

# Mark 15

by John Nelson Darby

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*Jesus' death and resurrection represent the ultimate sacrifice for humanity's sins, and His resurrection offers new life and forgiveness to all who believe in Him.*

**Scripture:** Mark 15:1

**Topics:** "The Suffering of Christ", "Redemption through His Sacrifice"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Mark 15, detailing the unjust condemnation of Jesus before Pilate, emphasizing the malice of the Jewish leaders and Pilate's moral weakness. He highlights the fulfillment of God's will through Christ's suffering and the significance of His death as a ransom for many, showcasing the depth of human cruelty and the divine purpose behind it. The sermon reflects on the mockery Jesus faced, the darkness that enveloped the land during His crucifixion, and the profound spiritual implications of His sacrifice, including the tearing of the temple veil, which signifies access to God for believers. Darby concludes with the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God by the centurion and the faithful devotion of the women who remained near Him during His suffering.

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## Transcript

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The Gospel by Mark relates very briefly the circumstances of the Lord's condemnation: this is an important fact. As soon as He has been rejected by the Jews, Mark speaks of that which took place before Pilate, to relate again that which is necessary, and to shew that the Lord is condemned here too for the testimony which He bore Himself to the truth (although it was really through the malice of the principal Jews); for indeed Pilate strove to set Him at liberty, but having no moral strength, and despising the Jews and all that belonged to them, he gives the Lord up to their will without conscience. When Pilate asks, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus answers, "Thou sayest." To the accusations of the chief priests, He answers nothing: His testimony had been given.

The Lord Jesus was soon to be a victim. All these accusations were nothing, and Pilate knew it; but the Jews must manifest the spirit which animated them. Pilate tried to get rid of Jesus and of the difficulty, by a custom which seems to have been introduced at that time, to set free a prisoner at the Passover, to please the Jews. He also sought, in making this appeal to the people, to ward off the blow of envy and malice of the priests: but in vain, for the Lord must suffer and die. The priests incited the people to ask that Barabbas should be released, and the Lord crucified. Pilate tries again to save Him, but to satisfy the

people he gives Him up.

In all this the Jews are guilty; of course the Roman governor ought to have been firm, and to have acted justly, and not to have left the Lord exposed to the priests' hatred; he was careless and without conscience, and despised a poor Jew who had no friends; also it was important for him to satisfy the turbulent populace. In Mark's Gospel however, all the hatred and animosity against the Lord are found in the priests; they are always and everywhere the enemies of the truth and of Him who is Himself the truth personally. Pilate's resistance had no effect; it was God's will that Jesus should suffer: He had come for this, and it was for this that He gave His life a ransom for many. In that which follows we find the story of the brutality of the heart of man which finds its pleasure in outraging those who are given up to its will without being able to defend themselves. Besides, the Lord must be despised and rejected of men, both by the Jews and Gentiles. This proves that man would not have God in His goodness.

328 Again, the Jewish nation had to be humbled - and the soldiers mocked the whole nation in mocking its King. The Lord was dressed in purple as a king, smitten and mocked with pretended honours, and then led away to be crucified. Upon the cross was written "King of the Jews"; the Lord was numbered too amongst the transgressors. What is especially brought out here is the humiliation of the king of Israel. "Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross," say the chief priests, "and we will believe." Those who were crucified with Him railed upon Him: we know that one of them was converted afterwards, and that he confessed Jesus to be the Lord.

Up to verse 33 we see the Lord's humiliation and the apparent triumph of evil. Man generally, and Israel as a nation, shew their joy in being able to get rid of God's faithful witness, of His presence, and of the true King of Israel: but they lowered themselves in trying to degrade the Lord, whose love continued to accomplish the work which the Father had given Him to do, in the midst of the outrages, the blindness, the folly, and the wickedness of men and of His people Israel, which alas! filled up the measure of its iniquity. The Saviour's love was stronger than man's perverse hatred - blessed be His name for it! But from verse 33 we find a deeper work than the Lord's outward sufferings, however real and profound they were to Him. He was left alone; there was no one to have compassion upon Him; we find nothing but desertion and cruelty. But there is a great difference between the cruelty of man, and the penalty of sin executed by God.

At the same hour all the country (or perhaps the earth) is covered with darkness. Christ is alone with God, hidden from things visible, in order to be entirely with God. He bears the penalty of our sin, He drinks the cup of malediction for us; He who knew no sin is made sin for us. In Psalm 22 we see that the Lord, feeling fully the pressure of man's hatred and malice, turns to God; He had foreseen what was to happen, and His sweat had become, as it were, drops of blood in thinking of it. He turns to God and says, "Be not thou far from me!" but to the anguish of His soul He is forsaken of God. And never was He more precious to God - He who was eternally precious to Him - than in His perfect obedience! But this obedience was fulfilled in His being made sin for us. Never had He so glorified His Father in His righteousness and love; but being made a sin-offering, and feeling in the depth of His soul that which God is against sin, He bore the penalty of it.

329 Thus God had to hide His face from Him who was made sin for us. This was necessary for the glory and majesty of God, as well as for our salvation. But who can sound the depths of the Saviour's suffering? He who had always been the object of the Father's delight is now forsaken of Him! He who was holiness itself finds Himself made sin before God! But all is over, all God's will about the work which He had given to Jesus to do has been accomplished. Blessed thought! the more He has suffered, the more He is

precious to us: and we love Him as we think of His own perfect love, and of the perfection of His person. All suffering was over for Him at His death; and in His resurrection all is new for us! all our sins are forgiven, and we are with Him in God's presence, and when He comes we shall be like Him in glory. But though He died it was not because His vital force was exhausted. He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. All was over, and He gave up His spirit into the Father's hands; He really died for us. He offered Himself without spot unto God, and God laid upon Him the sins of many. He must die, but no one took away His life; He had the power to lay it down, and to take it again! He gave it up Himself when all had been accomplished.

Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and here we see the way of the holiest opened to all the believers who were under the law. The curtain between the holy and most holy places signified that man could not enter into God's presence (Heb. 9); the death of Christ has opened a way of entry into the holiest by His blood; Heb. 10:19, 20. Immense difference and precious privilege! By this blood we can enter into God's presence without fear, as white as snow, to rejoice in the love which has brought us into this place. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross, and has brought us to God Himself - He, the just One, who died for us unjust ones.

330 And again by one offering He hath for ever purified them that are sanctified; He cannot offer Himself again: if all our sins had not been cancelled by this one offering, they could never be, for Christ cannot die again. It is not a question of sprinkling - "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The apostle demonstrates this solemn truth, saying, "Otherwise he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. 9:26. When a man believes, he enters into the possession of this blessing, and he is for ever perfected in Christ before God: sin cannot be imputed to Him, because Christ, who has borne and expiated it, is always in God's presence for him, a witness that his sins are already put away; and that he who comes to God through the Saviour is accepted in Him.

People say, "Then we may live in sin." This was the objection which was made to the gospel which the apostle Paul preached: the answer to it is found in Romans 6. If we really have faith in Christ, we are born again, we have a new nature, we have put off the old man and put on the new one, we are dead to sin, dead with Christ by faith; crucified with Him, so that we live no more, but Christ liveth in us. We are new creatures: there is a divine work in us, as well as a work for us. If Christ is our righteousness, He is also our life, and then the Holy Spirit is given to us, and we are responsible to walk as Christ walked; but this does not interfere with the work of Christ for us - a perfect work, accepted of God, in consequence of which He sits at God's right hand as a man in that glory which He had as Son with the Father before the world was. Before Christ came, God did not shew Himself, and man could not enter into His presence. Now God has come out and come to us in love, and man has entered into His presence according to righteousness in Christ.

Then the centurion's conscience speaks, whilst all stand afar off (v. 39); all, except the disciples who have fled, are enemies. But the loud voice of the Lord without the least sign of weakness, and the fact that He gives up the ghost to the Father at once, act powerfully upon this man's soul, and he recognises in the dying Jesus the Son of God. Now the work is finished, and God takes care that if His death has been with the transgressors, He should be with the rich in His burial, honoured and treated with all reverence. The women who followed Him occupied themselves with Him, looking upon Him afar off when He was crucified: and some of them, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of Joses, saw the place where His body was laid in the sepulchre. For Joseph of Arimathea had gone to Pilate to ask for the body

of Jesus: more courageous at His death than during His life. This often happens; the greatness of the evil forces faith to shew itself.

331 But the women, notice it well, have a more blessed position still; they had followed him from Galilee, and had ministered to Him of their substance; and we find them near the Lord when His disciples had left Him. They had not been sent to preach: but their devotedness to the Lord, their faithfulness and constant love for Him when dangers present themselves, shine forth in the Lord's history. We find another proof that the Lord gave up His life, and that it was not taken from Him, in that Pilate wondered that He was already dead, and that he called the centurion to assure himself of the fact. When he knew it, he gave the body to Joseph, who put it in his own new tomb till the sabbath should be past.

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