

Introduction

1. What are some Christian doctrines? (e.g., virgin birth of Jesus, believer's baptism, nature of God).
2. There are perhaps no more important Christian doctrines than those related to our beliefs about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. **Read 1 Cor 15:3-4.**
 - a. As we come to the end of Mark's gospel, we will focus our last three lessons on Mark's account of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
 - b. In this lesson we consider the death of Jesus and its significance for our salvation and practice of faith. Mark's gospel declares Jesus died. He did not swoon or switch places with Simon of Cyrene.
3. **Read Mk 15:33-41.**

A. A Final Cry (33-36)

1. "At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon" (33)
 - a. We don't know what caused the darkness (e.g., eclipse, storm clouds, dust storm, miracle).
 - b. Warren Wiersbe comments, "This was indeed a miracle and not some natural phenomenon, such as a sand storm or an eclipse. It would not be possible to have an eclipse during full moon at Passover. By means of this darkness, God was saying something to the people. For one thing, the Jews would certainly think about the first Passover. The ninth plague in Egypt was a three-day darkness, followed by the last plague, the death of the first born (Ex. 10:22-11:9). The darkness at Calvary was an announcement that God's Firstborn and Beloved Son, the Lamb of God, was giving His life for the sins of the world. It was also an announcement that judgment was coming and men had better be prepared" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 180).
 - c. The darkness symbolized the spiritual darkness and suffering Jesus endured over these three hours.
 - d. Jesus, the light of the world, was about to penetrate the darkness of evil and shine bright by overcoming the darkness of sin, death, and Hell once for all.
2. At the end of this three hour period of darkness, "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*' . . ." (34)
 - a. The four gospels together record seven sayings of Jesus from the cross:
 - 1) Forgiveness – "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34).
 - 2) Salvation – "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43).
 - 3) Relationship – "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home" (Jn 19:26-27).
 - 4) Abandonment – "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") (Mk 15:34).
 - 5) Distress – "I am thirsty" (Jn 19:28).
 - 6) Triumph – "It is finished It is finished." (Jn 19:30 / Mk 15:37).
 - 7) Reunion – "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).
 - b. Mark only records one direct saying and notes Jesus' cry at the end but does not give His words.
3. Mark gives the translation of these Aramaic words as ". . . 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken (Gk., *egkatelipes*) me?'" (34)
 - a. What did Jesus mean?
 - b. Certainly, these words sound like abandonment and loneliness which are consistent themes in Mark's emphasis that Jesus faced the end of His life alone and abandoned.
 - c. Typically, interpreters focus on Jesus' abandonment by the Father due to the sin of humanity that was placed upon Him.
 - 1) But how can God forsake Himself?
 - 2) If Jesus is fully God and fully man, how could He turn His back upon Himself?
 - 3) Do we have a schizophrenic God?

- d. Jesus quoted the first verse of messianic Psalm 22, which we read at the end of the last lesson.
 - 1) Typically the quotation of the first verse of a passage implied the invocation of the entire passage.
 - 2) Here is the end of Psalm 22: “All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: ‘He has done it!’” (Ps 22:29-31)
 - 3) Jesus’ cry may not have been a shout of despair and abandonment but a shout of confidence in God’s plan and ultimate vindication and victory!
 - e. Perhaps both themes—abandonment and ultimate victory—may be seen together.
 - f. Daniel Akin notes, “God separated from God—who can understand? I may never understand it, but I will forever praise Him for it” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 355).
4. Those standing nearby misunderstood Jesus’ words.
 - a. Some heard His words as a call to the great Prophet Elijah for deliverance from the cross. (35)
 - b. Some heard His words as a cry of pain and offered Jesus some wine vinegar to deaden the pain. (36a)
 - c. Most of them still mocked Him (cf., Mk 15:32), “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down” (36b).

B. Death (37-38)

1. At the end of the period of darkness, about three in the afternoon, “With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last” (37).
 - a. This cry was most likely accompanied by the sixth and possibly seventh sayings of Jesus from the cross.
 - b. His shout of triumph, “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30)
 - c. His shout of reunion, “Father, into Your hands I entrust My Spirit” (Lk 23:46).
2. Testimony of the Temple Curtain (38)
 - a. There were two curtains in the temple.
 - 1) The first curtain covered the entrance to the Holy Place in which were the Table of Shewbread, the Menorah, and the Altar of Incense.
 - 2) The second curtain covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies containing the Ark of the Covenant.
 - b. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year on *Yom Kippur*.
 - 1) He went in twice on that appointed day. The first time he went in to offer atonement for his sins and the second time for the sins of the people (cf., Leviticus 16).
 - 2) This intercession for sin by the high priest was no longer necessary after Jesus’ death, since He as our Great High Priest had made intercession and provision for all human sin once for all.
 - c. Notice that the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom not bottom to top. It was an act of God!
 - d. There is some debate as to which curtain was torn. The outer curtain could be seen by everyone but the inner one only by certain priests. Regardless of which curtain was torn, there are important implications by this act of God.
 - 1) The Old Covenant is torn away as the New Covenant is completed.
 - 2) The temple itself would soon be destroyed (CE 70) just as Jesus predicted (cf., Mk 13:2).
 - 3) Jesus’ sacrifice for sin was complete, perfect, and sufficient for all human sin in all time.
 - 4) God Himself opened access to Himself and His glory directly to every human being without need for a human intercessor other than Christ Jesus.
3. The testimony of the centurion (39)
 - a. At Jesus’ death, the centurion declared, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (39)
 - b. The declaration of Jesus as God’s son is an important theme in Mark (cf., Mk 1:1,11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61-62; 15:39).
 - c. Akin observes, “Now we arrive at the destination Mark has intended since 1:1. On the lips of a Gentile Roman Centurion, we hear the confession . . . It was not one of His marvelous miracles or tremendous teachings that evoked this confession; it was his passion” (Akin, 355).
 - d. James Brooks concludes, “. . . even if he did not experience full conversion, he recognized that Jesus was the Son of God in a unique sense. . . . At last he is confessed as such by a human being who is a type of thousands and even millions of Gentiles who later will stand by faith before the cross and confess that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the unique son of God” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 263).

- e. Again we hear the irony in Mark as both the high priest (cf., Mk 14:61) and this Roman centurion, enemies of Jesus, testified to the truth of who He was/is.

C. Women at the Cross (40-41)

1. Mark 15:40-16:8 form the last of our now familiar Markan sandwiches.
 - a. Women at the Cross (15:40-41)
 - b. The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)
 - c. Women at the Tomb (16:1-8)
2. Mark often placed a story within a story.
 - a. A story begins which is the bottom slice of bread. A second story is told. That is the middle of the sandwich. Then the first story concludes. That is the top slice of bread forming a Markan sandwich.
 - b. This is the ninth and final time that we encounter this literary feature in Mark (cf., 3:20-35; 4:1-20; 5:21-43; 6:7-29; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; 14:17-31; 14:53-72; 15:40-16:8).
 - c. This sandwich highlights the important role of women not only in the death/burial/resurrection of Jesus but throughout His earthly ministry.
3. Note that most of the disciples had fled at Jesus' arrest (cf., Mk 14:50).
 - a. Peter fled at the high priest's home during Jesus' first trial (cf., Mk 14:72).
 - b. All except John, who was at the cross (cf., Jn 19:26-27), were in hiding fearing for their lives.
4. At least four women were still present with Jesus at the cross.
 - a. "Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Solome" are named here by Mark who also notes, "Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also here" (40, 41b).
 - 1) Mary Magdalene – She came from the village of Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had delivered her from demonic possession (cf., Lk 8:2).
 - 2) Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph (James) – There is no conclusive information about her identity. She was a faithful follower of Jesus and perhaps her sons were too.
 - 3) Solome – She is mentioned by name only here and in Mk 16:1. She was most likely the mother of the disciples James and John as implied based on Mt 27:56.
 - b. According to Luke, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was among the other women present (cf., Jn 19:26).
 - c. The focus of Mark is on the love, care, and faithfulness of these female followers.
 - d. Mary Magdalene will have a prominent part in the close of this Markan sandwich (cf., Mk 16:1, Jn 20:11-18).
5. These women became important eyewitnesses of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.
6. Notice that most of these women had been faithful followers of Jesus since His early ministry in Galilee and ". . . had followed him and cared for his needs" (41a).
 - a. "followed" (Gk., *ekolouthoun*) – cf., Mk 1:18 - "[Simon and Andrew] left their nets and followed [Jesus]."
 - b. "cared for" (Gk., *diekonoun* from *diakono*) – This is the root verb for our word "deacon."
7. Our focus is often on the male disciples, but Jesus had many, faithful female followers who by their actions were often more faithful and fearless than the men.

D. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection

1. To whom do you cry out when you face death, disappointment, and disaster in life?
2. Who do you say Jesus is?
3. Will you boldly testify to the truth of who Jesus is with not only your words but also your actions as the women did?
4. The church owes much to the sacrifices and faithfulness of women throughout the centuries.
5. Will you be faithful to the end with Jesus like the women at the cross?