

Explore the Bible: Sacrificed

November 7, 2023

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Nov. 19 focuses on Mark 15:24-39.*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Bible lessons like this one have been an important part of the Baptist Standard for many years. Each has a cost of at least **\$50** to produce. To ensure these lessons continue to be provided the rest of 2023 and into 2024, you can **make a donation** in any amount by visiting [our donation page](#). In the comments field, note your donation is toward the cost of Bible studies.*

Darkest Night (Mark 14:43-52)

Interrupting Jesus' agony in the dark Garden of Gethsemane, Judas appears with a torch-lit, armed mob sent by the Jewish religious establishment. In the dark with a few torches, the arresting party knows it is critical that they quickly identify Jesus and take him into custody.

Surprisingly, Judas acts like he is in charge: "I'll kiss him, you arrest him and put him under guard." Judas approaches Jesus awkwardly, calls him "Rabbi" and kisses him. Judas sells Jesus' freedom for money?

Peter has a sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Peter and Mark include this detail in their Gospel but do not name the swordsman. Other gospel writers do.

Jesus points out that it takes an armed group to capture him in the dark when he is in the temple every day teaching.

All the believers desert Jesus and run away.

Interrogation and trial (Mark 14:53-65)

Jesus has been arrested. The guards take him into Jerusalem to the home of the high priest. The first order of business is to find some evidence to justify a death sentence. The first witnesses tell made up stories—which reveal flaws when they are compared. Jesus finally is asked to justify the arrest himself.

“Are you the Messiah?” came the question.

“I am. You will see me sitting at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Jesus appears to be quoting from Daniel 7:13-14. The religious authorities would have been familiar with the passage.

That is enough for the high priest. Jesus presumptuously has claimed to be divine. He clearly is not, they believe.

“Blasphemy,” says the high priest. The religious leaders quickly condemn Jesus to death. They begin to attack him physically. The religious leaders trade their own Messiah for the status quo.

Peter denies Jesus (Mark 14:66-72)

In the high priest’s courtyard, a servant girl points out Peter as an associate of Jesus. Peter “can’t understand” her reference and leaves. The rooster crows.

When she accuses him again, he begins to curse and denies knowing Jesus. Again, someone associates him with Jesus because he is a Galilean. Peter denies that. The rooster crows again, reminding Peter of Jesus’ earlier words. Peter abandons his Savior for temporary personal safety.

Roman Governor Pilate questions Jesus (Mark 15:1-15)

Very early Friday morning, the religious establishment gives custody of Jesus to Roman governor Pilate. A Roman trial starts. His accusers are the chief priests. Jesus says little.

A Jerusalem crowd comes to Pilate and asks for the release of the usual Passover festival prisoner. Pilate suggests Jesus. The priests encourage the crowd to ask for Barabbas, a murdering insurrectionist.

“What shall I do with Jesus?”

The crowd shouts “Crucify him.”

Pilate releases Barabbas. He has Jesus flogged and hands him over to be crucified. Jerusalem’s street crowd sacrifices its own Messiah in the heat of the moment. Pilate sacrifices Jesus for his career.

Roman soldiers abuse Jesus (Mark 15:16-21)

A company of Roman soldiers dress Jesus as a king with a purple robe and a crown of thorns, and they start calling him “king of the Jews.” They hit him on his head with a staff, spit on him and bow down to him. Then they put his clothes back on him and force him to carry his cross out of town. Jesus is too weak, and he falls. Simon from Cyrene, a bystander, is forced to carry the cross. The Roman soldiers brutalize Jesus, because they can.

Golgotha Hill (Mark 15:22-41)

The procession comes to Golgotha Hill— the “place of the skull.” At 9 a.m., soldiers nail Jesus’ body to a wooden cross and leave him there to die, as long as it takes.

Soldiers gamble for his clothing. He will not need them. He is taunted by his earlier words that “he was going to destroy the temple and build it back in three days” and that he saved others but cannot save himself. Insults continue.

At noon, darkness comes over the whole land. At 3 p.m., Jesus cries out in a loud voice “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” With a loud cry, he dies. *“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith” (Romans 3:25).*

The temple curtain that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple is split from top to bottom.

A centurion standing in front of Jesus says only, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

Many women followers are present, watching from a distance.

The Sabbath will begin at 6 p.m. In three hours, Jesus’ lifeless body must be taken down from the cross and buried properly. Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate and asks for Jesus’ body. Joseph and Nicodemus wrap it in linen cloth with spices. They lay Jesus in a cave cut from the rock in a garden.

The bleak Sabbath begins.

Glen Funderburk has taught children’s Sunday school for many years. These lessons on the Gospel of Mark are written from the perspective of children.