

Mark Chapter 15

Mark 15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried [him] away, and delivered [him] to Pilate."

“Straightway in the morning”: At daybreak, probably between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. Having illegally decided Jesus’ guilt during the night (14:53-65; John 18:13-24), the Sanhedrin formally convened after daybreak to pronounce a sentence.

“Chief priests” (see note on Matt. 2:4). “Elders and scribes” (see notes on 14:43; Matt. 2:4).

The “whole council” would be Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish judicial body, which must ratify the sentence pronounced by night (in 14:64). The entire Sanhedrin (see notes on 14:43, 53; Matthew 26:59).

This meeting is described (in Luke 22:66-71). It amounted to little more than reiterating the charges earlier made against Jesus and affirming His guilty verdict.

“Pilate” Roman procurator (governor), of Judea from A.D. 26-36. His official residence was at Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem for Passover. Pilate alone however, who wielded Rome’s authority in Palestine, could actually have a death sentence carried out.

Jesus was first taken to Annas, then Caiphaz (the high priest), and then to the Roman in charge, Pilate. We see a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy, here, (they shall deliver him to the Gentiles). Rome had power in Jerusalem in those days and only the Romans could order Jesus’ death.

Mark 15:2 "And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest [it]."

“Pilate asked him”: John records (John 18:30), that the Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate simply agree to the death sentence they had already pronounced on Jesus (14:64). Pilate refused, and the Jewish leaders then presented their false charges against Jesus (Luke 23:2). Having heard those charges, Pilate then questioned Him.

Pilate really was not in favor of killing Jesus. He asked Jesus, Are you the king of the Jews? The only charge Pilate took seriously was that Jesus claimed to be a king, thus making Him guilty of rebellion against Rome. Jesus answered Pilate in a way that left no argument. This was as if He was saying, "Yes, but you said it". Pilate’s question reveals that he had already been informed of this charge (Luke 23:2).

Jesus answer acknowledged that He was the rightful king of Israel, but implied that Pilate’s concept of what that meant differed from His (John 18:34-37).

Mark 15:3 "And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing."

Sometimes, the best answer is no answer at all, and we see that was what the Lord did there. The chief priests were accusing Jesus of everything they could think of to try to stir Pilate up. They mentioned Jesus being King of the Jews, thinking Pilate would think that Jesus would lead the Jews against Rome.

Mark 15:4 "And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee."

Answerest thou nothing”: Pilate was amazed at Jesus’ silence, since accused prisoners predictably and vehemently denied the charges against them. Jesus may have remained silent in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 42:1-2; John 18:38), or both.

As we said before, Pilate was truly trying to get to the bottom of this. He was not on anyone's side at that moment. He marveled that Jesus was not defending Himself by answering back all these accusations, as we see (in verse 5).

Mark 15:5 "But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled."

On Jesus’ silence see (Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:23).

Mark 15:6 "Now at [that] feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired."

“At that feast”: The Passover.

Ancient secular sources indicate that Roman governors occasionally granted amnesty at the request of their subjects. Assuming that the people would ask for their king whom they had so acknowledged earlier in the week (11:1-10), to be freed, Pilate undoubtedly saw this annual custom as the way out of his dilemma regarding Jesus.

This was like a governor pardoning a criminal. It was the custom to pardon one prisoner during the Passover feast. Pilate somewhere along here sent Jesus to Herod to be judged, because Pilate could find no fault in Him. We also see (in Luke 23:12).

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Pilate and Herod, even though they were involved in sentencing Jesus, were not as guilty as these high priests, priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

Mark 15:7 "And there was [one] named Barabbas, [which lay] bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."

“Barabbas”: A robber (John 18:40), and murderer (Luke 23:18-19), in some way involved as an anti-Roman insurrectionist.

Whether his involvement was motivated by political conviction or personal greed is not known. It is impossible to identify the specific insurrection in question, but such uprisings were common in Jesus’ day and were precursors of the wholesale revolt of A.D. 66-70.

This Barabbas was not only a murderer but had tried to overthrow the government, as well. Barabbas was not just a regular criminal, but a vicious murderer.

Mark 15:8-9 "And the multitude crying aloud began to desire [him to do] as he had ever done unto them." "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

You see, from the very beginning Pilate could find no fault in Jesus. In this question Pilate was asking them to ask for the release of Jesus.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing. He could see right through these accusations of the high priests. He knew that their jealousy of His powerful ministry had caused them to try to get Jesus killed. He knew that Jesus was not guilty of any crime punishable by death.

Mark 15:10 "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy."

“Delivered him for envy”: Pilate realized that the Jewish authorities had not handed Jesus over to him out of loyalty to Rome. He saw through their deceit to the underlying reason, their jealousy over Jesus’ popularity with the people.

We see priests who were supposed to be upholding the things of God, who were so puffed up with pride that they were about to destroy the Savior of the World. High priests were supposed to know the Scriptures, and yet they would not believe that Jesus was Messiah.

Mark 15:11 "But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."

The Chief priests had a hold on the people. They used their great influence here, and caused the people to cry out for this murderer Barabbas over Jesus.

Mark 15:12 "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do [unto him] whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

I believe Pilate was seeking every way he could to not kill Jesus. Pilate actually believed Jesus was who He said He was, I believe. Pilate told them, you will have to judge your King yourselves.

Mark 15:13 "And they cried out again, Crucify him."

“Crucify Him” (see note on Matt. 27:31). Crucifixion, the common Roman method of execution for slaves and foreigners, was described by the Roman writer Cicero as “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.”

This cry will ring through all the ages. These two words "crucify him" changed all of history. It brought death and hell to those who do not believe, and life everlasting for those who do believe.

Mark 15:14 "Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him."

Pilate, through these verses, tried to make the people understand that they were crucifying an innocent man. The people would not listen to Pilate, but listened to these evil priests. What a terrible thing to know that you asked for Jesus to be crucified. They were crying out, but we had our part in this as well.

Every person who ever lived (except Jesus), had sin in his life at one time. Our sins helped cause Jesus to be crucified. He was crucified for our sins, so that we might go free.

Mark 15:15 "And [so] Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged [him], to be crucified."

“Scourged”: With a whip (known as a flagellum), consisting of a wooden handle to which metal-tipped leather thongs were attached. Being scourged with a flagellum was a fearful ordeal, ripping the flesh down to the bone, causing severe bleeding. It was a beating from which prisoners often died.

In Matthew, we read about Pilate's attitude:

Matthew 27:24 "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but [that] rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed [his] hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye [to it]."

This was all against the wishes of Pilate. The people spoke, and Pilate allowed this, because it was the will of the people.

Mark 15:16 "And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band."

"Praetorium" means governor's courtroom, or hall of judgment. This "whole band" here, meant large number of soldiers. Probably located in the Fortress Antonia complex.

"Band" is a cohort (six hundred men), of Roman soldiers. It may rather refer to a smaller contingent from among such a cohort as all the soldiers who were not on duty at that time gathered to mock Jesus.

Mark 15:17 "And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his [head],"

"Clothed him with purple crown of thorns": "Purple" was the color traditionally worn by royalty; the "crown of thorns" was in mockery of a royal crown. The callous soldiers decided to hold a mock coronation of Jesus as king of the Jews.

Little did they know that He should be robed in purple (purple is one of the godly colors). Purple showed Jesus as the King of not only the Jews, but was looking forward to when He will come in the clouds as King of kings and Lord of lords when he will be King of all the earth.

Thorns were a very hated plant on the earth. This "crown of thorns" showed just how little regard these soldiers had for our Lord. Of course, it was painful also, with the thorns sticking in His head.

Mark 15:18 "And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!"

"Hail, King of the Jews": The greeting was a parody of that given to Caesar.

This salute was a sarcastic salute. They were saying, "You say you are King, but look at you now."

Mark 15:19 "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing [their] knees worshipped him."

"Reed": An imitation of a royal scepter.

All of this was mocking Jesus. Had they only known who He really was, they would never have done this. This spitting and striking Jesus went on and on. Bowing to worship Him was laughing at Him and making fun, as well.

Mark 15:20 "And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him."

We know from other Scriptures that they took Him outside the city wall to be crucified.

Mark Chapter 15 Verses 1-20 Questions

1. After the council of priests, elders, and scribes met, they bound Jesus and took Him to whom?
2. Who was the only one who could order the death penalty in those days?
3. What did Pilate ask Jesus?
4. How did Jesus answer?
5. When the chief priests accused Jesus of many things, what did Jesus answer?
6. Why did the chief priest tell Pilate that Jesus said He was King of the Jews?
7. Why did Pilate marvel at Jesus?
8. This release of a prisoner at the feast was like what?
9. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?
10. What good thing for Pilate came of all this?
11. Who was truly to blame for the crucifixion?
12. Who was the murderer who was bound for trial?
13. Who did Pilate want to release?
14. Who did the people want released?
15. Who had swayed the people's opinion?
16. What did Pilate know was the real reason the priests wanted Jesus killed?
17. Pilate asked the people what, to do with Jesus, what did they answer?
18. What did Pilate try to convince them of to no avail?
19. What part did we have in Jesus being crucified?
20. What physical thing did Pilate do to show that he had no part in this?
21. Who took Jesus away?
22. What does Praetorium mean?
23. What color robe did they put on Jesus?
24. What did this purple robe really show Jesus as?
25. What was His crown made of?
26. What other terrible things did the soldiers do to Jesus?
27. What did they put on Him to take Him to crucify Him?

Mark Chapter 15 Verses 21-35

Mark 15:21 "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross."

Condemned prisoners were required to carry the heavy crossbeam of their cross to the execution site. Exhausted from a sleepless night and severely wounded and weakened by His scourging, Jesus was unable to continue.

The Roman guards conscripted Simon, apparently at random, to carry Jesus' crossbeam the rest of the way. Simon, from the North African city of Cyrene, was on his way into Jerusalem. The identification of him as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Rom. 16:13), is evidence of Mark's connection with the church at Rome.

"Cyrene" is a country of Africa, so this was a black man. Jesus had carried the cross part of the way, and when they saw His body was weak, they took hold of Simon and compelled him to carry the cross for Jesus.

There are several mentions of Alexander in the book of Acts, and in Romans we read of Rufus, which makes us think that they were followers of the Lord. Possibly, they were part of the 120.

Mark 15:22 "And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull."

"Golgotha ... place of a skull": "Golgotha" is an Aramaic word meaning "skull," which Mark translated for his readers. Although the exact site is unknown, today two locations in Jerusalem are considered as possibilities:

- (1) Gordon's Calvary (named for the man who discovered it in modern times), to the north; and
- (2) The traditional site to the west at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a tradition dating to the fourth century.

"Golgotha" lay outside the city wall, and was the execution site for Jerusalem. It is synonymous with Calvary, which comes from a Latin word also meaning "skull."

In Luke chapter 23, this place was called "Calvary". This hill really does look like a skull.

Mark 15:23 "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received [it] not."

"Wine mingled with myrrh": To temporarily deaden the pain (see note on Matt. 27:34), the Romans allowed this drink to be administered to victims of crucifixion, probably not out of compassion, but to keep them from struggling while being crucified.

"Myrrh" would have dulled the pain, but Jesus would not take it.

This was a drink to kill the pain, but the Lord refused the pain killer, because He wanted not to be numbed from the pain, but to endure the full impact of the cross.

Mark 15:24 "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."

"Crucified" (see note on verse 15). None of the gospel accounts give a detailed description of the actual crucifixion process.

“Parted his garments”: This was in fulfillment of (Psalm 22:18). The executioners customarily divided the victim’s clothes among themselves.

Roman legal texts indicate that the executioners had a legal right to claim the minor possessions of the accused.

We see here, that Mark doesn't go into great detail about the crucifixion; it just states that they crucified Him. His coat was a coat that had no seam. They didn't want to tear it, so they cast lots. (In John 19:23), we read that four soldiers each got a part, and then they cast lots for His coat.

Mark 15:25 "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him."

“Third hour”: The crucifixion occurred at 9:00 a.m. based on the Jewish method of reckoning time. John notes that it was “about” the sixth hour” when Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (John 19:14).

Jesus suffered on the cross six hours, symbolic of six days of work on the earth.

Mark 15:26 "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

“Superscription of his accusation”: The crime for which a condemned man was executed was written on a wooden board, which was fastened to the cross above his head. Jesus’ inscription was written in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. (John 19:20; see note on Matt. 27:37).

“THE KING OF THE JEWS”: Since Pilate had repeatedly declared Jesus to be innocent of any crime (Luke 23:4; 14-15; 14:22), he ordered this inscription written for Him. While Pilate’s intent was probably neither to mock nor to honor Jesus, he certainly intended it as an affront to the Jewish authorities, who had given him so much trouble.

When the outraged Jewish leaders demanded the wording be changed, Pilate bluntly refused (see note on John 19:22). A comparison of all 4 gospel accounts reveals that the full inscription read THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (see note on Luke 23:38).

This sign confirms that Jesus was sentenced for having claimed to be the Jewish Messiah.

Matthew 27:37 "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Mark 15:27 "And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left."

“Two thieves”: They were probably involved with Barabbas in the rebellion (see note on verse 7), since robbery itself was not a capital offense under Roman law.

Of these two thieves, the one on the right repented and was saved, and the one on the left died in his sin. These two symbolized the lost of all humanity on the left, and those saved by the blood of the Lamb on the right. In heaven, it will be Jesus, the Judge of all the world who will put the sheep on the right and the goats on the left; the separation, sheep (saved), goats (lost).

Mark 15:28 "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."

By placing Jesus’ cross between the two robbers (verse 27), Pilate may have intended to further insult the Jews, implying that their king was nothing but a common criminal. God intended it, however, as a fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 53:12).

Both the man on the left and the man on Jesus' right were sinners and deserved their punishment. The difference was the one on the right repented, and Jesus promised him eternal life.

Mark 15:29 "And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [it] in three days,"

“wagging their heads”: A gesture of contempt and derision (2 Kings 19:21; Psalms 22:7; 44:14; 109:25; Jer. 18:16; Lam. 2:15).

“Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days”: The passerby repeated the false charge made during Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas (14:58). The charge was a misunderstanding of Jesus’ words (in John 2:19-21).

“Railed on” means they hurled insults.

You see, they had no idea that He was speaking of His body in this. Jesus spoke in parables, so that the unbelievers would not understand. Understanding of this and all other Scriptures comes from the Holy Spirit of God revealing the meaning to us.

Mark 15:30 "Save thyself, and come down from the cross."

He could have come down off the cross any time He wanted to, but had He gotten down before the body died, all of humanity would have been lost. This was the choice that Jesus Himself made to endure the shame of the cross that we might be renewed to God and live.

Mark 15:31 "Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save."

If there ever was an incorrect statement, this was it. Jesus did save others (this is true). He could save Himself (He just wouldn't for our sakes). One terribly false teaching going around is that demons took Jesus off the cross. Satan, a demon, or nothing else ever had power over the Lord Jesus. He stayed on the cross, because He chose to.

He defeated Satan for all time on the cross. Jesus did not suffer in hell. He was victorious on the cross, and the Father had planned it. This was victory, not defeat.

Mark 15:32 "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him."

“Christ” (see note on 1:1).

“Descend now from the cross”: A final demand for a miracle by the unbelieving Jewish authorities (8:11). Their claim that they would then see and believe was false, since they later refused to believe the even greater miracle of Christ’s resurrection.

“They that were crucified with him”: The two robbers joined in the reviling of Jesus, though one latter repented (Luke 23:40-43).

They would not believe even if He came down from the cross. Jesus raised the dead, opened blind eyes, freed the demoniac man, fed the 5000, and they did not believe. Even a voice from heaven came and called Jesus

God's Son at Jesus' baptism. This would not alter their opinion any more than all of these things did. You either believe, or you don't; and they didn't.

Jesus did not use His great power for personal reasons. He would suffer the pain and humiliation of the cross to fulfill the will of the Father, and to save all who will believe. We Christians, can learn a lesson from this. When others revile us for the gospel's sake, just hang in there that much firmer.

Mark 15:33 "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."

“Sixth hour”: Noon, by Jewish reckoning, at the half-way point of Jesus’ 6 hours on the cross (see note on verse 25).

Darkness reigned from noon until 3 p.m. A mark of divine judgment (Isa. 5:30; 13:10-11; Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:14-15; Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). The geographical extent of the darkness is not known, although the writings of the church fathers hint that it extended beyond Palestine.

“Ninth hour”: I.e., 3:00 p.m.

Satan thought he had put out the Light of the world, but Satan never counted on the resurrection.

Mark 15:34 "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

“Eloi ... sabachthani?” The Aramaic words of (Psalm 22:1). Matthew, who also record this cry, gave the Hebrew words (Matt. 27:46).

“Why hast thou forsaken me?” Jesus felt keenly His abandonment by the Father, resulting from God’s wrath being poured out on Him as the substitute for sinners (see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21).

Mark preserves the Aramaic form of Jesus’ outcry, which calls (Psalm 22:1), to mind. Some mistook His words (verse 35). Even in the midst of bearing God’s wrath for sin, Jesus still calls Him “my God.” His agony does not overcome His faith.

God the Father cannot look upon sin. Jesus had taken the sin of the whole world upon His body, so that sin might die upon the cross. The Father, for a moment, turned away so the full pain of the flesh could be experienced by Jesus our Lord (His Son). Sin was crucified with Jesus on the cross.

Mark 15:35 "And some of them that stood by, when they heard [it], said, Behold, he calleth Elijah."

Further mockery which in effect meant, “let the forerunner come and save this so-called Messiah” (see note on Luke 1:17).

In the 4th chapter of Malachi, it had been promised that Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Some of these people thought Jesus was calling Elijah.

Mark Chapter 15 Verses 21-35 Questions

1. Who did they compel to carry Jesus' cross?
2. What country was he from?
3. What did that tell us about him?
4. Who are Alexander and Rufus, probably?
5. Give two other names for Golgotha?
6. What did they offer Jesus to drink?
7. Why did He not take it?
8. After they crucified Him, what did they do with His garments?
9. Why did they not separate the coat?
10. How many soldiers were His garments given to?
11. At what hour did they crucify Him?
12. How long would Jesus be on the cross?
13. In Mark 15:26, what was the superscription of His accusations?
14. In Matthew 27:37, what was said?
15. Who was crucified with Jesus?
16. Who did the two thieves symbolize?
17. What was the difference in the two here?
18. What did those wagging their heads say to Jesus?
19. How do we read and understand a parable?
20. Had Jesus come down off the cross, what would have happened to all of humanity?
21. In verse 31, what did the chief priests mockingly say about Jesus?
22. What is a terrible teaching going around about demons and Jesus?
23. Where was Jesus victorious?
24. In verse 32, what did the priests call Jesus?
25. Why do we know that they would not have believed, even if He had come down?
26. What lesson can we, Christians, learn from this?
27. At what hours was the darkness over the land?
28. What does this three hours of darkness symbolize?
29. What did Jesus cry out at the end of the ninth hour?
30. What had Jesus taken on His body?
31. Who did some of the people believe Jesus called?
32. What Old Testament prophecy caused them to believe this?

Mark Chapter 15 Verses 36-47

Mark 15:36 "And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put [it] on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

“Vinegar” meaning a sour wine. Cheap wine commonly consumed by soldiers and workers. It may have been an act of mercy, or merely intended to prolong His suffering.

“Reed”: A hyssop branch (John 19:29).

The thought in offering drink was to prolong consciousness in case “Elijah” was about to appear.

In the last lesson, Jesus had cried out to the Father, and those standing around thought He was calling out to Elijah.

Mark 15:37 "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

“With a loud voice”: Demonstrating amazing strength in light of the intense suffering He had endured. His shout reveals that His life did not slowly ebb away, but that He voluntarily gave it up (John 10:17-18). For the words of Christ’s cry (see Luke 23:46).

This showed that the act of giving up the ghost was of Jesus' free will. This loud voice indicated His power was still there to do as He would. The six hours of work on the cross was over. He had accomplished what He had set out to do.

Mark 15:38 "And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

“The veil of the temple was rent in twain”: The massive curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary (Exodus 26:31-33; 40:20-21; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:3). This rending signified that the way into God’s presence was open by the death of His Son.

The temple “veil” hung between the Holy of Holies (the sanctuary of God’s very presence), and the rest of the temple. It was a somber reminder of the separation between God and man. Tearing of the veil indicates that Christ’s death makes possible free access for sinners to the holy and almighty God.

Here we see the curtain, which closed the way to God the Father, was now opened. It was not opened by man (from the earth), but by the Lord of all the heavenly. It was torn from the top; showing that God did it. Now, the way to the Father was open to man. No mere man could go to the Father before, but now the way was opened by the Son.

Mark 15:39 "And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God."

“Centurion”: The Roman officer in charge of the crucifixion. Centurions, considered the backbone of the Roman army, commanded 100 soldiers.

“Saw that he so cried out”: The centurion had seen many crucified victims die, but none like Jesus. The strength He possessed at His death, as evidenced by His loud cry (verse 37), was unheard of for a victim of crucifixion.

That, coupled with the earthquake that coincided with Christ's death (Matt. 27:51-54), convinced the centurion that Jesus "was the Son of God." According to tradition, this man actually became a believer (see note on Matt. 27:54).

The fact that Jesus dismissed His Spirit from His body tells you He was in total control. This is more fully described (in Luke 23:46):

Luke 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

Jesus you see, commanded His Spirit to go to the Father, dismissing His Spirit from His body. This centurion had been at many crucifixions and knew this one was different. He was convinced by the happenings that Jesus truly was the Son of God.

Mark 15:40 "There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;"

Some of these women had earlier been at the foot of the cross (John 19:25-27). By then, unable to watch Jesus' suffering at such close range, they were "looking on from a distance." Their sympathetic loyalty was in sharp contrast to the disciples who, except for John, were nowhere to be found.

"Mary Magdalene": She was from the village of Magdala, on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee, hence her name. Luke notes that Jesus had cast 7 demons out of her (Luke 8:2). She is usually named first when the women who followed Jesus are listed, which may suggest that she was their leader.

"Mother of James the less and of Joses": She is distinguished from the other Marys' by the name of her sons. "James the Less" (called "James the son of Alphaeus" in Matt. 10:3), was one of the twelve.

"Salome": The wife of Zebedee (Matt. 27:56), and the mother of James and John (see note on 10:35).

Mention of these "women" is significant, for they serve as eyewitnesses to the death, burial and Resurrection (see 15:47; 16:1).

Mark 15:41 "(Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem."

"Many other women": They had been with Jesus since the days of His Galilean ministry, traveling with Him and the disciples, caring for their needs (Luke 8:2-3).

We see that the women (even in the face of these self-righteous religious people), had not abandoned Jesus. Jesus' ministry involved these women. Mary Magdalene had been delivered by Jesus of seven devils. These women never doubted who this was. It is very sad, but even today the larger percentage of the church is made up of devoted women.

Most churches have three women for every man. Perhaps, the women were not in as much danger as the men being close by. We do not know the details; we just know they were there. John was there also, and brought the account.

Mark 15:42 "And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,"

“Preparation ... day”: Friday, the day before the Sabbath (Saturday).

Mark 15:43 "Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."

“Joseph of Arimathea”: “Arimathea,” known in the Old Testament as Ramah, or Ramathaim-zophim (the birthplace of Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:1, 19; 2:11), was located about 15-20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Joseph was a prominent member of the “council” (or the Sanhedrin, see note on 14:43), who had opposed Jesus’ condemnation (Luke 23:51).

“Kingdom of God” (see note on 1:15).

“Went in boldly”: Pilate would not likely have been pleased to see a member of the Sanhedrin, after that group had forced him to crucify an innocent man. Further, Joseph’s public identification with Jesus would enrage the other members of the Sanhedrin.

“And craved the body of Jesus”: Though prisoners sentenced to death forfeited the right to burial under Roman law, their bodies were usually granted to relatives who asked for them, but Jesus mother was emotionally exhausted from the ordeal.

There is no evidence that His brothers and sisters were in Jerusalem and His closest friends, the disciples, had fled (except for John, who had Mary to take care of; John 19:26-27). In the absence of those closest to Jesus, Joseph courageously asked Pilate for Jesus’ body.

“Craved” means requested.

“Arimathea,” Joseph’s birthplace, was about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

“Joseph” was a member of the Sanhedrin, and asking for the body of one convicted of treason or sedition was a daring step of devotion to an unpopular figure. Such criminals were normally left to the elements and carrion birds.

The Sabbath began at 6 p.m., so the body had to be taken care of quickly. About 3 p.m., Jesus gave up the ghost. This left three hours for getting the body wrapped and in the tomb before Sabbath. This was Friday, not Wednesday, as many would have you believe.

Sabbath is Saturday, the day before is Friday. Matthew tells us a little more about Joseph of Arimathea. It says that he was a rich man, and also a disciple of Jesus. Perhaps, he was of the 120 disciples. We know he had a cave that had not been used for burial. This was where he would lay Jesus.

Joseph loved Christ enough to expose himself to the danger of association with Him, just to be able to bury His body. Possibly he was known of Pilate, but at any rate, he was allowed to see Pilate and ask for the body. Remember, Pilate found no fault in Jesus.

Mark 15:44 "And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling [unto him] the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead."

“Pilate marveled”: Victims of crucifixion often lingered for days, hence Pilate’s surprise that Jesus was dead after only 6 hours. Before granting Jesus’ body to Joseph, Pilate checked with the “centurion” in charge of the crucifixion (see note on verse 39), to verify that Jesus was really dead.

This was a very unusual turn of events. Most crucifixions were long and drawn out. Many times the legs of the victims had to be broken to hasten death. This was not the case with Jesus. He had no broken bones. The perfect Lamb sacrifice could have no broken bones. In John, we read a little more detail about their not breaking His legs.

John 19:31-34 "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away." "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him." "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:" "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

Every little detail of prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus is our Lamb Sacrifice. The centurion could only say, "Yes, He is dead" when Pilate asked.

Mark 15:45 "And when he knew [it] of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."

"He gave the body to Joseph": Having received confirmation from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate granted Jesus' body to Joseph. By that act the Romans officially pronounced Jesus dead.

Hebrews do not embalm, embalming is an Egyptian custom, so Jesus was wrapped in fine linen and carried to the tomb, as we read (in verse 46).

Mark 15:46 "And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher."

"Wrapped him in the linen": The Jews did not embalm corpses, but wrapped them in perfumed burial cloths (see note on 16:1). Nicodemus, another prominent member of the Sanhedrin (John 7:50), assisted Joseph in caring for the body of Jesus (John 19:39-40). These men, who had kept their allegiance to Jesus secret during His lifetime, then came forward publicly to bury Him, while the disciples, who had openly followed Jesus, hid (John 20:19).

"Sepulcher ... hewn out of a rock": This "tomb" was located near Golgotha (John 19:42). Matthew adds that It was Joseph's own (Matt. 27:60), while Luke and John note that no one as yet, had been buried in it (Luke 23:53; John 19:41).

We see that Joseph loved Jesus, possibly, even helped with the wrapping and carrying of the body personally. At any rate, Jesus was put in a brand new tomb which had belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. This had been hewn out of a rock, and Jesus was laid inside, and a large stone rolled over the door. This fulfilled the Scripture which stated He would be buried with the rich.

Mark 15:47 "And Mary Magdalene and Mary [the mother] of Joses beheld where he was laid."

The women had still been at the cross when Joseph came and got the body, and they followed, and saw where the body was laid. The spices or perfumes would be applied to the burial cloths later.

I say one more time that Hebrews were not embalmed, as that was an Egyptian practice. Hebrews today are buried within 24 hours so embalming is not necessary.

Mark Chapter 15 Verses 36-47 Questions

1. What did Jesus do, right before He gave up the Ghost?
2. What did that show us and the centurion?
3. How many hours was the suffering on the cross?
4. How was the temple veil torn?
5. What does this show?
6. When the centurion saw all of this, what did he say?
7. In Luke 23:46, what do we learn about Jesus' death on the cross?
8. Who were the loyal followers of Jesus who stood nearby?
9. What is a sad thing in our churches today regarding women?
10. Who was Mary Magdalene?
11. What disciple had been at the crucifixion?
12. What was the hurry to get the body off the cross and buried?
13. Who came for the body?
14. Who did he ask for it?
15. How many hours were left for the burying before the Sabbath?
16. What day of the week was Jesus crucified?
17. In verse 42, what left no doubt as to the day?
18. Who was Joseph of Arimathea?
19. What did Pilate marvel at?
20. What sometimes had to be done to hurry death?
21. Were Jesus' legs broken? Why?
22. When the soldier pierced Jesus side, what two things came out?
23. When did Pilate release Jesus' body to Joseph?
24. What was Jesus wrapped in?
25. What does the material symbolize?
26. After Jesus was placed in the rock hewn tomb, what was done to secure the tomb?
27. What country does embalming come from?
28. Was Jesus embalmed?
29. What two women beheld where He lay?