes (Die-aw-jen-ees).

He was also a Greek scientist living in Egypt.

Although a pagan, his reaction to this darkness was profound.

He wrote, “*Either the Deity himself suffers at this moment or sympathizes with the one that does.*”

The third writer was Phlegon (Flee-gon), of Tralles.

Phlegon was a Greek who lived in Asia Minor.

He wrote, “*there was a great and remarkable eclipse of the sun above any that had happened before.*”

He stated that the day was turned into night at 12 noon.

It was so dark that he could see the stars.

He then describes how a great earthquake shook Bithynia (Bith-thin-e-uh), which is now Turkey (1,000 miles from Jerusalem).

He also states and that many of the houses in the city of Nicea were toppled.

So, let me ask you, what's the cause of this darkness?

First, let's discuss what it's not.

The cause of the darkness was not from Satan.

Satan does not have cosmic power.

God does. (Job 9:7-8; Isa. 45:6-7; Ezek. 32:7-8).

Secondly, it's not an eclipse.

Science denies that this darkness was a natural eclipse from the sun.

An eclipse doesn't last for three hours.

So what caused it? Maybe the better question is, Who caused it? "

The cause of the darkness is God The Father.

It's a fulfillment of more OT Scripture.

Because
Darkness is a sign of judgment.

Amos 8:9— *I will make the sun go down at noon;
I will darken the land in the daytime.*

Zephaniah 1:15— *That day is a day of wrath,
a day of trouble and distress,
a day of destruction and desolation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and total darkness,*

Joel 2:1— *Blow the ram's horn in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the residents of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming;
in fact, it is near—*

Joel 2:2— *a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and total darkness,*

All that to day this...darkness symbolizes God's judgment on sin.

Remember the Exodus?

A plague of darkness spread over the land before the first Passover lamb was slain.
(Exodus 10:22)

And now, before the death of the Lamb of God, there is more darkness.

Now, please note, this darkness is not the absence of God; it's the very opposite.

It's is the presence of God.

It is God expressing his holy fury and judgment on our sin.

So with that disclaimer...let me ask you:

What happened during those three hours of darkness of God the Father visiting Golgotha?

Remarkably, the Gospels don't record one word spoken by anyone during this time.

Evidently, the horror of The Father's wrath was too much for any human eye to watch.

So Jesus was alone.

And in that solitary confinement —Wave after wave of the world's sin was unleashed on Jesus.

In other words, hell came to Israel.

God unleashed the full extent of our eternal punishment on Jesus.

In the timeframe of those three hours—Jesus endured the eternal wrath of God—for every sinner who repents and believes.

How can Jesus endure God's eternal wrath for every Believer in only three hours?

Because Jesus is not just the Son of Man, but the Son of God.

He is truly human and truly divine.

Meaning, Jesus is an infinite and eternal person.

Jesus is the only person who qualifies to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

No mere mortal will do. —no one else qualifies

Jesus had to be human because it's humans who sinned.

A human must be the sacrifice.

But Jesus is also truly divine—meaning He is the only one who can.

That's a fundamental theological lesson for us today, my friends.

Because Jesus is both human and divine...

His personhood and his work are also limitless and eternal.

All that to say; evidently, God the Father deemed that ^{Jesus} He suffer for three hours.

It's important to note here that God the Father did not visit Golgotha to punish those people mocking Jesus.

Incredibly, God the Father came to punish Jesus.

God came to punish God.

God is both Just & The Justifier.

Isaiah 53:10—Yet the Lord was pleased to crush him severely.

It's on God the Father's timetable that He visits Golgotha.

He's given humanity three hours to prepare for what's getting ready to happen next.

Not one Gospel writer record a single event of what takes place during these three hours.

There is only terrifying darkness.

No one can see a thing, and no one says a word.

For three hours, Jesus, as the perfect Son of Man— a human being—was separated from God the Father. Why?

God's holy nature demanded that a human being experience the consequences of sin through the separation of God.

Scripture tells us what happened during those three hours.

2 Corinthians 5:21—He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

How did Jesus become sin? He became the sin offering.

All the OT sacrifices point to the cross.

John the Baptizer said,

John 1:29—"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Question: How did Jesus really and truly take away our sin?

Answer: By becoming the sin offering represented in the OT.

Finally, after three hours, and the darkness slowly goes away—Jesus speaks...

Mark 15:34— 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?"

If you take verse 34 out of its original context, you might conclude that Jesus was crying out in despair and defeat.

In reality, this cry was after the three hours of His suffering.

Here's the thing—Jesus knew that The Father was there with Him in the darkness — and Jesus didn't say a word.

It's only now when the darkness goes away—and the Father leaves Golgotha—that Jesus cries out.

“My God! My God!”

These are the first words out of Jesus' mouth after He has made propitiation/satisfaction/paid our sin debt in full.

Jesus quotes the first line of Psalm 22.

In the Hebrew culture, this pointed to the entire Psalm.

So Jesus is crediting all of Psalm 22 to Himself.

KEYPOINT #2

When Jesus felt most abandoned by ^{the Father} God, Jesus declared His continued trust in Him. The Father

Jesus cries out for ^{the} God the Father, yet The Father does not reply.

He remains silent, and yet it's in the silence where Jesus proclaims His trust.

2 Corinthians 5:7—For we walk by faith, not by sight. *-Same for us.*

What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1—Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Important Theological Lesson.
It's only here in all four Gospels where Jesus called the Father, **God**.

Typically Jesus calls God, *Father*.

Why does Jesus use a formal term instead of the intimate one that He's always used?

Because at this moment, their relationship is not a Father to a Son, but a Judge to a defendant.

Our salvation is judicial.

We're talking about perfect justice being executed on humanity at this point.

Hebrews 9:22—According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

A blood payment must be made for sin—and Jesus paid it.

Mark 15:35—When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "See, he's calling for Elijah."

Why would people assume that Jesus is calling for the OT prophet Elijah?

Eloi, Eloi
Eli, Eli, means *My God, My God*, but it can refer to the shortened name Elijah.

Eloi = Eli
Some folks in the crowd watching, deliberately distort Jesus' words.

They presume that Jesus is calling for Elijah.

Why would that make this presumption?

2 Kings 2:11 tells us that Elijah was snatched into heaven without dying.

Also
A tradition in Israel said Elijah would return in times of crisis to protect and rescue the righteous.

In other words, Elijah was a patron saint of lost causes.

John's Gospel fills in a gap here...

John 19:28— *After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "I'm thirsty."*

Jesus is obviously physically thirsty.

But why else would Jesus ask for a drink at this moment?

1. Because he knows he's moments away from death.
2. He's got something to say.

He's got something to say before his human body collapses and he suffocates to death.

Jesus is not going to die like everyone else who has been crucified.

Back to...

Mark 15:36— *Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink,*

This wine is not the ^{same} exact wine mentioned in verse 23 from last Sunday.

This wine was a wine vinegar mixture—it didn't have a narcotic.

Believe it or not, it was a favorite beverage of the soldiers.

And just like John's Gospel tells us, Jesus fulfilled prophecy...

Psalm 69:21— *... for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

Mark 15:36— ... fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink,"

The “stick” used is the same instrument that the soldiers beat Jesus with in verse 19.

At first, it may seem that people have compassion for Jesus.

But then, we hear someone say...

Mark 15:36— “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

The one who offered Jesus a drink continues to make a joke out of the situation.

But the joke is on him.

Elijah already came at the beginning of Jesus’s ministry— in the person and work of John the Baptizer. (Mark 9:12–13).

John’s Gospel gives us more detail at this moment.

John 19:30— When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

Those three English words, “***It is finished!***” translate into one Greek word, *tetelestai* (*tuh-tell-uh-stye*).

It’s a beautiful word because it means “*Paid in Full.*”

^{MCFAL}
The debt that we owe to God has been rendered once and for all.

All the animal sacrifices that were continually made year after year, century after century in the OT, we’re simply installment payments.

There's no more interest; the balance has been paid in full— by Jesus Christ.

Back to Mark...

Mark 15:37— *Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last.*

Luke 23:46 —*And Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, **into your hands I entrust my spirit.**", Saying this, he breathed his last.*

One of the reasons the Roman soldiers were shocked by the demeanor of Jesus is that not only did he not fight to be nailed to a cross.

Not only did he not take the narcotic.

But in this verse, we learn that Jesus didn't die like everyone else who was crucified.

Usually, the victim falls unconscious and dies of suffocation.

Here we see that Jesus was conscious until his final breath.

In fact, Jesus could have lived longer on the cross because he had enough energy to shout his last words—"It is finished."

It was definitely not the last gasp of a dying man. It was a cry of victory.

KEYPOINT #3

Jesus gave his life. It was not taken from Him.

None of the Gospel writers say that Jesus "died."

That's a bad English translation if you have the GW or the NCV.

Jesus chose the moment of His death.

Dear friends, this is the world's biggest dose of grace.

Because The Fall of Genesis 3 has been reversed.

Mankind now has the opportunity to return to God.

Redemption and forgiveness have been made possible by Jesus Christ.

All man has to do is believe.

We see an immediate outcome of Jesus' death.

Mark 15:38—Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Jesus is now dead.

He's done speaking, but evidently, God the Father isn't.

The Father gives a preview of what is to come to the religious leaders that hated His son.

Notice how specific this language is in verse 38—*it was torn in two from top to bottom.*

It's as if the Father's hand Himself, reaching from Heaven, tore this curtain.

The only other time we see this word **torn**, is in Mark 1:10, when God tore open the heavens at Jesus's baptism.

What's the deal with the veil? Why would God the Father make this statement?

It goes back to the OT and how the original tabernacle was ~~set up~~ ^{built}.

This veil separated the holy place from the holy of holies.

Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies for the past fifteen hundred years.

He entered for a very short time on the Day of Atonement.

What did he do once he was in there with the very presence of God?

His job was to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and on top of the ark of the covenant.

This symbolized that a perfect animal sacrifice had been completed to atone for sins temporarily.

He was to do this ~~very~~ ^{very} precisely and reverently.

One false move, and he would fall over dead.

— That's a picture of the law & legislation

That's why they tied a rope to the High Priest's legs so they could pull him out.

Nobody is going in there to get his body.

All that to say this—

KEYPOINT #3:4

The veil was a visible manifestation of a spiritual reality.

And the spiritual reality is this— *“We have no access to God.”*

This veil served as a continual reminder between mankind and God.

Do Not Enter - Why?

God is holy. Man is sinful.

The only way man can enter is if propitiation has been made.

But, when The Father tore the veil, He removed the barrier—once and for all.

Mankind now does have access to God— through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The spiritual significance is this...

When The Father tore the veil, the old covenant of law passed away, and the new covenant of **grace** was installed.

That's why we have both the OT and the NT.

This tearing of the veil is stage one of the visible acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice.

By the Father

Stage two is the resurrection.

Now, some say that the earthquake that Matthew mentions in his Gospel caused the veil to tear.

Now think about his with me...If an earthquake caused this veil to tear, it would have been torn in many different directions.

It wasn't. It was clearly a supernatural act done by the Father Himself.

None of the Gospel writers offer any explanation for the tearing of the veil.

However, the Epistle to the Hebrews does...

Hebrews 6:19—We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain...

therefore...
Hebrews 10:19—we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus—

Back to our text...

Mark 15:39— 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!",

Standing opposite him— The centurion has a front-row seat to the most significant act in salvation history.

Now, this is crazy!

We have a Gentile **centurion** who supervised the execution squad for Jesus—

He's the only one out of all these people to confess that Jesus is the **Son of God**.

There's only one other place in Mark's Gospel to where somebody confesses that.

Anyone remember? A demon! (Mark 3:11)

As a battle-hardened career soldier, why would ^{Centurion} he make that claim about Jesus?

He saw everything, didn't he?

- Pilate's legal pronouncement that Jesus was innocent
- The hatred of the religious leaders
- The hatred of the crowd
- The terrible flogging,
- His own soldiers were mocking, beating, and spitting on him.
- He watched Jesus make the promise of forgiveness and ~~enteral~~ ^{ETERNAL} life to the thief on the cross.
- He watched Jesus minister and take care of his own mother from the cross.
- He heard Jesus forgive people from the cross.

- The Centurion*
- He experienced the judgement of God in the midday darkness.
 - He watched Jesus die, unlike any other person he has ever witnessed.
 - He felt the earthquake.

How can anyone be a firsthand witness to all that— and not get saved?

Tradition says that the Centurion's name was Longinus. (Long-gene-us).

Whether's that true or not, this man, like the thief on the cross, comes to faith.

Mark 15:40— *There were also women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, [Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses,] and Salome.*

Here we see that there were women disciples “watching from a distance,”

Watching from a distance is better than absence.

Certainly, the male disciples are absent—except John. He finally shows up at the end.

Mary Magdalene was the woman whom Jesus cast demons out of.

she never left his side.

Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses, is Jesus' mother, Mary.

This is an odd way to refer to Jesus' mother. Why?

Because she is not special. She is a sinner who also needs a savior.

Salome was possibly the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John (sons of thunder).

Mark 15:41— *In Galilee these women followed him and took care of him. Many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem.*

In Mark's Gospel, only women and angels ^{serve} help Jesus.

The women were there until Jesus' final breath.

PREACH

The story we just read is a story that seems too good to be true.

Human level

It's horrific and tragic.

Divine perspective

It's a beautiful disaster.

It is the most substantial cosmic event imaginable.

And yet, it's not imaginable by humans because God purposed our redemption.

There's a lot to it that I don't understand.

But what I do understand causes me to worship Jesus.

I find it interesting that nobody understood what was actually taking place when it was taking place.

At the end of the narrative, the Centurion, comes the closest.

Today, I also think that we don't understand what is actually taking place in our lives. *today*

Many of us don't realize what God is doing during this time of judgment on the Earth.

As Americans, it seems that as long as we have our entertainment and fast food, we'll shut up and claim to be happy.

But as Christians, we are to understand the signs of the times.

As Christians, we are to finish the work that God started in us.

The Centurion said,

Mark 15:39— "Truly this man was the Son of God!",

He came the closest to understanding what was happening.

But he was wrong.

Jesus was not the Son of God; Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is alive.

And over the next two weeks, we'll learn how and why.

Benetton
PRAYER

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Cor. 13:11)

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