

# Nailed to the Cross



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 14

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Mark 15:1–15; Mark 15:15–20; Mark 15:21–38; Mark 15:33–41; Mark 15:42–47.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “At three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘My God, My God, why have You left Me alone?’ ” (Mark 15:34, NLV).

**MARK 15** tells the story of Jesus’ court trial and death sentence. Also in Mark 15, we read about the soldiers who make fun of Jesus. Then Jesus is nailed to the cross. He dies and is buried.

In Mark 15, things happen in a way that is different from what you may expect. Writers give a special name to this type of experience: irony. Because irony is an important part of Mark 15, we need to know more about it.

Irony often has three parts: (1) when an experience or word in a story has two different meanings, we say that the experience or word is filled with irony. (2) The two different meanings don’t agree with each other. And (3) someone in the story doesn’t see the irony or different meanings. This person doesn’t understand what’s going on around him. So, he doesn’t know that he will suffer.

This week, Mark writes about many painful experiences that also are filled with irony: Pilate’s question to Jesus, the laughing soldiers, the sign above the cross, the mean and nasty Jewish leaders who make fun of Jesus when He is dying. All these painful experiences show us powerful Bible truths about Jesus and what His death means for us.



**This week, Mark writes about many painful experiences that are also filled with irony: Pilate’s question to Jesus, the laughing soldiers, the sign above the cross, the mean and nasty Jewish leaders who make fun of Jesus when He is dying.**

**ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS? (Mark 15:1–15)**

**Read the story in Mark 15:1–15. What ironies do you see in this story? As we saw yesterday, irony is an experience that happens in a way that is different from what you may expect.**

The Jews decide Jesus must die for saying He is God. Roman law didn't allow the Jews to kill anyone. So, the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 26–36. Pilate was not a nice leader. He did many things to upset the Jews (compare with Luke 13:1).

Pilate's question gives us a hint of the "crime" that the Jews accused Jesus of doing. Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" (Mark 15:2, ESV). In Old Testament times, Jewish leaders poured oil on Israel's kings to show that God chose them. The word for the Savior in the Hebrew language was "Messiah," which meant "the One God chose and poured His Spirit on," the same as oil. So, for many Jews, the idea of the Messiah was the same as a king. As a king, the Messiah could challenge the King of Rome. So, when Jesus says He is God, we understand why the Jews accuse Him of fighting against Rome. The Romans often killed people for this crime.

Do you see the irony or misunderstanding in this story? The Jews want to kill Jesus because He says He is God and the King of the Jews. The irony is that the Jews don't see that Jesus is both! The leaders don't believe Jesus is who He says He is. So, they want to punish Him for His "crimes." But they should really honor and worship Him. Jesus answers Pilate's question, " 'You have said so' " (Mark 15:2, NIV). Notice Jesus' answer. Jesus doesn't say that He is a king or is not a king. Jesus' answer shows us that He is a king, but not the type of king that Pilate expects.

In Mark 15:9, 10, Pilate understands that the Jews bring Jesus to him because they are jealous of Him. But Pilate doesn't see that he does what the Jewish leaders want when he asks the crowd who they want him to release: Jesus or the criminal Barabbas? The Jewish leaders get the crowd to shout for Pilate to send Jesus to die on a cross. Pilate is surprised. The cross was a terrible way to die. Worse, Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. So, we see more irony in this story, or something else that we didn't expect: the Roman governor wants to save Jesus, while Jesus' own people want to nail Him to the cross.



**Jesus' answer shows us that He is a king, but not the type of king that Pilate expects.**

**WELCOME, KING OF THE JEWS! (Mark 15:15–20)**

**Read the story in Mark 15:15–20. What did the soldiers do to Jesus? What do their actions mean?**



**The truth, or irony, is that Jesus really is King, and not just of the Jews.**

The Romans beat prisoners to get them ready for death. First, the Romans removed all of the prisoner's clothes. Next, they tied him to a pole. Then they beat him with leather whips. Pieces of bone, glass, stones, and nails were tied to the leather whips.

After Jesus was whipped, the soldiers continued to shame Him. The soldiers put purple clothes on Jesus. They placed a crown of thorns on His head. The soldiers made fun of Jesus for being the King of the Jews. This group of soldiers that hurt Jesus was named a battalion. A battalion has from 200 to 600 men.

As readers, we can see the irony in this story. You will remember that irony is when an experience or word in a story has two different meanings. Also, someone in the story doesn't see the irony or different meanings. We see the irony in this story because we know what the soldiers don't know: Jesus really is the King. The soldiers are making fun of Jesus when they say He is a king. But they announce the truth. The soldiers make fun of Jesus with words that they used to greet the King of Rome: " 'Welcome, King of the Jews!' " (Mark 15:18, ERV).

The soldiers also make fun of Jesus in other ways. They hit his head with a stick. They spit on Him. Then they kneel down and pretend to honor Him. The Greek language that Mark uses shows us that the soldiers do all three of these actions again and again. So, they keep hitting Jesus. They keep spitting on Him. They keep kneeling down in front of Him and making fun of Him. Jesus stays silent. He doesn't say anything or show them any of His feelings.

The Romans made prisoners remove all their clothes and then carry their cross. Why did the Romans do this? They wanted to shame the person completely in front of the community. Mark 15:20 says that the soldiers removed the purple clothes from Jesus. But the Jews were against wearing no clothes in public. So, the Romans put Jesus' own clothes back on Him.

Do you see all the irony in this story? The soldiers bow in "respect" to Jesus as King. But they do it to make fun of Him. The truth, or irony, is that Jesus really is King, and not just of the Jews. He is their King, too.

## NAILED TO THE CROSS (Mark 15:21–38)

**Read Mark 15:21–38. What terrible and painful irony do we read about in these verses? Remember, irony is an experience that happens in a way that is different from what you may expect.**

In this part of the story, Jesus is silent. People who want to kill Him are in control. Until Jesus' arrest, He did many things to help people. Now people do whatever they want to Him and against Him. Jesus was a strong preacher who was in good health. But the beating the soldiers gave Him made Him so weak. The soldiers gave Him no food. They didn't let Him sleep. All these things made Jesus feel weak. So, a stranger must carry His cross. At the cross, the soldiers remove Jesus' clothes. His clothes become the property of the soldiers. The soldiers gamble to see who gets to own the clothes (compare with Psalm 22:18).

Death on a cross was not a very bloody death. Nails were used to fasten a person to the cross (compare with John 20:24–29). These nails went through the wrist below the palm of the hand where there were no big blood vessels. (In both the Hebrew and Greek language, the word for "hand" can mean both the hand and the lower part of the arm.) The soldiers didn't put the nails in Jesus' palms. The palm of the hand doesn't have enough strength to hold the body up on the cross. The nails crushed the nerve that runs along the middle of Jesus' arm and caused terrible suffering. Jesus had trouble breathing. To get a good breath, Jesus had to push against His nailed feet and squeeze His arms. This action caused Him awful pain. People often died on the cross because they were too tired and in too much pain to lift their bodies to get a breath.

All through the Book of Mark, Jesus tells people not to tell anyone who He is. So, Mark often doesn't use Jesus' other names: "Lord," "Son of God," or Savior. But on the cross, Jesus' secret about who He is can no longer be hidden. The Jewish leaders are the ones who now use Jesus' other names! The leaders say, " 'He saved others, but he can't save himself!' " (Mark 15:31, ERV). The word "saved" also can mean "heal" and "remove someone from danger" in the Greek language. Do you see the irony in their words? When they say these words, the leaders show everyone they know that Jesus is the Savior. Jesus healed, saved, and removed people from danger. These actions are everything a Savior does.



**The leaders say,  
" 'He saved others, but  
he can't save himself!' "  
(Mark 15:31, ERV).**

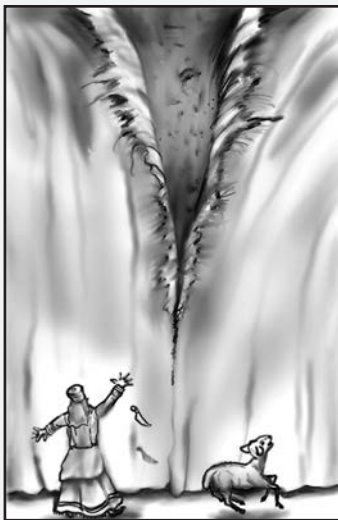
**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU LEFT ME ALONE?  
(Mark 15:33–41)**

**Read Mark 15:33–41. What words does Jesus say on the cross in the Book of Mark? What does Jesus' death mean for us all?**

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**This torn curtain shows us that the animal offerings for sins are no longer needed because Jesus offered Himself for our sins.**

The Book of Mark shows that the cross is a very dark place. Mark tells us, “About midday [12:00 noon] the whole land became dark and stayed dark for three hours” (Mark 15:33, WE). On the cross, Jesus prays. He cries out to God and asks why God has left Him all alone. Jesus’ words are a quote from Psalm 22:1. In Mark 15:24, 29, we see other quotes from this same psalm or song. These quotes show us that God is keeping all the promises He made about Jesus in the Old Testament. God’s plan for Jesus is happening, even when evil men put Jesus on the cross.

Mark tells us what Jesus says on the cross in the Aramaic language. Then Mark gives us the translation. The words written as “my God, my God” are “**Eloi, Eloi.**” “**Eloi**” comes from the word “**e lahi**” in the Aramaic language. Some people who heard Jesus misunderstood what He said. These people thought that Jesus cried for Elijah, whose name means “My God is YHWH.” Elijah in the Aramaic language is “**eliyyah.**”

Jesus’ death on the cross helps us remember His baptism, in Mark 1:9–11. The baptism of Jesus in Mark 1 is the start of Jesus’ work on earth. Daniel talks about this time in Daniel 9:24–27. When Jesus dies for our sins (Mark 10:45), He finishes what He came to do. Jesus’ death on the cross also shows us another part of Daniel’s special message in Daniel 9:24–27. The temple curtain is torn (Mark 15:38). This torn curtain shows us that the animal offerings for sins are no longer needed because Jesus offered Himself for our sins. A new time in the history of God’s plan to save humans now starts.

**Evil men tried to hurt and kill Jesus. But they did not stop God’s plan to save us. How does this information teach us that we always can trust God and His plan, even when evil happens all around us?**

**JESUS' BODY IS PUT IN THE GRAVE (Mark 15:42–47)**

**Read Mark 15:42–47. What does Joseph from Arimathea do for Jesus? Where were Jesus' followers at this time? How important was Joseph's gift?**

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Dead people must be buried. A man named Joseph who is from Arimathea goes to Pilate. Joseph is a respected member of the Sanhedrin. Remember, the Sanhedrin is the Jewish court. Joseph was a rich and powerful man who lived in the city. As a rich and powerful man, Joseph knew Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. So, now we understand why Joseph was brave enough to go to Pilate and ask for Jesus' body. That Joseph asked to take care of Jesus' body touches our hearts. But we must ask, *Where were Jesus' loyal followers at this time?*

Mark 15:43 tells us that Joseph asks for Jesus' body. But Pilate is surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead (Mark 15:44). Pilate ordered the head soldier in charge of nailing Jesus to the cross to give him a report. Another name for the head soldier is a centurion. Pilate asks the centurion if Jesus was already dead. The centurion said that, yes, Jesus was dead.

This information is important. Later, some people will say that Jesus didn't really die on the cross. He fainted. The centurion's report to the Roman governor is proof that the report about Jesus' fainting is false. Of course Jesus really died and didn't just faint! If the Romans knew how to do one thing, they knew how to kill criminals.

Joseph brought a sheet to wrap Jesus in. Then Joseph put Jesus' body in a grave that was carved from a rock. This grave was big enough for a man to walk into (Mark 16:5). Mark 15:47 tells us that two women saw where Joseph put Jesus' body. Those two women were Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus. These two women, along with Salome, watched Jesus die on the cross. All three women will go to Jesus' grave on Sunday morning to take care of His dead body (Mark 16:1).

Why does Mark tell us about these three women? They are witnesses. They saw Joseph put Jesus' body in the grave. They will come back to the grave and find it empty. So, these women are important witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, or waking up from the dead.



**The centurion's report to the Roman governor is proof that the report about Jesus' fainting is false.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “In Pilate’s Judgment Hall,” “Calvary,” and “ ‘It Is Finished,’ ” in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 723–764.



“Jesus was punished the same as a sinner so that He could save us from the punishment for breaking God’s law.”

“Pilate very much wanted to save Jesus. But he saw he couldn’t do this without losing his own job and honor. Pilate didn’t want to lose his power as governor. So, he chose to let an innocent man die. How many people do the wrong thing to avoid loss or suffering, the same as Pilate? God’s Spirit tells us to do the right thing. But our selfish hearts want to do the wrong thing. The person who gives in to evil will be judged guilty.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 738, adapted.

“Jesus felt the guilt from all of our sins. Jesus is our Substitute. He is God’s Promise to us that He will forgive us and save us. Jesus was punished the same as a sinner so that He could save us from the punishment for breaking God’s law. Jesus felt the guilt of every sinner pressing on His heart. Jesus saw how much God hated sin. This thought filled Jesus’ heart with worry and fear. His whole life Jesus preached the Good News about the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Jesus’ message was that God wanted to save the worst sinners. But now Jesus feels the terrible guilt of our sins on his heart. The guilt is so terrible that Jesus can’t see the Father’s loving face. The Father turns away His face from the Savior when Jesus is feeling the most pain. Sorrow fills Jesus’ heart. No human heart can fully understand the sorrow that Jesus felt at that time. Jesus’ sorrow was so painful that He hardly felt the pain that He suffered in His body.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 753, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jesus is our Substitute. He died for us and paid the penalty for our sin. How important is this idea to our being saved? Why is any teaching false that rejects this Bible teaching?
- ② Who or what is today’s Barabbas? Who or what do the people of this earth ask for instead of Jesus?
- ③ Review Daniel 9:24–27. Why is this chapter so important? Are you ready to give a Bible study on these verses to anyone who asks?

## PART 9: BRINGING ARMENIA TO JESUS

While Anush prayed for her father, she also prayed for the 4,000 people who lived in her town in Armenia. Then God started to touch hearts.

After her baptism, Anush met with two other young women to pray for the town. Then they invited people to special meetings. Several dozen young people came. After that, the Adventist Church in Euro-Asia helped Anush and her friends rent buses. They took groups of 50 young people on trips around Armenia. At every stop along the way, church members greeted the young people. Anush saw the young people become excited about Bible truth. They started asking questions about God.

Interest in the Adventist message grew. Then a pastor started to visit Anush's town every other Sunday to hold meetings. At the meetings, the pastor talked about relationships, money, and other topics. Many people came to the meetings over two years.

People in the town respected Father. So, when he became a Seventh-day Adventist, the whole town talked about his faith. Father went to a church that wasn't the state religion of Armenia. His baptism helped other people to want to know more about God. The town's church grew from seven women in a private home to a rented hall where dozens of people meet every Sabbath. Church members meet with other people online to pray daily. The members plan to buy their own church building.

Father's name is Armen Safaryan. His wife's name is Gayane Badalyan. Today, they work with their daughter Anush Safaryan to make tofu at their company. As we saw last week, tofu is a food product made from a special bean named the soybean. Tofu is used as a meat substitute. Father's company is the only tofu company in Armenia. So, Father's company has been shown on TV. Many TV reporters ask Father why he makes tofu. So, Father gets invited often to share his faith on TV.

Father is a church leader. Mother is in charge of health work for their local church. Father is an example to other men in a country where many mothers and children go to church without their husbands and fathers. Father, Mother, and Anush want to change that. When church leaders introduce Father at meetings where he gives talks, the leaders say, "See, this normal Armenian man is an Adventist. Men, you are not alone. This man goes to church on Sabbath."

Anush shares her story at churches and youth camps. She says, "Ask God to touch the hearts of your husbands and fathers. Pray that they will go to church with you."

Part of last quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering helped open a special center in Yerevan, Armenia. Thanks for helping share the Good News with your offerings.

INSIDE  
*Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**At every stop along the way, church members greeted the young people.**

