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Mark 15:1 - 15:32



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a comprehensive examination of Mark 15:1-32, which describes how Jesus underwent six trials, was ridiculed, beaten, and ultimately crucified while two robbers hung beside him. Jewish leaders falsely accused Jesus of inciting insurrection against Rome and, despite Pilate finding him innocent, the crowd pressured the governor to have him executed. Despite this, Steve highlights how Jesus chose not to save himself even though he had the power to do so, fulfilling the prophecies about his crucifixion in Isaiah 53. The passage also touches on the release of Barabbas and the promise of salvation to one of the robbers on the cross.

Transcript

Well, now we come to Mark chapter 15 where, if you recall, in chapter 14 Jesus had been arrested and taken to the Sanhedrin to an ad hoc meeting in the middle of the night where they sought some way to condemn him according to their law. They wanted to have some modicum of righteousness in their verdict, so they wanted to really find something wrong with him. That was their first mistake.

There's nothing wrong to find with him, but they really sought. They tried to bring in witnesses who were hostile to him, but even their witnesses didn't agree with each other. They couldn't find two witnesses to agree on one accusation against him.

So the high priest himself, Caiaphas, finally stepped down and cross-examined Jesus and adjured him in the name of God to testify whether he was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, the Son of the Blessed, as he put it in Mark. And Jesus, under adjuration, did admit that he is, and then they called that blasphemy. So they were glad to get something on him.

Now, was it blasphemy? Well, if a man is not God and he says he's God, I guess that's blasphemy. That's not the technical meaning of blasphemy. Blasphemy is really where you speak evil of God, where you curse God or slander God or speak disrespectfully of God.

I suppose for a man to say that he is God is speaking disrespectfully about God because

it lowers God to being like a man. But Jesus was God, so obviously he was not guilty of blasphemy. This, by the way, I didn't mention at the time, but the trial before the Sanhedrin in the middle of the night when he was arrested was the second trial.

He actually went before Annas, the high priest, briefly. We don't know what happened in detail there, but I just want you to be aware of how many times Jesus stood trial in the course of one night and one morning, because he actually stood trial six times between the time he was arrested and the time that he was crucified. He had three hearings separately before Jewish tribunals and three before Roman tribunals.

And the first one is only recorded in John's gospel, and therefore we pass over it because we didn't come to it in Mark. But in John chapter 18, we read of Jesus' arrest in verse 12. John 18, 12 says, Then the detachment of the troops and the captain of the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him, and they led him away to Annas first.

For he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who had given counsel to the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die for the people. So he goes and stands before Annas, but that is not the Sanhedrin.

It's like they're displaying their victim to the high priest, the older high priest, apparently to get his approval and his pleasure. But it says in verse 24, John 18, 24, Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. And so Jesus was actually questioned briefly in verses 19 through 23 by Annas, and then he was sent to Caiaphas.

It was Caiaphas who headed up the Sanhedrin in the middle of the night that we read about in Mark chapter 14. And it was Caiaphas who cross-examined Jesus. So he stood before Annas and was questioned briefly.

Then he was sent bound to Caiaphas, and that's where he was condemned for blasphemy. And then they had to take counsel again after the breaking of the day. We see that in chapter 15, verse 1. Immediately in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.

And they bound Jesus, led him away, and delivered him to Pilate. Now, verse 1 covers, in a single verse, another tribunal. And this was after they had already condemned him of blasphemy in the previous night.

They met again after daybreak in order to figure out what charges to bring against him to Pilate. Now, the Romans, when they had conquered the region about a hundred years before this, had allowed the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, to have a large measure of autonomy in deciding the internal affairs of the religious community. The Romans didn't want to mess with that.

The Romans didn't consider they had any expertise about the Jewish religion and their laws, and they were allowed to practice their religion. So, the Romans allowed the

Sanhedrin, the religious court, to carry out law enforcement according to the Jewish law, with one exception. The Romans did not give the court the right to execute anybody.

Which was problematic for the Jews because a lot of their laws required capital punishment. But if the Jews found somebody guilty of something worthy of capital punishment, they could not kill them. They had to turn them over to the Romans and persuade the Romans to kill them, to execute them.

Now, there were exceptions. Not legal exceptions, but rather mob exceptions. Like when Stephen was stoned, for example.

That was a mob scene. That was done spontaneously, and then the crowd dispersed probably before the Romans could show up. And, you know, it would be hard to arrest any particular person for that because a bunch of people were stoning Stephen.

But when it comes to a crucifixion or a planned execution, the Jews would not have the permission to do that. They didn't have the permission to stone someone either, but they did that illegally. So, they needed to get Pilate to agree to kill him.

The problem was, Pilate was Roman, a pagan. The charge on which Jesus had been condemned by the Sanhedrin was one of blasphemy against Yahweh. What would Pilate care about that? Pilate probably liked blaspheming Yahweh just in his spare time, just to bug the Jews.

He certainly wouldn't see it as something to crucify a man over. In fact, he might see it as something to befriend a man over. If he's, you know, blaspheming the God of Israel, any enemy of the God of Israel is a friend of mine, if you're a Pilate and you're a Roman.

And so, they knew that they couldn't just come to Pilate straight out and say, well, this man blasphemed our God and our law requires that he be put to death, but we can't do it, so you do it for us. Pilate, they figured, would not be sympathetic toward that. So, the reason they gathered at dawn was to figure out what kind of other charges they could bring against Jesus that would impress Pilate that Jesus was a bad person and needed to be done away with.

Now, you realize what they're up against, because Pilate didn't like these Jews. The Romans and the Jews did not like each other at all. And Pilate and these chief priests were not friends by any means.

If anything, they liked to needle each other, make each other mad to the point where Pilate would even send troops into the temple and wipe out Jews as they worshiped there. We read of a case like that in Luke chapter 13, that Pilate just slaughtered some Jews as they were worshiping in the temple, just to show that he could get away with it, just to make them angry. He didn't like them, and they didn't like him.

So, if the Jews come to Pilate with a Jewish prisoner and say, we want you to kill this guy, Pilate says, now, wait a minute, why are you Jews wanting me to kill a fellow Jew of yours? What's the deal here? Well, they had to come up with some kind of charge that sounded realistic, that sounded like it would be offensive to them and to Pilate, and there weren't many such. What they came up with was they accused him of causing insurrection and of commanding people to not pay tribute to Caesar. That's what they came up with.

Well, that was something that Pilate should be concerned about, but it just wasn't true, and Pilate wasn't going to buy it, as we see. But, you see, what they came with was that we can say this, Jesus said he's the king of the Jews. Now, that should bother Pilate, because the king of the Jews was Rome, the Roman Emperor.

And for some Jewish guy to say he's the king of the Jews sounds like a political statement. And so, they brought that against Jesus when they brought him to Pilate. So, it says in verse 1, they delivered him to Pilate.

Verse 2, then Pilate asked him, are you the king of the Jews? Apparently, that was the charge they brought. It doesn't tell us their words to Pilate here. Although it does in John's gospel, and John's gospel is much more complete in some of this narrative of what happened in Pilate's court.

If you looked over at John 18, keep your finger, of course, in Mark, but in John 18 we have some interesting dialogue between Caiaphas and Pilate here. Or at least between the Jews and Pilate. It says in verse 28, John 18, 28, Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium, and it was early morning.

But they themselves did not go into the praetorium, that praetorium was the governor's headquarters in Jerusalem, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. If they go into a Gentile's house, they thought they would be defiled and couldn't finish eating the week-long Passover feast. Pilate then went out to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man? And they answered and said to him, If you were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you.

Now, it's quite clear from their answer that Pilate was snide, and Pilate was skeptical. Like, what are you bringing this man to me for? Like, suggesting, I doubt that he's done anything that I'm going to be concerned about. You know, why would you bring a Jewish person to me, asking me to do something to him? Why don't you handle him yourself? And they said, well, we wouldn't have brought him to you if he wasn't a criminal, so you can just give up any ideas that he's innocent.

If he was not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you. Then Pilate said to them, you take him and judge him according to your law. Therefore, the Jews said to him, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

And John comments in verse 32, that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spoke signifying by what death he would die. What's that mean? It means that when Jesus said that he would be lifted up, in, I think it's in the 12th chapter of John, he speaks about when he's lifted up, he'll draw all men to him, and John said this he spoke predicting the means by which he would die. It means he'd be lifted up on a cross.

Now, John sees this as a fulfillment. That Pilate would be the one to order his execution, which would be a cross. The Jews wouldn't use crosses.

The Romans used crosses. So that the Jews were unable to put him to death by their method, which would have been stoning, ends up putting it into the Roman hands to do it, which would be crucifying, which fulfills Jesus' prediction that he would be lifted up and crucified. Then Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him, are you the king of the Jews? Now, this is the question that we have come to in chapter 15 of Mark, verse 2. Then Pilate asked him, are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus answered and said to him, it is as you say.

Now, in the Greek, both in Matthew and in Mark, actually all three, and Luke too, the words here, it is as you say, in the Greek are only two words. You say. You say.

He answered and said to him, you say. Now, there are some italicized words here because you say doesn't sound like really a complete thought. And so the new King James and the new American Standard and the NIV and I think the, and some others, add the words, it is as.

So it is as you say. In other words, yes I am. The King James actually added different words.

And had him say, you say that I am. Which is a different kind of statement. You say that I am.

That's how the King James has Jesus answer him. But, from the Greek, it's just you say. But all modern translations seem to think that he was saying, it is as you say.

Or, like we say, you said it. And, interestingly, Jesus does not say I am in so many words here. It's rather he says, well, you said it, not me.

You know, he's watching himself. There's probably a stenographer keeping track of everything he says. And so, he doesn't say, I am the King of the Jews.

He doesn't say it outright at this point. But, the way he answered in John's Gospel, in John 18, was a little more evasive, even than that. In John 18, in verse 33, Pilate said, Are you the King of the Jews? In verse 34, Jesus answered him, Are you speaking for yourself on this? Or did others tell you about me? In other words, are you interested in this for your own sake? Or are you just repeating something you heard, that I'm the King of the

Jews? And Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? In other words, why would I care if you're the King of the Jews? What's that got to do with me? I'm not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me.

What have you done? And Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now, my kingdom is not from here.

Pilate therefore said to him, Are you a King then? And Jesus answered, You say that I am a King. For this cause I was born. And for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. Now you can see that where Pilate says, Oh, you are a King then. When Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate said, Oh, so you admit you're a King? And Jesus said, You say that I'm a King. That is no doubt what is summarized in Mark chapter 15 and Jesus' answer given at the end of verse 2. He said, Are you a King of the Jews? He said, You say. It is as you say.

So, there is more dialogue going on. Mark obviously has compressed this considerably and has just given the ultimate answer that Jesus gave to the question rather than all the dialogue that went on between the question and the answer. John's Gospel gives us that expanded information.

Now, Mark 15 verse 3, The chief priests accused him of many things, but he answered them nothing. Then Pilate asked him again, saying, Do you answer nothing? See how many things they testify against you? But Jesus still answered nothing. So that Pilate marveled.

Now, somewhere in the midst of these few verses, verses 2 through 5, there was an interruption that Mark does not record, but Luke does. Because it's found in Luke chapter 23 and it's rather interesting because this is how we know that Jesus stood before three different Roman tribunals. Twice before Pilate and once before Herod, as it turned out.

And how that happened is from Luke 23 verse 5. It says, Let me see here. Okay, see, here we go. Verse 4 says, Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no fault with this man.

That's right after Jesus said, It is as you say. In Luke 23. So there's a parallel to that.

And Pilate goes out and says to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no fault with this man. But they were more fierce, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. Now, that statement of theirs must be what Mark is referring to in Mark 15.3 when it says, The chief priests accused him of many things, but he answered nothing.

Okay, so we're harmonizing things here. Mark tells us that Jesus said, It is as you say, or simply you say. And then he just tells us the chief priests accused him of many things.

But in between those things, Luke tells us that Pilate decided Jesus wasn't guilty of anything, went and told the chief priests, and that led them to make these additional accusations. But in the course of making them, Luke 23 says, they said, He's causing trouble throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. Now, that was a slip of the tongue that they should not have made if they cared to speed things up.

Because Pilate was already of the opinion that Jesus was innocent, and that he was not going to get out of this easily because the Jews were adamant. They had a crowd there. If he was going to turn Jesus loose, they were going to be upset with him.

He wasn't even sure why they were upset with him. And he was apparently positively impressed with Jesus. But Jesus was like a hot potato to him.

He'd rather not have to deal with it. And so when he heard the word Galilee, that Jesus started in Galilee, Pilate answers and says, When he heard of Galilee, he asked if the men were from Galilee, if he was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that Jesus belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, which was Galilee, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time, because of the feast, you see.

Herod had come down for the feast. Herod lived up in Galilee, and Pilate was, you know, he got a brilliant idea. I don't want to deal with this Jesus guy.

They just said, Galilee, he's a Galilean. Herod, his king, is right in town for the feast. How convenient.

I'll just let Herod worry about this. And so he sent him also to Herod. It says, Now when Herod saw Jesus, verse 8 of Luke 23, he was exceedingly glad, for he had desired for a long time to see him, because he had heard many things about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him.

So he wanted to see a show. He didn't care anything about Jesus, except that he heard that he could do amazing things. And thought, well, this will be my chance to get him to do something for me.

Then he questioned Jesus with many words, to give it some semblance of a court trial. But Jesus answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Jesus.

Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Jesus with contempt and mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate. Because Jesus wouldn't speak, and he wouldn't do any miracles. That very day, Pilate and Herod became friends with each other.

For before that, they had been at enmity with each other. It doesn't explain why they became friends. Pilate was hoping that Herod would take this off his hands, and Herod sent him back to Pilate.

I don't know why that would encourage the friendship. Except that, in a sense, once two people have failed to stand by Jesus when they were given the chance to vindicate him, to speak up for him, both of them had reason to believe Jesus was innocent, and they could have said so, and they could have released him. But both guys had failed in that duty, and they both kind of caved into the pressure of the Jews rather than to release Jesus, which either of them could have done.

I guess the rejection of Jesus, so to speak, would be the thing that they had in common, even though they hadn't been friends previously. So, it would appear that as we get back to Mark 15, it was after verse 3 that Jesus was sent to Herod, but then he was sent back to Pilate, and so we pick up again Jesus' third Roman trial, the second time before Pilate. Verse 4, Then Pilate asked him again, saying, Do you answer nothing? See how many things these testify against you? But Jesus answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

Now, at the feast, Pilate was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists. They had committed murder in the insurrection.

Luke also mentions that he was an insurrectionist and a murderer. John, in John 18.40, says that Barabbas was a robber, which is a little different than an insurrectionist or a murderer, but apparently the man was guilty of all those things. Very possibly he was a robber by trade, and also became involved once in insurrection, where some people had been killed.

So he was a robber, but he was jailed for something else. He was jailed for insurrection and murder. Now, Barabbas, in the parallel in Matthew 27.16, interestingly, the Alexandrian text refers to his name as Jesus Barabbas.

Now, Jesus was a very common name in Israel in those days. It was the name Joshua, and many people had named their children after Old Testament heroes, and Joshua was one of them. Jesus just means Joshua, and so a lot of parents had named their kids by that name.

Just like in Mexico, there's lots of people who are named Jesus, apparently for the same reason, except that people are naming them after Jesus of Nazareth, rather than Joshua. But this man's name apparently was Jesus, if the Alexandrian text is to be trusted in Matthew 27.16. Jesus Barabbas. What's interesting about that is the name Barabbas.

Abbas is from the word Abba, father. And Bar means son of. That's when Jesus referred to Peter as Simon Bar-Jonah, means Simon the son of Jonah.

Bar-Ptolemy means son of Ptolemy. Bar-Ptolemy was one of the disciples. It means son of Ptolemy.

Barabbas means son of a father. Jesus, son of a father, was the name of this man. Not son of the father.

Jesus, the son of the father, actually was condemned, and Barabbas, the son of a father, was released in his place. It's just kind of interesting the meaning of the name, and its closeness, as it were, to the name of Jesus and the identity of Jesus, and what is meant by the name. Now it says that Barabbas there was chained with his fellow insurrectionists, because they'd committed murder and insurrection.

Now I don't know if that means that they were shackled in prison, or if they had recently been arrested. They had not even been taken to jail yet. They were just standing there in chains.

And so they came to the attention of the court as possibly somebody to release instead of Jesus. Or to, I should say, the Jews saw him as somebody to release instead of Jesus. Because Pilate, apparently, each year at Passover, just as a goodwill gesture, and Pilate didn't do many of those, that he released one prisoner of the Jews that had been arrested.

So the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just that, as he'd always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priest had handed him over because of envy. Now I'm not sure exactly what the connection is between, you know, he knew that the Jews had turned him over because of envy, and him saying, Do you want me to release the king of the Jews? I think probably it means that he knew they didn't like Jesus.

He knew they envied him. And therefore, he was kind of rubbing it in their face that he was calling Jesus the king of the Jews. It does appear that Pilate liked to call Jesus the king of the Jews in front of the Jews, because it irked them.

Remember when Jesus was crucified, Pilate put a sign over Jesus' head that says the king of the Jews. And the Jews came to him and said, Don't say king of the Jews, say he said he was the king of the Jews. And Pilate said, What I've written, I've written.

I'm just going to leave it like that. Because he knew it bothered the Jews to refer to Jesus as the king of the Jews. By this time, anyway, he had been beaten, according to John's gospel.

Now, Mark records him being beaten in verses 16 through 20 at the end of the trial, after he's delivered over to be crucified. But John's gospel tells us that earlier in the trial, Pilate had decided to scourge Jesus, hoping that scourging him would be enough to satisfy the blood lust of the Jews so that they'd be satisfied to let Jesus go with only a

scourging. Because Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus.

And so Jesus had earlier been scourged and given a crown of thorns and put a purple robe on, according to John's gospel, and then came back to Pilate. And that's when Pilate said to the people, Behold the man. Most scholars believe that Jesus was looking pretty bad, bloody and beaten and so forth, and that Pilate hoped that the Jews would have sympathy on Jesus and say, Listen, isn't that enough? Do you really want me to do more to this man? Why don't we just let him go now? Because Pilate did say, I'll scourge him and let him go.

But then the people kept crying for Jesus' crucifixion. Now, Mark has Jesus scourged after the trial's over. So apparently the same soldiers put the crown of thorns on him again afterward and beat him some more.

But the point here is that Jesus was looking pretty bad. Didn't look very regal. You know, bloody and beaten and wearing a crown of thorns.

And Pilate says, This is the King of the Jews. Shall I release the King of the Jews to you? And he said it in order to needle them, in order to make them angry, because he knew they didn't like Jesus. They delivered him because of envy.

Now, how did he know that? I mean, was he just a shrewd judge of character? Possibly. I mean, he was a ranking officer. He may have come up through the ranks because of being able to read a man or read the motives in people.

Some people just have those intuitions more than others. Or was it that he knew about Jesus somewhat before Jesus was ever brought to him? The Bible doesn't say that he did, but I have every reason to believe that Pilate had a file on Jesus before the Sanhedrin ever brought Jesus to his attention. Because Jesus was one of those people that the Romans would worry about in many cases because he had crowds following him and many people proclaimed him the Messiah as recently as five days earlier.

He had ridden into Jerusalem, the town that Pilate lived in, riding on a donkey with people waving palm branches and saying he's the son of David and he's bringing in the kingdom of David. That suggestion would be threatening to the Romans, generally speaking. They were always on the lookout for people who pretended to be the Messiah because the Messiahs tended to raise revolutions against Rome and then the Romans had to go and crush the revolutions.

They always succeeded in doing so. They had killed many false messiahs before Jesus and they would kill many more in the years following Jesus' time. What's interesting is that Pilate didn't have any interest in killing Jesus even though right under his nose Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey with people proclaiming him the Messiah.

You'd think that would threaten the Romans. But I believe that the reason Pilate didn't do

anything about it was that he already knew something about Jesus. Remember Jesus had been speaking publicly in the temple to great crowds year by year at all the festivals.

I believe that sometime much earlier in Jesus' ministry his activities had been reported probably to Pilate when he was in Jerusalem. He looked like a troublemaker or looked like potential trouble at least and I think they had watched him. I think they had investigated him and I think they knew that he wasn't a troublemaker to them.

I think Pilate knew more than the disciples did that Jesus was not a political guy. But that the Jews were jealous of him and envious of him because of his popularity. You see, if Pilate's first exposure to Jesus was when they brought this criminal to him and a total stranger to Pilate it doesn't seem like he'd be able to know that the Jews were envious of Jesus.

I mean what could he see about the man that they'd be envious of? But if he knew of Jesus as a popular figure one that some people proclaimed to be the Messiah but one who was not very friendly with the Pharisees and the chief priests and so forth Pilate might have borne a little sympathy toward him because, you know, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. And if Jesus was hated by the Sanhedrin Pilate might have actually just realized well, he's no threat to me then. But it's interesting that Pilate was so generous toward Jesus and actually wanted to release him.

It's not like the Romans wouldn't kill people at a drop of a hat if they wanted to. But Pilate was impressed with Jesus. Besides that, we're told that his wife sent him a message on Jesus on trial.

She said, I've been troubled by many things in a dream about this righteous man have nothing to do with him. And Pilate and the Romans were very superstitious about dreams and being, you know, omens from the gods and so forth. So Pilate had his wife's warning that she'd had a dream.

He was impressed with Christ's demeanor. He was probably impressed with the fact that Jews didn't like him. That meant Jesus was probably one of the good guys as far as the Romans were concerned.

And so he was willing to scourge Jesus but he didn't want to crucify him. He kept, you know, putting that off. And he only finally caved in because of what they said later on.

And that was that Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews. And that would be against Caesar. It says in verse 11, But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he should rather release Barabbas to them.

And Pilate answered and said to them again, What do you want me to do with him who is called the king of the Jews? So they cried out again, Crucify him! And Pilate said to them, Why? What evil has he done? They had not been able to convince Pilate that Jesus had

really done anything wrong. And he was pretty convinced that Jesus hadn't. At least they hadn't heard any charges yet that were serious charges of criminal action.

I mean, he had asked Jesus about this charge of being king of the Jews. See, that was the main charge. He said he's the king of the Jews.

And Pilate had asked that and Jesus said, Well, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom was of this world, my servants would have fought. But my kingdom is not of this world, so they don't fight.

And so he knew that Jesus was a pacifist. He was not a revolutionary. He wasn't the king in the sense that Rome would be concerned about.

And so he thought, Okay, that charge is not going to fly with me. What other thing has he done wrong? What has he done wrong that I should crucify him? And it says, They just cried out more loudly, Crucify him! So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them and delivered Jesus after he scourged him to be crucified. That scourging had happened earlier, according to John's Gospel, John 19.1. Now, it says, Pilate wanting to gratify the crowd.

Well, why did he want to gratify the crowd? Well, maybe he just didn't want to ride on his hands. But John's Gospel tells us more about what influenced him. Because it says, John 19.12 tells us what really influenced Pilate to give Jesus over to be crucified.

In John 19.12 it says, From then on, Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.

As if the Jews gave a wit about Caesar's well-being. Pilate would know they're being hypocritical. But there's a veiled threat here.

There's a veiled threat of blackmail. You know, Caesar would not like to hear about you releasing a criminal who claims to be a king. That sounds pretty subversive to me.

And if Caesar would somehow hear about this, it probably wouldn't go well for you. I don't think he'd view you as one of his friends. Now, petty government officials in the Roman Empire didn't want Caesar suspecting them of disloyalty in anything.

It was hard to be secure in the Roman ranks. Because anything that could make the Caesar think you weren't totally loyal could get you removed from office or worse. Pilate himself had been appointed as the governor there in Palestine because it was kind of a punishment.

Romans didn't want to be put in over the administration of Palestine because the Jews were so ungovernable. They were so riotous and revolutionary and so stubborn. And so it

seems that Pilate had already come into some measure of disfavor in order to be assigned that particular post.

And now, for them to suggest you're not a friend of Caesar if you let this man go, it was blackmail, really. And it says in verse 13, When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat him in the judgment seat in a place that is called the pavement, that in Hebrew, Gavatha. Now it was the preparation day of the Passover, at about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews, Behold your king.

And they cried out away with him, Crucify him. And Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your king? And the chief priest answered, We have no king but Caesar. So he delivered him to them to be crucified.

Because of their professed loyalty to Caesar and their suggestion that if he didn't crucify Jesus, it would make him look like he's not very loyal to Caesar. And that could not go well for him. So he finally decided to gratify them.

According to Mark 15, 15, Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them and delivered Jesus after he scourged them to be crucified. Now we read of this second, it must have been the second scourging of Jesus. In verse 16, Then the soldiers led him away to the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison, and they clothed him with purple, and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck him on the head with a reed and spat on him, and bowing the knee, they worshipped him.

And when they had mocked him, they took the purple off him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. Now these guys didn't have anything at all against Jesus. These were Roman soldiers.

He was just a common prisoner to them. They didn't have, they weren't persecuting him for any religious reasons. To them, he was just a condemned man.

And remember when Jesus prayed for the soldiers who crucified him, he said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. They're just doing their job, and as far as they know, this is another common criminal. So, you know, Jesus just puts up with this, obviously.

And it says in verse 21, Now they compelled a certain man, Simon, a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear his cross. And they brought him to the place of Golgotha, which is translated the place of a skull. Then they gave him wine mingled with murder drink, but he did not take it.

And when they crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots for them, to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified him. Now we read a moment ago, in the 19th chapter of John, it is the sixth hour, when

Jesus was on trial before Pilate.

Specifically said it was the sixth hour, and Pilate said, shall I crucify your king? Or should we do this one who is the king of the Jews? And they said crucify him. It was about the sixth hour, when Pilate released Jesus to the Jews. But here we read it is the third hour, and they crucified him.

Sounds like it is three hours earlier. How could Jesus get crucified three hours earlier than he was condemned in court? Now this is one of the many cases where some people think the Bible contradicts itself. The solution is generally believed to be that John used the Roman way of reckoning the hours of the day.

The Romans, it is believed, reckoned the hours of the day the way we do. The hours of the day began at midnight. And therefore the sixth hour of the day would be six in the morning.

Therefore according to John's gospel, Jesus was turned over to the Jews by Pilate at six in the morning, the sixth hour. Now Mark is perhaps using the Jewish way of reckoning. Most people believe that he did.

He got his gospel from Peter. Peter was Jewish and so was Mark. And although they are writing to probably a Roman audience, it is probable that they used their own way of reckoning the hours of the day.

And the Jewish day began at six in the morning. So the first hour was seven in the morning. The second was eight.

The third hour was nine in the morning. And so it is generally believed from these two verses that Jesus was condemned by Pilate at six in the morning and crucified at nine in the morning. And that certainly is reasonable.

Especially since he was beaten for a while and mocked for a while between the time that Pilate released him and the time he was crucified. And then there was the trip up the hill to be crucified. That probably didn't go very quickly.

Now we are told in verse 21 that they compelled Simon a Cyrenaeen to carry his cross. Now interestingly, over in John 19 and verse 17, we read that Jesus was carrying his own cross. In John 19, 17, it says, And he, bearing his cross, went out to the place that is called the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.

So they led him out of Jerusalem bearing his cross toward Golgotha. But at some point afterward, they compelled another man to carry Jesus' cross. Therefore, all the dramas, the passion and so forth, depict Jesus as stumbling under the cross, being proven because of his beatings, because of his all-night ordeals, having lost blood, having lost sleep, having not eaten, being weakened.

That Jesus was unable to carry the cross. And though he began doing so, that he was not able to get all the way up the hill. And so they compelled this other man who was passing by to take his cross.

It's John alone that tells us that Jesus bore his own cross. And the other Gospels all tell us that Simon a Cyrene carried his cross for him. So both are true, obviously.

Jesus must have carried it first. And then for whatever reasons that can only really be imagined, someone else had to carry it the rest of the way. But no doubt it's because Jesus was proved too weak to finish carrying it up the hill.

An interesting side note in Mark 15.21 is that Simon a Cyrene is referred to by Mark as the father of Alexander and Rufus. Now, obviously, since a man is not usually identified by who his sons are, but who his parents are. In other words, if it said, Simon a Cyrene, the son of Rufus, that would have been a very common way for Jews to identify a person, a man and his father, who was his father.

But you'd never really identify a man by who his children are. Unless you expect your readers to know his children better than they know the man himself. In other words, the children who are known to the audience become the reference point for him to identify who this man was.

He was their father. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Now, who were Alexander and Rufus? Well, whoever they were, seemingly were known to the Christians in Rome.

Because Mark was in Rome, apparently writing to a Roman audience. Remember when he translated a Jewish coin into a drachma, a Roman coin? Obviously, he was writing to people who were in Rome. Apparently, the Roman church knew Alexander and Rufus.

And therefore, it was in order to let them know who the man was who carried the cross, he points out that it was the father of those two men. Now, in Romans chapter 16, Paul is writing to the church in Rome, and he sends greetings to various people that he knew who were in Rome, in the church there. And, in Romans 16 verse 13, he says, Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Now, his mother and mine doesn't mean that they were literal siblings. But, or he'd say, Greet my mom, probably first. But, I think what he's saying is that the mother of Rufus is like a mother to Paul too.

And Rufus is in Rome, a Christian in Rome. Now, is it the same Rufus whose father is Simon the Cyrene? I think so. The reason I say so is because Rufus is not identified by any other identifier.

Like, there's only one Rufus in the church in Rome. If there were multiple Rufuses in the church of Rome, you'd have to identify which Rufus. Rufus the so-and-so and so, or Rufus

the so-and-so and so.

So, he says, Greet Rufus and his mom, whose name is not given either. There's one Rufus, and he and his mom are known without reference to his dad. So, it's probably the same Rufus in the church of Rome that Mark refers to, whose father is Simon the Cyrene.

That means the woman whom Paul refers to as his mom, not literally, any more than Timothy was literally his son. She was the wife of Simon the Cyrene, probably. And Rufus, who was a Christian known to Paul, probably because he was a Jerusalem Christian before he was in Rome.

And Paul knew him from there, because Paul had never been in Rome. That Rufus is probably the one that is referred to in Mark 15-21. That man was just passing by, and might not have even known who Jesus was.

He was from another country. He was probably a pious Jew from another country who came for the Passover, and might have been totally unaware of who this man was, whose cross he was carrying. He was just passing by, and the Romans grabbed him and said, you carry the cross.

Yet, if this was the first time he saw Jesus, it seems likely that he watched the crucifixion, or watched Jesus enough to become impressed and to become a Christian himself, so that his family apparently was in the church as well at a later time. So they brought him to Golgotha, the place of the skull. It says they gave him wine mingled with myrrh, verse 23, to drink, but he didn't drink it.

That would be for a painkiller. Although the Romans were not generous people to their criminals, they allowed women who had soft hearts to offer wine and myrrh mixed together, which would serve as a pain deadener to the men who were being crucified, but Jesus refused it. He had told his disciples he won't drink of the fruit of the vine again until he drinks it in the kingdom, so he wouldn't take it even, in this case, to alleviate some of the pain that he's going to be facing.

In verse 24, when they crucified him, they divided his garments and cast lots for them to determine what every man should take. What's interesting is that Mark does not mention that that's a fulfillment of prophecy. The fact that he doesn't mention it means that he's not making it up as sort of a fake fulfillment of prophecy.

Sometimes people think that all those prophecies we say that Jesus fulfilled are just fabrications that the early church knew what the prophets said and when they told the story of Jesus, they kind of made up stories to make it look like he fulfilled them. But here, we know that this fulfills Luke 22, or Psalm 22, 18, which is about the crucifixion. And it mentions them casting lots for his garments.

This is the fulfillment, this event fulfilled it, but Mark doesn't make any reference to that

fulfillment, which is interesting. It's almost as if Mark is oblivious to it or he's just telling it because it's true. He's not telling it to try to point out that it fulfilled prophecy by any means.

It's just happened. Now it was the third hour and they crucified him and the inscription of his accusation was written above the king of the Jews. I believe it's in John's gospel that tells us that inscription was written in Latin and Greek and Hebrew so that anyone passing by could see it.

And that's when the Jews objected to it and asked Pilate to change it, but he would not change it for them. It says in verse 27, And with him they also crucified two robbers, one on his right hand and the other on his left. So the scripture was fulfilled which says, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Now that's Isaiah 53, 12. And Jesus, in fulfillment of it, he was numbered with the transgressors. That is, he was included with other men who were in fact transgressors in his crucifixion.

Now the Alexandrian text leaves out verse 28 altogether. So the mention of that fulfillment of Isaiah 53 goes without mention in the Alexandrian text just like the fulfillment of Psalm 22, 18 goes without mention of its fulfillment in verse 24. But whether Mark actually did write this line in verse 28 or not, we don't know.

It is possible that it was added later by some scribe. It's not that common for Mark to point out the fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew does it all the time.

But Mark doesn't do it so frequently and so it's not clear whether Mark wrote verse 28 or not. But it is truly the case that it does fulfill that scripture. And those who passed by blasphemed him wagging their heads and saying, Aha! You who destroyed the temple and built it in three days saved yourself and come down from the cross.

Likewise the chief priest also together with the scribes mocked and said among themselves He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe. Jesus never was one to give them signs when they begged for signs.

They make it sound like What? You want us to believe in you? Prove it by coming down. They should have known that he could. I mean, he'd done enough miracles in their seeing and hearing in his past years that they shouldn't be questioning whether he could do something miraculous if he wished to.

But their mockery would especially sting him because he knew he could. It'd be bad enough if you were simply hanging on a cross in agony and so forth and people were mocking you in general. But when they mock you saying If you really are who you say you are why don't you come down from the cross? And you know you could.

You know you could call twelve legions of angels and they would come and deliver you but you don't. I mean, that takes humility to let them think that you're a fool. To let them think that you're powerless when you're really very much in command of the situation.

Remember Jesus said No one takes my life from me. I lay it down on my own accord. I have the power to lay it down.

I have the power to take it up. He said that in John chapter 10. He was in charge of the situation here.

He was never on trial before Pilate. Pilate was on trial before Jesus. And Pilate was found guilty.

Pilate failed that test. Jesus was the one in command of the world. Maybe not so much as one might think as he's nailed to the cross.

But Jesus did say he could call twelve legions of angels but he chose not to. It's also galling to hear his words thrown back at him twisted. They said to him You who will destroy the temple and build it in three days.

As if you said that and look how foolish you look now for saying that. Well he never said that. And that's hard too on the ego.

When people are mocking you for something they say you said which was wrong but you didn't say it. He never said he would destroy the temple in three days. But he just hung there and took the verbal abuse.

And it even says at the end of verse 32 And those who were crucified with him reviled him. Well at first they did. In Luke 23 of course we read that one of them had a change of heart in the six hours they were hanging there in the sun with him on the crosses.

Who were these two guys anyway? And why were they crucified with him? We're never told but I have my own theory. Theories are theories. They may not be facts.

But it seems interesting. This was like a last minute crucifixion. The Sabbath was going to be that night.

It was not a convenient time for crucifying people. Why would Pilate crucify these two guys with Jesus? Had he already been planning their execution and just threw Jesus in with the bunch? That's possible. But we are told that Barabbas had some friends with him who were arrested with him and were kept in chains with him.

That's what we were told a few verses earlier when he was mentioned in verse 7. There was one named Barabbas who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists and they had committed murder and insurrection. Now Barabbas got away from Pilate. Because Pilate offered to let one prisoner go and offered to let Jesus go.

No, let Barabbas go. Pilate didn't want to let Barabbas go. Barabbas was a real troublemaker to Rome.

An insurrectionist is someone who is trying to overthrow Rome. He's just the kind of guy that Romans like to crucify. Pilate didn't want to let Barabbas go but he had committed himself to let one go and the people called for Barabbas.

So Barabbas slipped out of his fingers. But Barabbas' friends were still in chains. And it may be that they were the ones that got crucified along with Jesus.

It may be that Pilate thinking well you rotten Jews you got Barabbas from me but I'm going to show you I'm going to take his two friends and crucify them along with your king. They're not going to get away. I don't know.

They were called robbers. But Barabbas was called a robber in John's gospel. They may have been a band of robbers who also got involved in an insurrection and killed somebody and so there were two robbers crucified on either side of him.

They may have been Barabbas' friends. Barabbas' companions who were chained with him. That's only a hunch.

It could be entirely mistaken. But if it is them then it suggests the possibility that Pilate was a bit stung by the fact that the Jews managed to get Barabbas out of custody and so he decided to spite them by killing Barabbas' friends right then on the spot along with Jesus. I don't know.

Maybe so. But the change of heart of one of them is recorded not in Mark nor in Matthew but Luke does and if you look briefly because we're going to stop at this point in Mark in Luke chapter 23 the parallel account Luke chapter 23 it says in verse 39 Then one of the criminals who were hanging blasphemed them, saying, If you are the Christ, save yourself and us. But the other who had been insulting him at an earlier point himself but had perhaps some hours to observe the demeanor of Christ and to be impressed that maybe he really was the king of the Jews who knows he answered and rebuked the other criminal saying Do you not even fear God seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.

But this man has done nothing wrong. Now by the way these guys who were crucified with him in Mark 15 27 are called robbers it's not likely that if they were only robbers that they would consider crucifixion to be the just penalty for their deeds. Under the Jewish law a robber would just have to make a payment and repay restitution to the people they robbed if all they had done was rob then it doesn't seem like he'd be saying we deserve to die like this we're receiving the just penalty for our deeds obviously their deeds included more than mere robbery and remember Barabbas was called a robber too but he was also said to be with his friends an insurrectionist and one who'd

committed murder and so these guys although they're called robbers in Mark they're called criminals in Luke and they did do something worthy of death and even one of them admitted it it was too late to be pleading innocent when you're nailed to a cross anyway said we are experiencing this justly for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man has done nothing wrong then he said to Jesus Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom that is such a remarkable thing for him to say as he was dying and Jesus was dying the disciples when Jesus died gave up hope that Jesus was going to have a kingdom they did not anticipate his resurrection although he had three times plainly told them it would be they didn't expect it and when it happened they were surprised and didn't believe the reports they had pretty much given up hope that's what the two men on the road to Emmaus said they apparently shared the opinion of the other apostles when they met Jesus after his resurrection but didn't know it was him he said what are you guys so sad about? are you the only one in these parts who doesn't know what's happened lately? there was this man Jesus and we had hoped we had hoped that he was the one who was going to deliver Israel but he got killed the other day and now some women say he rose again but who can believe those crazy women but the interesting thing is we had hope means we don't anymore we gave up hope as soon as he died even the disciples gave up belief that Jesus was the king and that he was going to reign once they saw he was dead this man saw that Jesus was dying and still believed that Jesus was going to have a kingdom whether he believed it was going to be like in heaven in which case that would be amazing since the Jews really didn't have a clear theology about heaven or whether he believed Jesus might rise from the dead or what he somehow believed that Jesus yet would have a kingdom though he was going to die that day quite obviously and his faith was incredible and Jesus said to him assuredly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise and so this man was saved at the last minute on his death bed we could say this is a case probably the only case we know of in the scripture that I can think of off hand of a death bed repentance which was genuine and which resulted in salvation of a man who had lived a criminal life had never done as far as we know one redeeming work even after he believed in Christ he wasn't baptized he didn't do any good works all he did was express his faith in Christ and Christ said you're saved you're coming with me to paradise today and so it was now where's paradise? that's another question the bible is not all that clear on that more than one place is actually called paradise the garden of Eden is called paradise heaven is called paradise in 2nd Corinthians 12 but it also seems likely that shale or Hades where Jesus where the dead go is where Jesus went when he died and so some people believe that paradise in this statement is a reference to another compartment in shale where saved people went when they died because they couldn't go to heaven yet because Jesus hadn't died and risen and made a new and living way into the presence of God as he has now so where is paradise? I don't know but it's where saved people go not damned people so this man went with Jesus to paradise and is with Jesus now, even now although the man lived an entirely unchristian life his repentance at the last breath of his life was genuine.

He did do one good work and that is he spoke up for Jesus he defended Jesus against the accusations and the mockery of his friend so he took sides with Jesus against his friend and believed that Jesus would have a kingdom even though Jesus didn't look like he was in a very promising situation at that moment to end up having a kingdom alright well that gets us through a significant part of this chapter I believe that we can easily finish the chapter in our next session and get through the death and burial of Jesus alright