



LESSON 23

Jesus endures the cross

MARK 15:16-47



Jesus died to save sinners.



“And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (Mark 15:39).

Supporting Truths

1. Jesus did not save Himself so that He could save others.
2. Jesus bore God’s wrath as He died.
3. Jesus is the Son of God.
4. Jesus was mocked as He died.
5. Jesus is Messiah and King.

Objectives

1. Restate the chief priests’ insult.
2. Describe the darkness and Jesus’ cry.
3. Recite the key verse.
4. List all the ways Jesus was mocked and compare to Isaiah 53:3.
5. Explain that Jesus’ death and burial prove that all that was said in mockery actually turned out to be true.

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Lesson Summary

Jesus was cruelly mocked during His crucifixion. He was the true King and Son of God, and He was suffering the worst punishment for the sake of sinners, yet they just laughed at Him. Worst of all, the Father poured out His wrath on Jesus, counting Him as a sinner in the place of sinners. But in the end, there were still a few who honored Jesus, who saw that He really was the Son of God.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The cross is at the center of the gospel. On the cross Jesus died to bear God's wrath and pay the penalty for sin. He did this for the sake of sinners, even wicked sinners who made a joke out of all His suffering. Because of His death, we have hope. We are no different than the cruel people who laughed at Him, but because He finished His mission, we can be forgiven. All that is required is that we respond in true faith and repentance.

LAST WEEK



**The trial and denial of
Jesus**
Mark 14:53–15:15

THIS WEEK



Jesus endures the cross
Mark 15:16–47

NEXT WEEK



**Jesus rises from the
dead**
Mark 16:1–8

THE PASSION WEEK OF JESUS

Lesson Commentary

Jesus died to save sinners.

The disciples were shocked by Jesus' mission (Mark 8:31–32). Yet His suffering and death should not have come as a surprise (Isa 53:3–5). Even the mockery Jesus endured was predicted years before His birth. In fact, the mockery, suffering, death, and burial all prove that He perfectly accomplished His mission as Messiah. He gave “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45), the just for the unjust, in order that He might save sinners.

Jesus was mocked in His crucifixion (15:16–32)

Jesus had already been *flogged*, *beaten with a whip that had pieces of bone or metal woven into it*. Flogging was so violent that many prisoners died from it. But instead of treating Jesus gently after that, the soldiers *mocked* Jesus. They *joked* about Jesus and *pretended to honor Him*. Giving Jesus a royal-looking robe, a crown of thorns, and a reed for a scepter, they mockingly bowed and said, “Hail, King!” copying the way they would say, “Hail, Caesar!” (15:18).

To them, Jesus' royalty and suffering were just a big joke. They had fun beating Him, and with their

spit they dishonored Him (15:19). Ironically, what they meant as a joke was actually true: Jesus was the King. All the while, Jesus obeyed Scripture: “I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting” (Isa 50:6).

Weakened by the flogging, Jesus could not carry the beam of His cross, so the soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to do it (Mark 15:21). Cyrene was a busy port city in North Africa where many Jews lived, but Simon was in Jerusalem, probably for Passover. Mark mentions Simon's sons because they must have been known to Christians in Rome where Mark wrote his gospel (Rom 16:13). It seems Simon's whole family was saved after Simon carried the Savior's cross.

Jesus was taken to *Golgotha*, which is Aramaic for *Skull Place*. We call it *Calvary* because the Latin

word for skull is *calvarium*. Along the way, Jesus was offered myrrh mixed in wine, which would help deaden the pain (Mark 15:23). This offer fulfilled prophecy (Ps 69:21), but Jesus refused it in order that He might be fully conscious during His death for sin. When He was crucified on Friday at 9 AM (Mark 15:24–25), He felt all the pain: the spikes through the forearms and heels, the shock of the post being dropped into the hole, and the rough wood scraping against His lacerated back as He heaved up and down to breath. It is perhaps the most painful form of execution.

But Mark focuses on the mockery instead of the pain. Crucifixion was itself mockery.

The Romans used it to execute slaves and

rebels. The Jews considered a crucified person to be accursed (Deut 21:23). In addition, the soldiers dishonored Jesus by caring more about His clothes than about His life. Also, the inscription on the cross mocked Jesus. It was normal for the charges to accompany the crucified criminals, but in this case, it was a charge that no one actually believed (Mark 15:26). Finally, Jesus was mocked by being crucified alongside violent revolutionaries (15:27). Yet the mockery—the cross (Num 21:9), the divided clothes (Ps 22:18), and the company of wicked men (Isa 53:12)—actually confirmed that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

The Jews also mocked Him. Crucifixions took place by the busy road heading from Jerusalem toward the Roman capital of Caesarea. The many people traveling by shook their heads with scorn, and in “deriding” Him they were literally “blaspheming” (Mark 15:29). They continued to falsely accuse Him (15:29–30). The chief priests joined in, joking that they would believe if Jesus could get down off the cross (15:31–32). Even the criminals mocked Him, although one later repented (Luke 23:39–43). But again, the sneering proved that Jesus was exactly who He said He was (Ps 22:7). In fact, the reason He did not save Himself was so that He could save others (Mark 8:31; 10:45). All that was said in

THINK ABOUT IT

The cross prolonged death in order to inflict the greatest amount of pain.



THINK ABOUT IT

The soldiers' cruel mockery shows the wickedness present in every human heart (Jer 17:9).

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mockery actually turned out to be true: Jesus was the King of the Jews, the King of Israel, the Messiah.

Jesus was mocked in His abandonment (15:33–36)

From noon until 3 PM, the sun became dark (15:33). This was not a solar eclipse. Passover is always at full moon, so the moon was not between the sun and the earth. The darkness was supernatural, showing God's presence (Ps 18:11), especially His holy presence to judge (Isa 5:30; 13:10–11; Joel 2:1–2; Amos 5:20). Jesus was bearing God's wrath against sin, dying as a sinner in the place of sinners (1 Pet 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21). Jesus cried out, and for the first time in His life, He did not call God "Father" (Mark 15:34; Ps 22:1). Although the Trinity could not be ripped apart, the closeness and joy of their relationship was lost as God judged Jesus for the sins of many (Isa 53:5). He truly was forsaken so that sinners could be forgiven.



THINK ABOUT IT
Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. His wounds heal us (1 Pet 2:24).

Yet even in this He was mocked (Mark 15:35–36). Possibly the bystanders only heard His first words, and in Aramaic "My God" and "Elijah" sound similar. But since Jesus was quoting a well-known verse, they may also

have purposefully twisted His words for fun. Either way, someone offered Him wine with vinegar, a drink popular with soldiers and laborers because it was invigorating. They wanted to keep Jesus conscious as they joked about Elijah coming.

Jesus was honored in His death (15:37–47)

As they joked, Jesus' death proved He finished His mission. First, the thick curtain in the temple tore in a way that showed it was not done by human hands (15:38). Now the way into the Holy of Holies was open (Lev 16:2), for Jesus' death opens up access to God for all who believe in Him (Heb 10:19–22). Second,

the centurion, a soldier experienced in death and crucifixion, noticed that Jesus' cry was unusual (Mark 15:39). Normally, crucifixion victims died gradually and were too weak to shout in the end. Realizing that Jesus was not an ordinary man, the centurion became the first human in Mark's gospel to call Jesus the Son of God (15:39), confirming the main point of Mark's gospel (1:1). As the Son, Jesus died to bring many to the Father.

As the Gentile honored Jesus with his words, several women honored Him with their presence (15:40–41; John 19:25–27). They were Mary

Magdalene (Luke 8:2), Mary the mother of James the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), and Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee (Matt 20:20; 27:56). These women were faithful helpers, always there for Jesus. They were also faithful followers, and they kept following even to the place where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47). Although not assigned leadership roles like the apostles, they are honored for faithfully serving Jesus.

After the Gentile and the women, a high-ranking member of the Sanhedrin honored Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus, rolling a stone in front of the tomb to keep thieves out (15:43–46). The stone was easy to roll in place but hard to roll away, since it rolled in a groove downhill to the entrance, but uphill away from the entrance. The burial itself honored Jesus as the prophesied Messiah (Isa 53:9), but it also showed how much Joseph honored Jesus. Joseph had already risked his reputation and life by opposing the Sanhedrin's verdict against Jesus (Luke 23:51). Now he also defiled himself twice, once by going right into a Gentile dwelling, and again by handling Jesus' dead body. He was willing to be unclean for Jesus, which is fitting, since Jesus was willing to be counted as a sinner for the sake of sinners like Joseph.

THINK ABOUT IT
Jesus voluntarily surrendered His life to God (John 10:17–18).



Lesson Outline

Jesus died to save sinners.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



Honor Jesus as your Messiah . . .

1. The people's mocking shows He is the Messiah (15:16–36).
2. Jesus' crucifixion shows He is the Messiah (15:20–28).
3. God's wrath shows He is the Messiah (15:33–34).
4. Jesus' death shows He is the Messiah (15:37–39).
5. Jesus' burial shows He is the Messiah (15:40–47).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus was mocked in His crucifixion (15:16–32).
 - The soldiers beat, mocked, and crucified Jesus (15:16–28).
 - The people walking by mocked Jesus (15:29–30).
 - The chief priests and scribes mocked Jesus (15:31–32a).
 - The criminals mocked Jesus (15:32b).
2. Jesus was mocked in His abandonment (15:33–36).
 - Jesus bore God's wrath (15:33–34).
 - Bystanders mocked His agonizing cry (15:35–36).
3. Jesus was honored in His death (15:37–47).
 - The temple curtain tore as Jesus died (15:37–38).
 - The centurion honored Jesus as the Son of God (15:39).
 - The women honored Jesus by being with Him (15:40–41; John 19:25–27).
 - Joseph of Arimathea honored Jesus by burying Him (15:42–47).



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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3-5 Lesson Questions

1. **What did the soldiers put on Jesus?**
They dressed Him like a fake king, with a purple robe, a crown of thorns, and a reed scepter.
2. **Who was Jesus crucified with?**
Two criminals.
3. **What happened to the sun when Jesus was on the cross?**
It became dark.
4. **What did the centurion call Jesus?**
The Son of God.



Ages 6-11 Lesson Questions

1. **What kind of people were crucified?**
Slaves, rebels, and cursed people.
2. **What did the chief priests say to make fun of Jesus?**
"He saved others. Let Him save Himself."
3. **What did all the mockery prove about Jesus?**
It fulfilled Isaiah 53:3, so it proved Jesus was exactly who they were jokingly saying He was.
4. **What did Jesus say while He was on the cross**
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?"
5. **What did the centurion notice that was strange about Jesus' death?**
Jesus cried out loudly right before dying.
6. **What happened in the temple when Jesus died?**
The curtain blocking off the Holy of Holies was ripped in two from top to bottom.
7. **Who stayed with Jesus as He died and was buried?**
Faithful women.
8. **How did Joseph of Arimathea honor Jesus?**
He was willing to be unclean in order to give Jesus an honorable burial.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

ACCESS TO GOD

Bring in a first aid kit. Show it to the children, but put it in a place they cannot reach it. Ask them what they would do if there was an emergency and they needed to get it. They would need someone to get it for them. Explain that we all have an emergency; we are all desperately “sick” with sin. But we cannot heal ourselves. We need someone much greater than us to heal us—Jesus. The Bible says that by “his wounds we are healed” (Isa 53:5). What wounds are these? In today's lesson, we will find out how we may be healed by Jesus' wounds.

MOCKING OR HONORING?

Make two signs before the lesson. One should represent mocking (angry face) and the other honoring (happy face). Talk about what it means to mock and to honor. Explain that today's lesson has some people that mock Jesus and others that honor Him. As you teach about these different people, hold up the correct sign telling the class if they mocked or honored Jesus. The children should respond by giving a “thumbs down” for those that mocked Jesus and a “thumbs up” for those that honored Jesus.



ILLUSTRATE

SETTING THE SCENE

Using butcher paper on the wall, outline a large cross on a hill. Use this as a background during the lesson time to illustrate when Jesus was nailed to the cross. At the appropriate point in the lesson, hang a sign over the top of the cross that announces Jesus' crime. On another wall, use butcher paper to create a rocky mountain with a tomb opening. During the lesson when Jesus is buried, roll a large cardboard stone across the opening of the tomb. Consider using this again for next week's lesson when the stone is rolled away to remind the children that Jesus is risen.

THE EVENTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Utilize the following props as you teach the lesson: whip, purple/scarlet fabric, long sharp thorns, vinegar, garments of clothing, long spikes, pictures of criminals, a cross, lights off, purple cloth, and stone.



APPLY

PAID IT ALL

Materials: Black construction paper, yarn, crayons.

Directions: Trace your hand on the black paper. Color it with a white crayon. Make a red circle in the middle of the hand. Write, in white, under the hand “Paid it all”. Use the yarn to make a lace at the top of the page.



Paid it all

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AGES 6–8



STICKS AND STONES

Ask the children to finish the following phrase: “Sticks and stones may... (break my bones, but words will never hurt me).” Is that true? Absolutely not! Our words can do a lot to hurt or to heal. Have the children ever experienced mocking? How did they feel? How did they want to respond? In our lesson today, Jesus endures cruel mocking from soldiers, Pilate’s sign, the people, the religious leaders, and the criminals crucified alongside him. However, even though the mocking was cruel and unjust, He did not respond. We will find out why in today’s lesson.

THE SUBSTITUTE

Pin something onto the wall or ceiling, higher than any child can reach. Tell the children that if they are unable to reach it themselves, they may ask anyone to do it for them. They will most likely ask one of the teachers. The teacher is their substitute! A substitute is someone who does something which you are unable to do, in your place, and on your behalf. Jesus died as our substitute. He paid the price for sin that we could never pay. That’s what our lesson is about today: Jesus, our great substitute.



BUT WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Crimes against the president receive a harsher punishment. Why is that? What if someone commits a crime against God? What kind of punishment should they receive? Death (Rom 6:23). Even one sin is worthy of eternal separation from God in hell (Jas 2:10) Why? Our sin is against an infinitely great and holy God. Any sin we commit is infinitely great because it is against an infinitely great God. This is why Jesus needed to die for sin. Only God’s Son could pay a big enough penalty to cover our sin.

TORN IN TWO

Tear a sheet from top to bottom. Explain that the veil in the temple was 6 inches thick and 30 feet wide. It separated the priests from the presence of God in a room called the Holy of Holies. It was a visible symbol that man was separated from God. However, the moment Jesus died, there was a great earthquake. God split the curtain of the temple from top to bottom, symbolizing that all people now had access to God, not just the priests.



JESUS DIED FOR SIN

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, white paper plate, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

Directions: Color the plate, making sure that there is a field, a hill and the sky. Cut the half of the inside part of the plate. Cut the crosses. Color two of them in black. Glue the cross on the cut part of the plate, with the white cross in the middle.

*Jesus Died for Sin
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

SUBSTITUTE

Imagine a convicted murderer about to be put to death. The executioner asks if he has any last words, but before he can respond, someone bursts through the door. It is a man, but not just any man—it is the father of the girl murdered by the prisoner! Everyone is shocked and anxious. The room goes quiet. What do you think happens next? The father says calmly: “Remove this man from the chair. Let him go free. I will die in his place. I will pay the price of his crime.” Can you imagine this happening? The story we will hear today is even more unbelievable: The Son of God, Jesus, dies for the sins of His enemies (Rom 5:10).

LAST WORDS

Write Jesus’ last words on the board or on a poster board before the children arrive: “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (Mark 15:34). Ask the children if they have ever heard this phrase before. What language is it (Aramaic)? Who said it? What does it mean? Explain that they were Jesus’ final words before He gave up His life on the cross. For the first time in Jesus’ life, He did not call God “Father.” Why not? We will find out in today’s lesson.



ILLUSTRATE

LIVING ILLUSTRATION

The two criminals crucified alongside Jesus joined in the mocking (Mark 15:32). Yet the Bible records that one of these men repented and trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins. Read Luke 23:39–43. This repentant criminal is a living illustration of why Jesus voluntarily suffered and died on the cross: to save sinners. The one who spent his final hours mocking Jesus would that very day join Jesus in paradise.

A RANSOM TO WHOM?

Jesus gave “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Most children understand “ransoms” as they relate to kidnappings. Ask them what a ransom is and how it works. In a kidnapping, to whom is the ransom paid (the kidnapper). Explain that the way a ransom is used in a kidnapping does not accurately represent the ransom Jesus paid to free us from our sin. The “ransom” Jesus paid was not to Satan. It was paid to God to satisfy His anger against sin (Rom 3:24–25). It is God that is offended by our sins.



APPLY

WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

There are only two types of people in this world, and they are represented by the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus. Both mocked Jesus, and both were guilty of great crimes. They both deserved death. Yet while one man apparently kept mocking Jesus up to the moment of his death, the other called out to Jesus and received the gift of salvation (Luke 23:39–43). This repentant criminal joined Jesus in paradise that very day, while the other was eternally separated from Jesus’ presence. Which criminal are you? If you are the unrepentant criminal, call out to Jesus who graciously saves! If you are the repentant criminal, thank Him with your life for His incredible gift of grace.