

CHAPTER 15

What we read of the sufferings of Christ, in the foregoing chapter, was but the prologue or introduction; here we have the completing of them. We left him condemned by the chief priests; but they could only show their teeth, they could not bite. Here we have him,

- I.** Arraigned and accused before Pilate the Roman governor (v. 1-5).
- II.** Cried out against by the common people, at the instigation of the priests (v. 6-14).
- III.** Condemned to be crucified immediately (v. 15).
- IV.** Bantered and abused, as a mock-king, by the Roman soldiers (v. 16-19).
- V.** Led out to the place of execution with all possible ignominy and disgrace (v. 20-24).
- VI.** Nailed to the cross between two thieves (v. 25-28).
- VII.** Reviled and abused by all that passed by (v. 29-32).
- VIII.** Forsaken for a time by his father (v. 33-36).
- IX.** Dying, and rending the veil (v. 37, 38).
- X.** Attested and witnessed to by the centurion and others (v. 39-41).
- XI.** Buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea (v. 42-47).

◀15▶ MARK 15:1-14

CHRIST BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE

Here we have,

I. A *consultation* held by the great Sanhedrim for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met *early in the morning* about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out *ways and means* to get him put to

death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an *uproar among the people*. The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame us for our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that *war* against Christ and thy soul, are up early; *How long then wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?*

II. The delivering of him up a prisoner to Pilate; they *bound him*. He was to be the great sacrifice, and sacrifices must be bound with cords,

~~1877~~ Psalm 118:27. Christ was bound, to make bonds easy to us, and enable us, as Paul and Silas, to sing in bonds. It is good for us often to *remember the bonds* of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was *bound for us*.

They led him through the streets of Jerusalem, to expose *him* to contempt, who, while he taught in the temple, but a day or two before, was had in veneration; and we may well imagine how miserably he looked after such a night's usage as he had had; so buffeted, spit upon, and abused. Their delivering him to the Roman power was a type of ruin of their church, which hereby they merited, and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, the covenant, and the oracles, of God, and the visible state church, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up the *king* they do, in effect, deliver up the *kingdom of God*, which is therefore, as it were, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ, to gratify the desires of the Romans, or to satisfy and jealousies of theirs concerning him, it had been another matter; but they voluntarily betrayed him that was *Israel's crown*, to them that were *Israel's yoke*.

III. The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories (v. 2); "*Art thou the king of the Jews? Dost thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom the Jews expect as a temporal prince?*" — "Yea," saith Christ, "it is as *thou sayest*, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect." He is the king that rules and protects his Israel according to the spirit, who are Jews inwardly by the circumcision of the spirit, and the king that will restrain and punish the carnal Jews, who continue in unbelief.

IV. The articles of impeachment exhibited against him, and his silence under the charge and accusation. The chief priests forgot the dignity of their place, when they turned informers, and did in person *accuse Christ of many things* (v. 3), and witness against him, v. 4. Many of the Old-Testament prophets charge the priests of their times with great

wickedness, in which *well did they prophesy* of these priests; see ^{<3226>}Ezekiel 22:26; ^{<3911>}Hosea 5:1; 6:9; ^{<3911>}Micah 3:11; ^{<3911>}Zephaniah 3:4; ^{<3916>}Malachi 1:6; 2:8. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is said to be for the *iniquity of the priests that shed the blood of the just*, ^{<3913>}Lamentations 4:13. Note, Wicked priests are generally the worst of men. The better any thing is, the worse it is when it is corrupted. Lay persecutors have been generally found more compassionate than ecclesiastics. These priests were very eager and noisy in their accusation; but Christ *answered nothing*, v. 3. When Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should (v. 4), yet still he stood mute (v. 5), he *answered nothing*, which Pilate thought very strange. He gave Pilate a direct answer (v. 2), but would not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alleged, were notoriously false, and he knew Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Note, As Christ *spoke* to admiration, so he *kept silence* to admiration.

V. The proposal Pilate made to the people, to have Jesus released to them, since it was the custom of the feast to grace the solemnity with the release of one prisoner. The people expected and demanded that he should do *as he had ever done to them* (v. 8); it was not an ill usage, but they would have it kept up. Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered up Jesus *for envy*, because he had got such a reputation among the people as eclipsed theirs, v. 10. It was easy to see, comparing the eagerness of the prosecutors with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not his *guilt*, but his *goodness*, not any thing *mischievous* or *scandalous*, but something *meritorious* and *glorious*, that they were provoked at. And therefore, hearing how much he was the darling of the crowd, he thought that he might safely appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would be proud of rescuing him out of the priests' hands; and he proposed an expedient for their doing it without danger of an *uproar*; let them demand him to be *released*, and Pilate will be ready to do it, and stop the mouths of the priests with this — that the people insisted upon his release. There was indeed another prisoner, *one Barabbas*, that had an interest, and would have some votes; but he questioned not but Jesus would out-poll him.

VI. The unanimous outrageous clamours of the people have *Christ put to death*, and particularly to have him *crucified*. It was a great surprise to Pilate, when he found the people so much under the influence of the

priests, that they all agreed to desire that Barabbas might be *released*, v. 11. Pilate opposed it all he could; “*What will ye that I shall do to him whom ye call the King of the Jews? Would not ye then have him released too?*” v. 12. No, say they, *Crucify him*. The priests having put that in their mouths, they insist upon it; when Pilate objected, *Why, what evil has he done?* (a very material question in such a case), they did not pretend to answer it, but *cried out more exceedingly*, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Now the priests, who were very busy dispersing themselves and their creatures among the mob, to keep up the cry, promised themselves that it would influence Pilate two ways to condemn him.

1. It might incline him to believe Christ *guilty*, when there was so general an out-cry against him. “Surely,” might Pilate think, “he must needs be a bad man, whom all the world is weary of.” He would now conclude that he had been *misinformed*, when he was told what an interest he had in the people, and that the matter was not so. But the priest had hurried on the prosecution with so much expedition, that we may suppose that they who were Christ's friends, and would have opposed this cry, were at the other end of the town, and knew nothing of the matter. Note, It has been the common artifice of Satan, to put Christ and his religion into an ill name, and so to run them down. When once this sect, as they called it, comes to be *every where spoken against*, though *without cause*, then that is looked upon as *cause enough* to condemn it. But let us *judge* of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prejudice by common fame and the cry of the country.

2. It might induce him to condemn Christ, to *please* the people, and indeed for *fear of displeasing* them. Though he was not so *weak* as to be governed by their opinion, to believe him guilty, yet he was so *wicked* as to be swayed by their outrage, to condemn him, though he believed him innocent; induced thereunto by reasons of state, and the wisdom of the world. Our Lord Jesus dying as a *sacrifice* for the *sins of many*, he fell a sacrifice to the *rage of many*.

CHRIST INSULTED AND CONDEMNED

Here,

I. Pilate, to gratify the Jews' malice, delivers Christ to be *crucified*, v. 15. *Willing to content the people, to do enough* for them (so the word is), and make them easy, that he might keep them quiet, he *released Barabbas unto them*, who was the scandal and plague of their nation, and *delivered Jesus* to be *crucified*, who was the glory and blessing of their nation. Though he *had scourged him* before, hoping that would *content* them, and then not designing to crucify him, yet he went on to that; for no wonder that he who could persuade himself to *chastise* one that was innocent (⁴²²⁶Luke 23:16), could by degrees persuade himself to *crucify* him.

Christ was *crucified*, for that was,

1. A *bloody death*, and *without blood no remission*, ³⁸⁰²Hebrews 9:22. The blood is *the life* (⁰⁹⁰⁴Genesis 9:4); it is the *vehicle* of the *animal spirits*, which *connect* the soul and body, so that the exhausting of the blood is the exhausting of the life. Christ was to lay down *his life* for us, and therefore *shed his blood*. Blood *made atonement for the soul* (⁴⁸⁷¹Leviticus 17:11), and therefore in every sacrifice of propitiation special order was given for the *pouring out* of the blood, and the *sprinkling* of that before the Lord. Now, that Christ might answer all these types, he *shed his blood*.

2. It was a *painful death*; the pains were exquisite and acute, for death made its assaults upon the vitals by the exterior parts, which are *quickest of sense*. Christ died, so as that he might *feel himself die*, because he was to be both the priest and the sacrifice; so that he might be *active* in dying; because he was to *make his soul an offering* for sin. Tully calls crucifixion, *Teterrimum supplicium* — *A most tremendous punishment*: Christ would meet death in its greatest terror, and so conquer it.

3. It was a *shameful death*, the death of slaves, and the vilest malefactors; so it was accounted among the Romans. The *cross* and the *shame* are put together. God having been injured in his honour by the sin of man, it is *in his honour* that Christ makes him *satisfaction*, not only by denying himself in, and divesting himself of, the honours due to his divine nature, for a

time, but by submitting the greatest reproach and ignominy the human nature was capable of being loaded with. Yet this was not the worst.

4. It was a *cursed* death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law (^{<623>}Deuteronomy 21:23); *He that is hanged, is accursed of God*, is under a particular mark of God's displeasure. It was the death that Saul's sons were put to, when the guilt of their father's bloody house was to be expiated, ^{<106>}2 Samuel 21:6. Haman and his sons were *hanged*, ^{<107>}Esther 7:10; 9:13. We do not read any of the prophets of the Old Testament that were *hanged*; but now that Christ has submitted to be *hanged upon a tree*, the reproach and curse of that kind of death are quite rolled away, so that it ought to be any hindrance to the comfort of those who die either innocently or penitently, nor any diminution from, but rather an addition to, the glory of those who die martyrs for Christ, to be as he was, hanged upon a tree.

II. Pilate, to gratify the gay humour of the Roman soldiers, delivered him to them, to be abused and spitefully treated, while they were preparing for the execution. They called together *the whole regiment* that was then in waiting, and they went into an inner hall, where they ignominiously abused our Lord Jesus, as a king, just as in the high priest's hall his servants had ignominiously abused him as a Prophet and Saviour.

1. Do kings wear robes of purple or scarlet? They *clothed him with purple*. This abuse done to Christ in his apparel should be an intimation to Christians, not to make the putting on of apparel *their adorning*, ^{<108>}1 Peter 3:4. Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a Christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ.

2. Do kings wear *crowns*? They *platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head*. A crown of straw, or rushes, would have been banter enough; but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. Let us be *taught* by these *thorns*, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, to hate sin, and be uneasy under it, and to be in love with Jesus Christ, who is here a lily among thorns. If we be at any time afflicted with a *thorn in the flesh*, let it be our comfort, that our high priest is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having himself known what *thorns in the flesh* meant.

3. Are kings attended with the acclamations of their subjects, *O king, live for ever*? That also is mimicked; they saluted him with "*Hail, King of the*

Jews; such a prince, and such a people, even good enough for one another.”

4. Kings have *sceptres* put into their hand, marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity; to imitate this, they put a *reed in his right hand*. Those that despise the authority of Jesus Christ, as not to be observed and obeyed, who regard not either the precepts of his word, or the threatenings of his wrath, do, in effect, *put a reed in his hand*; nay, and, as these here, *smite him on the head* with it, such is the indignity they do him.

5. Subjects, when they swear allegiance, were wont to *kiss* their sovereign; and this they offered to do, but, instead of that, *spit upon him*.

6. Kings used to be addressed upon the *knee*; and this also they brought into the jest, they *bowed the knee, and worshipped him*; this they did in scorn, to make themselves and one another laugh. We were by sin become liable to *everlasting shame and contempt*, to deliver us from which, our Lord Jesus submitted to this shame and contempt for us. He was thus mocked, not in *his own clothes*, but in another's, to signify that he suffered not for his own sin; the crime was ours, the shame his. Those who pretend subjection to Christ, but at the same time give themselves up to the service of the world and the flesh, do, in effect, the same that they did, who bowed the knee to him in mockery, and abused him with, *Hail, king of the Jews*, when they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. Those that bow the knee to Christ, but do not bow the soul, that *draw nigh to him with their mouths*, and *honour him with their lips*, but *their hearts are far from him*, put the same affront upon him that these here did.

III. The soldiers, at the hour appointed, led him away from Pilate's judgment-hall to the place of execution (v. 20), as a sheep to the slaughter; he was *led forth with the workers of iniquity*, though he did no sin. But lest his death, under the load of his cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the further cruelties they intended, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He *passed by, coming out of the country* or out of the *fields*, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprised by them. The cross was a very troublesome unwieldy load: but he that carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have his name upon the record in the book of God, though otherwise an obscure person; so that, wherever this gospel is preached; so that, wherever this gospel is preached, there shall

this be told for a memorial to him: in like manner, though *no affliction*, no cross, *for the present, be joyous, but grievous*, yet afterward it yields a crown of glory to them that are exercised thereby.

MARK 15:22-32

THE CRUCIFIXION

We have here the *crucifixion* of our Lord Jesus.

I. The *place where* he was crucified; it was called *Golgotha* — *the place of a scull*: some think, because of the heads of malefactors that were there cut off: it was the common place of execution, as Tyburn, for he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. I know not how to give any credit to it, but divers of the ancients mention it as a current tradition, that in this place our first father Adam was buried, and they think it highly congruous that there Christ should be crucified; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius (great names), take notice of it; nay, Cyprian adds, *Creditur fpiis* — *Many good people believe* that the blood of Christ crucified did trickle down upon the scull of Adam, who was buried in the same place. Something more credible is the tradition, that this mount Calvary was *that mountain in the land of Moriah* (and in the land of Moriah it certainly was, for so the country about Jerusalem was called), on which Isaac was to be offered; and the ram was offered instead of him; and then Abraham had an eye to *this day* of Christ, when he called the place *Jehovah-jireh* — *The Lord will provide*, expecting that so it would be seen in the *mount of the Lord*.

II. The *time when* he was crucified; it was the *third hour*, v. 25. He was brought before Pilate about the sixth hour (~~304~~ John 19:14), according to the Roman way of reckoning, which John uses, with which ours at this day agrees, that is at six o'clock in the morning; and then, at the *third hour*, according to the Jews' way of reckoning, that is, about nine of the clock in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the *third hour* is here mentioned, to intimate an aggravation of the wickedness of the priests, they were here prosecuting Christ to the death, though it was after the *third hour*, when they ought to have been attending

the service of the temple, and offering the peace-offerings; it being the first day of the *feast of unleavened bread*, when there was to be a *holy convocation*. At that very time, when they should have been, according to the duty of their place, presiding in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it. Note, There are many who pretend to be *for the church*, who yet care not how seldom they *go to church*.

III. The indignities that were done him, when he was nailed to the cross; as if that had not been ignominious enough, they added several things to the ignominy of it.

1. It being the custom to give *wine* to persons that were to be *put to death*, they *mingled* his with *myrrh*, which was *bitter*, and made it *nauseous*; he *tasted* it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness of it, but not the benefit of it.

2. The garments of those that were crucified, being, as with us, the executioners' fee, the soldiers *cast lots* upon his garments (v. 24), threw dice (as our soldiers do upon a drum-head), for them: so making themselves merry with his misery, and sitting at their sport while he was hanging in pain.

3. They set up a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him both justice and honour, *The king of the Jews*, v. 26. Here was no crime alleged, but his sovereignty owned. Perhaps Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ as a baffled king, or upon the Jews, who by their importunity had forced him, against his conscience, to condemn Christ, as a people that deserved no better a king than he seemed to be: however, God intended it to be the proclaiming even of Christ upon the cross, the *king of Israel*; though Pilate know not what he wrote, any more than Caiaphas what he said, ^{<415>}John 11:51. Christ crucified is king of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even then when he hung on the cross, he was like a king, *conquering* his and his people's enemies, and *triumphing* over them, ^{<5025>}Colossians 2:15. Now he was writing his laws in his own blood, and preparing his favours for his subjects. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a king, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed.

4. They crucified *two thieves* with him, *one on his right hand, the other on his left*, and him in the midst as the worst of the three (v. 27); so great a degree of dishonour did they hereby intend him. And, no doubt, it gave him *disturbance* too. Some that have been imprisoned in the common gaols, for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than any other of the grievances of their prison. Now, in the midst of such our Lord Jesus was *crucified*; while he lived he had, and there was occasion, *associated* with sinners, to do them good; and now when he died, he was for the same purpose joined with them, for he *came into the world*, and went out of it, to *save sinners*, even the chief. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it, v. 28. In that famous prediction of Christ's sufferings (²⁵⁰Isaiah 53:12), it was foretold that he should be numbered with the *transgressors*, because he was made *sin for us*.

5. The spectators, that is, the generality of them, instead of condoling with him in his misery, added to it by insulting over him. Surely never was such an instance of barbarous inhumanity toward the vilest malefactor: but thus the devil showed the utmost rage against him, and thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him.

(1.) Even they that *passed by*, that were no way concerned, *railed on him*, v. 29. If their hearts were so hardened, that their compassions were not moved with such a spectacle, yet they should have thought it enough to have their curiosity gratified; but that will not serve: as if they were not only divested of all humanity, but were devils in human shape, they taunted him, and expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him, and shot thick at him their arrows, even *bitter words*. The chief priests, no doubt, put these sarcasms into their mouths, *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, now, if thou canst, save thyself, and come down from the cross*. They triumph as if now that they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his *destroying the temple*; whereas the *temple* of which *he* spoke, he was now *destroying*, and did within *three days build it up*; and the temple of which *they* spoke, he did by men, that were *his sword* and *his hand*, destroy not many years after. When secure sinners think the danger is over, it is then most ready to seize them: the day of the Lord *comes as a thief* upon those that *deny* his coming, and say, Where is the promise of it? much more upon those that *defy* his coming, and say, *Let him make speed, and hasten his work*.

(2.) Even the chief priests, who, being *taken from among men* and ordained for men, should have compassion even on those that are out of the way, should be tender of those that are suffering and dying (^{<381>}Hebrews 5:1, 2), yet they poured vinegar instead of oil into his wounds, they *talked to the grief* of him whom God had smitten (^{<385>}Psalms 69:26), they *mocked him*, they said, *He saved others*, healed and helped them, but now it appears that it was not by his own power, for *himself he cannot save*. They challenged him to *come down from the cross*, if he could, v. 32. Let them but *see* that, and they would *believe*; whereas they would not believe, when he gave them a more convincing sign than that, when he came up from the grave. These chief priests, one would think, might now have found themselves *other work* to do: if they would not go to do their duty in *the temple*, yet they might have been employed in an office not foreign to their profession; though they would not offer any counsel or comfort to the Lord Jesus, yet they might have given some help to the thieves in their dying moments (the monks and priests in Popish countries are very officious about criminals broken upon the wheel, a death much like that of the cross); but they do not think that their business.

(3.) Even they that were crucified with him, reviled him (v. 32); one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

^{<415>}MARK 15:33-41

THE CRUCIFIXION

Here we have an account of Christ's dying, how his enemies abused him, and God honoured him at his death.

I. There was a thick *darkness over the whole land* (some think over the whole earth), for three hours, from noon till three of the clock. Now the scripture was fulfilled (^{<388>}Amos 8:9), *I will cause the sun to go down at noon*, and *I will darken the earth in the clear day*; and (^{<245>}Jeremiah 15:9), *Her sun is gone down while it is yet day*. The Jews have often demanded of Christ a *sign from heaven*; and now they had one, but such a one as signified the blinding of their eyes. It was a sign of the darkness that was come, and coming, upon the Jewish church and nation. They were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of righteousness, which was now

setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; and what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness? This intimated to them, that the things which belonged to their peace, were now *hid from their eyes*, and that the day of the Lord was at hand, which should be to them a *day of darkness and gloominess*, ^{<391>}Joel 2:1, 2. It was the power of darkness that they were now under, the works of darkness that they were now doing; and such as this should their doom justly be, who *loved darkness rather than light*.

II. Toward the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus, in the agony of his soul, cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* v. 34. The darkness signified the present cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an *offering for sin*. Mr. Fox, in his *Acts and Monuments* (vol. 3, p. 160), tells of one Dr. Hunter, a martyr in queen Mary's time, who, being fastened to the stake, to be burnt, put up this short prayer, *Son of God, shine upon me*; and immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of the dark cloud, so full in his face, that he was forced to look another way, which was very comfortable to him. But our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was denied the light of the sun, when he was in his sufferings, to signifying the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance. And this he complained of more than any thing; he did not complain of his disciples' forsaking him, but of his Father's,

1. Because this *wounded his spirit*; and that is a thing *hard to bear* (^{<394>}Proverbs 18:14); brought the waters into his soul, ^{<395>}Psalms 69:1-3.

2. Because in this especially he was *made sin for us*; our iniquities had deserved *indignation and wrath* upon the soul (^{<398>}Romans 2:8), and therefore, Christ, being made a *sacrifice*, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but bear hard indeed upon him who had lain *in the bosom* of the Father from eternity, and was *always his light*. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes, in extraordinary cases, to consume the sacrifices (as ^{<399>}Leviticus 9:24; ^{<400>}2 Chronicles 7:1; ^{<403>}1 Kings 18:38); and it was always a token of God's acceptance. The fire that should have fallen upon the *sinner*, if God had not been *pacified*, fell upon the *sacrifice*, as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted him from this *loud and bitter cry*. When Paul was to be *offered* as a sacrifice for the *service of saints*, he could *joy and rejoice* (^{<407>}Philippians 2:17); but it is

another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for *the sin of sinners*. Now, at the *sixth hour*, and so to the *ninth*, the *sun was darkened* by an extraordinary eclipse; and if it be true, as some astronomers compute, that in the evening of this day on which Christ died there was an eclipse of the moon, that was natural and expected, in which seven digits of the moon were darkened, and it continued from five o'clock till seven, it is remarkable, and yet further significant of the darkness of the time that then was. When the *sun* shall be *darkened*, the *moon* also shall *not give her light*.

III. Christ's prayer was bantered by them that stood by (v. 35, 36); because he cried, *Eli, Eli*, or (as Mark has it, according to the Syriac dialect) *Eloi, Eloi*, they said, *He calls for Elias*, though they knew very well what he said, and what it signified, *My God, My God*. Thus did they represent him as *praying to saints*, either because he had abandoned God, or God had abandoned him; and hereby they would make him more and more odious to the people. One of them *filled a sponge with vinegar*, and reached it up to him upon a reed; "Let him cool his mouth with that, it is a drink good enough for him," v. 36. This was intended for a further affront and abuse to him; and whoever it was that checked him who did it, did but add to the reproach; "*Let him alone; he has called for Elias: let us see whether Elias will come take him down; and if not, we may conclude that he also hath abandoned him.*"

IV. Christ did again *cry with a loud voice*, and so *gave up the ghost*, v. 37. He was now commending his soul into his Father's hand; and though God is not moved with any *bodily exercise*, yet this loud voice signified the great strength and ardency of affection wherewith he did it; to teach us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to put forth our utmost vigour, and to perform all the duties of religion, particularly that of *self-resignation*, with our whole heart and whole soul; and then, though speech fails, that we cannot *cry with a loud voice*, as Christ did, yet if God be the *strength of the heart*, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly *dead*, for he *gave up the ghost*; his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay.

V. Just at that instant that Christ died upon *mount Calvary*, the veil of the *temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*, v. 38. This bespoke a great deal,

1. Of the terror of the unbelieving Jews; for it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after; it was like the cutting asunder of the *staff of beauty* (for this veil was exceedingly splendid and glorious, ^{<127>}Exodus 26:31), and that was done at the same time when they gave for his price *thirty pieces of silver* (^{<311>}Zechariah 11:10, 12), to *break the covenant which he had made with that people*. Now it was time to cry, *Ichabod, The glory is departed from Israel*. Some think that the story which Josephus relates, of the temple door opening of its own accord, with that voice, *Let us depart hence*, some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, is the same with this; but that is not probable: however, this had the same signification, according to that (^{<354>}Hosea 5:14), *I will tear, and go away*.

2. It bespeaks a great deal of comfort to all believing Christians, for it signifies the consecrating and laying open to us of a *new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*.

VI. The centurion who commanded the detachment which had the oversight of the execution was convinced, and confessed that this Jesus was the *Son of God*, v. 39. One thing that satisfied him, was, that he *so cried out, and gave up the ghost*: that one who was ready to give up the ghost, should be able to cry out so, was very surprising. Of all the sad spectacles of this kind he never observed the like; and that one who had strength to cry so loud, should yet immediately give up the ghost, this also made him wonder; and he said, to the honour of Christ, and the shame of those that abused him, *Truly this man was the Son of God*. But what reason had he to say so? I answer,

1. He had reason to say that he suffered *unjustly*, and had a great deal of wrong done him. Note, He suffered for saying that he was *the Son of God*; and it was true, he did say so, so that if he suffered unjustly, as it was plain by all the circumstances of his suffering that he did, then what he said was true, and he was indeed the *Son of God*.

2. He had reason to say that he was a *favourite of heaven*, and one for whom the almighty power was particularly engaged, seeing how Heaven did him honour at his death, and frowned upon his persecutors. “Surely,” thinks he, “this must be some divine person, highly beloved of God.” This he expresses by such words as denote his eternal generation as God, and his special designation to the office of Mediator, though he meant not so.

Our Lord Jesus, even in the depth of his sufferings and humiliation, was the Son of God, and was declared to be so *with power*.

VII. There were some of his friends, the good women especially, that attended him (v. 40, 41); *There were women looking on afar off*: the men durst not be seen at all, the mob was so very outrageous; *Currenti cede furori* — *Give way to the raging torrent*, they thought, was good counsel now. The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief. Some of these women are here named. *Mary Magdalene* was one; she had been his patient, and owed all her comfort to his power and goodness, which rescued her out of the possession of seven devils, in gratitude for which she thought she could never do enough for him. *Mary* also was there, *the mother of James the little, Jacobus parvus*, so the word is; probably, he was so called because he was, like Zaccheus, little of stature. This *Mary* was the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, sister to the virgin *Mary*. These women had followed Christ *from Galilee*, though they were not required to attend the feast, as the males were; but it is probably that they came, in expectation that his temporal kingdom would now shortly be set up, and big with hopes of preferment for themselves, and their relations under him. It is plain that the mother of Zebedee's children was so (^{<410>}Matthew 20:21); and now to see *him* upon a cross, whom they thought to have seen upon a throne, could not but be a great disappointment to them. Note, Those that follow Christ, in expectation of great things in this world by him, and by the profession of his religion, may probably live to see themselves sadly disappointed.

<415> MARK 15:42-47

THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

We are here attending the funeral of our Lord Jesus, a solemn, mournful funeral. O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it! Observe,

I. How the body of Christ was *begged*. It was, as the dead bodies of malefactors are, at the disposal of the government. Those that hurried him to the cross, designed that he should make *his grave with the wicked*; but God designed he should make it *with the rich* (^{<250>}Isaiah 53:9), and so he did. We are here told,

1. When the body of Christ was begged, in order to its being buried, and why such haste was made with the funeral; *The even was come*, and it was *the preparation*, that is, *the day before the sabbath*, v. 42. The Jews were more strict in the observation of the sabbath than of any other feast; and therefore, though this day was itself a *feast-day*, yet they observed it more religiously as the *eve* of the *sabbath*; when they prepared their houses and tables for the *splendid* and *joyful* solemnizing of the sabbath day. Note, The day before the sabbath should be a day of preparation for the sabbath, not of our houses and tables, but of our hearts, which, as much as possible, should be *freed* from the cares and business of the world, and *fixed*, and put in frame for the service and enjoyment of God. Such work is to be done, and such advantages are to be gained on the sabbath day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it a day before; nay, the whole week should be divided between the improvement of the foregoing sabbath and the preparation for the following sabbath.

2. Who was it that begged the body, and took care for the decent interment of it; it was *Joseph of Arimathea*, who is here called an *honourable counsellor* (v. 43), a person of character and distinction, and in an office of public trust; some think *in the state*, and that he was one of Pilate's privy council; his post rather seems to have been *in the church*, he was one of the *great Sanhedrim* of the Jews, or one of the high priest's council. He was *euschemon bouleutes* — *a counsellor that conducted himself in his place as did become him*. Those are truly honourable, and those only, in place of power and trust, who make conscience of their duty, and whose deportment is agreeable to their preferment. But here is a more shining character put upon him; he was one that *waited for the kingdom of God*, the kingdom of grace on earth, and of glory in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, Those who *wait for the kingdom of God*, and hope for an interest in the privileges of it, must show it by their forwardness to own Christ's cause and interest, even then when it seems to be crushed and run down. Observe, Even among the *honourable counsellors* there were some, there was *one* at least, that waited for the kingdom of God, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this necessary service, when none of Christ's disciples could, or durst, undertake it, having neither purse, nor interest, nor courage, for it. *Joseph went in boldly to Pilate*; though he knew how much it would affront the chief priests, who had loaded him with so much reproach, to see any honour done him, yet he *put on courage*; perhaps at first he was a little

afraid, but *tolmesas* — *taking heart on it*, he determined to show this respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus, let the worst come to the worst.

3. What a surprise it was to Pilate, to hear that he was *dead* (Pilate, perhaps, expecting that he would have saved himself, and come down from the cross), especially that he was *already dead*, that one who seemed to have more than ordinary vigour, should so soon yield to death. Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous; for from first to last his name was called *Wonderful*. Pilate doubted (so some understand it) whether he was yet dead or no, fearing lest he should be imposed upon, and the body should be *taken down alive*, and recovered, whereas the sentence was, as with us, to hang *till the body be dead*. He therefore called the centurion, his own officer, and asked him *whether he had been any while dead* (v. 44), whether it was so long since they perceived any sign of life in him, any breath or motion, that they might conclude he was dead past recall. The centurion could assure him of this, for he had particularly observed how *he gave up the ghost*, v. 39. There was a special providence in it, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say that he was buried alive, and so to take away the truth of his resurrection; and so fully was this determined, that the objection was never started. Thus the truth of Christ gains confirmation, sometimes, even from its enemies.

II. How the body of Christ was *buried*. Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. It was a wonder the chief priests were not too quick for him, and had not first begged the body of Pilate, to expose it and drag it about the streets, but that remainder of their wrath did God restrain, and gave that invaluable prize to Joseph, who knew how to value it; and the hearts of the priests were so influenced, that they did not oppose it. *Sit divus, modo non sit vivus* — *We care not for his being adored, provided he be not revived*.

1. Joseph bought *fine linen* to wrap the body in, though in such a case old linen that had been worn might have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be *generous*, and to serve him with the *best* that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

2. He *took down* the body, mangled and macerated as it was, and *wrapt it in the linen* as a treasure of great worth. Our Lord Jesus hath commanded himself to be delivered to us sacramentally in the ordinance of the Lord's

supper, which we should receive in such a manner as may best express our love to him who loved us and died for us.

3. He *laid it in a sepulchre* of his own, in a private place. We sometimes find it spoken of in the story of the kings of Judah, as a slur upon the memory of the wicked kings, that they were not buried in the *sepulchres of the kings*; our Lord Jesus, though he did no evil but much good, and to him was given the throne of his father David, yet was buried in the graves of the common people, for it was not in this world, but in the other, that *his rest was glorious*. The sepulchre belonged to Joseph. Abraham when he had no other possession in the land of Canaan, yet had a burying-place, but Christ had not so much as that. This sepulchre was *hewn out of a rock*, for Christ died to make the grave a *refuge* and shelter to the saints, and being hewn out of a rock, it is a *strong* refuge. *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* Christ himself is a *hiding place* to his people, that is, as *the shadow of a great rock*.

4. He *rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre*, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury. When Daniel was put into the lion's den, a stone was laid to the mouth of it to keep him in, as here to the door of Christ's sepulchre, but neither of them could keep off the angels' visits to the prisoners.

5. Some of the good women attended the funeral, and *beheld where he was laid*, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it now. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should *know of his sepulchre* (⁴⁵⁰⁶Deuteronomy 34:6), because the respect of the people towards his person were to die with him; but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to *rise again*: and the care taken of his body, bespeaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body the church. Even when it seems to be a dead body, and as a valley full of dry bones, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whose dust there is a covenant in force which shall not be forgotten. Our meditations on Christ's burial should lead us to think of our own, and should help to make the grave familiar to us, and so to render that bed easy which we must shortly make in the darkness. Frequent thoughts of it would not only take off the dread and terror of it,

but quicken us, since the *graves* are always ready for us, to get ready for the graves, ~~STL~~ Job 17:1.