

Jesus Is Crucified

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus was rejected, mocked, and forsaken as He was unjustly condemned to die, but He gave up His life willingly on the cross to glorify the Father and bring us to Him.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Mark 15:6-47

The early Christians could have chosen plenty of symbols to represent Jesus and the gospel: the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at His baptism; hands as a symbol of Jesus' healing touch; the boat from which He calmed a storm; a royal scepter as a symbol of the kingdom He came to proclaim; the mountain on which He was transfigured in glory; palm branches as a symbol of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Any of these could have been worthy symbols of Jesus' life and ministry, but instead, the early Christians chose a cross as their most important symbol, representing Jesus' sacrificial death, a centerpiece of the gospel.



What are some ways you have seen the cross used to represent the Christian faith?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus is the rejected Savior of the world (Mark 15:6,11-15).

⁶ At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested ... ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead. ¹² Pilate asked them again, “Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews?” ¹³ Again they shouted, “Crucify him!” ¹⁴ Pilate said to them, “Why? What has he done wrong?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” ¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Before the cross was a spiritual symbol for the way of Jesus, it was a political one for the power of Rome, a symbol to flex their might and say, “Cross us and we will *cross* you.” To illustrate the point, Barabbas, a convicted murderer and insurrectionist, was on death row, scheduled to be executed by crucifixion the next day. But when given a choice between crucifying guilty Barabbas or innocent Jesus, the crowd requested a pardon for Barabbas—Jesus was to die in Barabbas’s place.



What are some reasons people reject Jesus as the Savior of the world?

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

Aspects of the Atonement: Christ’s _____ death on our behalf stands at the center of His atoning work. Without this work, there is no _____. While this substitutionary aspect is central to the atonement, every aspect of the atonement should inspire gratitude, _____, and a desire for _____, because it is only through Christ that we are reconciled.

Point 2: Jesus is the mocked King of kings (Mark 15:16-20).

¹⁶ The soldiers led him away into the palace (that is, the governor's residence) and called the whole company together. ¹⁷ They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage. ²⁰ After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him.

They led him out to crucify him.

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



What are some ways professing believers might be guilty of mocking Jesus?

Only the spiritual eyes of faith can see what's really going on through this mockery of Jesus. The soldiers and many others mocked the idea of Jesus as a king, but the irony is that their mocking actually served to reveal Jesus' glory as the Messiah-King sent by God to save sinners (Mark 10:33-34). It was through His suffering at the hands of sinners that this King would rise again and reign over all things. Truly He is "the King of the Jews" and the King of the world—He is the King of kings!



What is revealed to be true of followers of Jesus when they are mocked?



Voices from Church History

"When they 'clothed him in purple,' it was in mockery, yet ironically it was a fulfillment of prophecy, for he indeed was a king, so even their parody indirectly served divine revelation. Even though they did it in a spirit of derision, still they did it, and his regal dignity was by that symbolically heralded. So, likewise, though it was with thorns they crowned him, it was still a crown."¹

—Cyril of Jerusalem
(c. 313-386)

Point 3: Jesus is the forsaken Son of God (Mark 15:33-39).

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

³⁴ And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

³⁵ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.”

³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

³⁷ Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

No father should have to watch his child suffer and die. Yet God the Father sent His one and only Son into this world for this purpose, that through Jesus’ own broken and bruised body, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the grave, He would save the world from sin and death. On the cross, in the dark, Jesus experienced the cup of God’s wrath against sin in our place, and it left Him feeling abandoned by His Father. Yet through that experience, He earned our forgiveness, which we receive as a gift by grace through faith in Him.

Sin and Death: The ultimate consequence for _____ is death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Spiritual death, the _____ of a person from God, continues in a permanent state when someone dies apart from the _____ work of Christ, who defeated death through His own death on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

The minute Jesus died on the cross, the temple’s thick curtain was mysteriously torn in two, confirming what Jesus had been proclaiming in His final weeks—that He is the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. And not just for the Jews but the Gentiles as well. In all the Gospel of Mark, the only human to state explicitly Jesus’ divine identity as “the Son of God” was one of the Gentile centurions at His crucifixion. Jesus breathed His last and laid down His life as the Savior of the world.



What are some ways believers can honor the Son of God who gave His life for us?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Mark 15:6-15

Pilate offered to release one of two prisoners, as was his custom during the Passover festival. To his surprise, and likely disappointment, the crowd asked for the freedom of Barabbas, a murderous insurrectionist, and for the crucifixion of Jesus, a man he could not seem to find much fault with.

Pilate reluctantly released Barabbas and delivered the Messiah to be crucified. Imagine how unbelievable the news must have been for the murderous convict when he found out his scheduled execution was canceled, that a man named Jesus would be crucified in his place, and that he was now free to go.

For those of us who know Christ as Lord, the news of deliverance means so much more than escaping death; it means having a new life in Christ and eternity of enjoying our Lord together.

We might be tempted to think we would never be guilty of preferring Barabbas to Christ, but in some sense, that is what we do when we choose sin over Christ. Instead, let us never stop remembering all that Jesus suffered on our behalf so we can endure and never give up running the race of faith.



Ask yourself Pilate's question: What shall I do with the Man called the Christ, the king of the Jews?



Voices from Church History

"He is the One who, although he was silent in his passion, will not be silent finally in the day of reckoning. He is our God, even if unrecognized. He is already known among the faithful and all who believe. When he comes manifesting himself in his second coming, he will not be silent. For although he was formerly hidden in humility, he will come manifested in power."³

—Cyprian (d. 258)

Day 2: Read Mark 15:16-20

A whole company of soldiers took Jesus away to their private quarters so they could beat Him and ridicule Him further. They dressed Him in royal colors, crowned Him with thorns, and then mocked Him as the so-called “King of the Jews.”

Consider the scandal of all this: This mockery was delivered by mere men against the Maker of men! Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the sovereign Lord over all, the eternal Word of life, the Maker and Sustainer of all. Yet here we see Him lacerated, bruised, and bloodied, treated worse than a criminal, and mocked when He should be worshiped.

The result was complete humiliation and degradation. The goal was not just to break Him down physically but emotionally and mentally as well.

Jesus was flogged, mocked, and crucified so we could be made whole and reconciled with God (Isa. 53:4-6).



In what ways is Jesus mocked today?

Day 3: Read Mark 15:21-32

Mark highlighted the mocking of Jesus more than any other Gospel writer. Jesus was mocked by soldiers. He was mocked by passersby. He was mocked by the two thieves occupying crosses next to Him.

Ironically, we still find truths in their mocking. For example, they mocked Him for saying the temple would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. But what they didn't realize was that when Jesus said He would raise the temple in three days, He was using the physical temple as a metaphor for His body, which is the true temple of God.

Furthermore, through His cross and resurrection, Jesus would fulfill everything that the temple prefigured. Through His death, there would be no more need for temple sacrifices because God and sinner would be reconciled through Him. Through the cross, the presence of God is no longer found in a place but in a person—Jesus.



How can believers turn the mocking of Jesus into an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus?

Day 4: Read Mark 15:33-41

For centuries before Jesus, the glory of God was considered to be veiled in the holy of holies, in the center of the Jewish temple. Now with the sacrificial death of Jesus, the glory of God is accessible to all who come to Him through faith in Jesus. The dwelling place of God is no longer in a place but a person (Jesus) and His people (the church). The old order is done; the new order is here.

Each year, only one person in all of Judea was allowed to enter the holy of holies, and that only on one day of the year and only with the blood of a sacrifice (Lev. 16). But with the holy and perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the only sacrifice that could actually stand in our place and atone for our sins, the veil and the sacrifices are no longer needed. All that is needed is faith in Jesus, the Son of God, who laid down His life to save us.



What reasons do you have for believing Jesus is the Son of God sent for your salvation?

Day 5: Read Mark 15:42-47

Imagine what it must have been like for Joseph of Arimathea, and any other disciples present, to remove Jesus' body from the cross. To pull the nails out of His hands—hands that once healed and helped many. To free His feet from the cross—feet that took Him all over the countryside, and the sea, teaching, healing, and performing miracles. To wrap His broken body—the very embodiment of the love of God. In that moment, Jesus' disciples would have wrestled with the hard question: Was this really the Messiah?

If the story ended there, then we could know He wasn't, of course. Even though the centurion thought the way Jesus died was significant enough to call Him the Son of God, it is Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, according to the Scriptures, that assures us of His identity and the success of His mission (1 Cor. 15).

Jesus was beaten, flogged, pierced, wrapped in linen, and buried. He was dead; everyone knew it. But three days later...



How should Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross cause us to think about death for ourselves and others?

UNIT 25

SESSION 1

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SESSION 2

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3. David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1989), 101.

SESSION 3

1. Amanda Bible Williams, in *She Reads Truth*, by Raechel Myers and Amanda Bible Williams (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 6–7.
2. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 107.
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2. Athanasius, “Homily on the Resurrection of Lazarus,” quoted in *John 11–21*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVb in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 13.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001), 334.

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SESSION 2

1. Andrew Wilson, *Unbreakable: What the Son of God Said About the Word of God* (IOPublishing, 2014) [eBook].
2. Kim Huat Tan, *Mark*, in *New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015) [Wordsearch].
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3. Anne Askew, *The Latter Examination of Anne Askew (1547)*, ed. John Bale; quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
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SESSION 4

1. See “Diamonds Unearthed,” by Cate Lineberry, *Smithsonian Magazine* (December 2006), www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/diamonds-uneearthed-141629226.
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