The Verdict
Mark 15:16-26
Sermon Outline

A. Despised (vs. 16-20):

1. Pilate released Christ die.
   a) The Greek word is aulē, “courtyard,” the same as in 14:54, where it is translated “palace” (AV).[1]
   b) Praetorium – The word was used originally of a general’s tent, or of the headquarters in a military came (NASB – Notes).
      i. The term “headquarters” (15:16) is praetorium in Greek, which was derived from praetor, originally the name for Rome’s highest magistrate, later called a “consul.” The Praetorium was the praetor’s tent or military headquarters. The term was used here to refer either to Herod’s palace or, more likely, to the Antonia Fortress, located just north of the temple area. This fortress quartered the Roman “cohort,” a battalion of six hundred soldiers. Simon was from Cyrene, the chief city of Cyrenaica in North Africa (15:21).[2]

2. King of Kings despised:
   a) The three verbs, smote, spit, and worshipped, are all in the imperfect tense, depicting the repetition of these acts. Soldier after soldier made bitter mockery of Jesus’ misunderstood claim to be a king.[3]
   b) 200 to 600 men mocked Him for believing He is king of the Jews:
   c) The King of King in a palace despised. “Purple robe – Probably an old military cloak, whose color suggested royalty (Matthew 27:28; NASB notes).”
   d) Genesis 3:15-18 fulfilled – His head is bruised with the thorns representative of mankind’s curse (Genesis 3:17). “Crown of thorns – Made of a prickly plant (the Greek word means simply (briers”), of which there are many in Palestine. Both robe and crown were parts of the mock royal attire placed on Jesus.” (NASB notes)
   e) Genesis 3:15-18 fulfilled – crowned with our sin.
      i. With this “crown” the soldiers unwittingly pictured God’s curse on sinful humanity being thrust on Jesus (cf. Gen. 3:17–18). Matthew noted that they also placed a staff in His hand as a mock scepter (Matt. 27:29).[4]
      ii. Because the wreath was twisted, however, some thorns or spikes must have scraped inward, drawing blood from Jesus’ scalp. Only the highest king would wear an actual crown instead of a wreath, so they are portraying Jesus as a vassal prince.[5]
   f) The soldiers were very persistent, actively seeking to get it on His head.
   g) These men were godless, purposefully practicing having no reverence or respect for God.
   h) They continually saluted Him while continuously calling Him King of the Jews.
   i) With exuberant joy like a lamp frisking about in a field while saluting the mocked Him. “Hail, king of the Jews! – A
mocking salutation that corresponded to “Hail, Caesar!” (NASB notes)

j) With no end in sight they were continuously violently hit Christ on the very head that the thorn brush crown was placed.

k) Instead of the kiss that is custom of their day for a king they continuous spit in the ground. “Spit on him – Probably a parody on the kiss of homage that was customary in the Near East when in the presence of royalty.” (NASB notes)

l) The not only despised Him as king they also despised Him as Lord. He was totally despised.

3. They made fun of Him for believing that Christ is King of the Jews.

a) Jesus’ suffering before the Roman authorities was exemplary for Mark’s readers who would be subjected to similar ridicule before pagan authorities (cf. comments on Mark 13:9–13).[6]

4. They made Him a slave; a man with honor, among the worthless. They look off the clothes but not the crown.

5. It is interesting that the shepherds and Magi came to His birth, now the Jews sentenced Him and the Gentiles executed Him.

6. The Jews despised Him but so did the Gentiles (represented by the soldiers).

B. Rejected (vs. 21-24):

1. With complete authority they continually forcefully compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Christ.

   a) Cyrene – An important city of Libya in North Africa that had a large Jewish population. 
   b) Simon – probably a Jew who was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (Jews of Cyrene” in Ac 6:9). 
   c) Alexander and Rufus – Only mentioned by Mark, but referred to in such a way as to suggest that they were known by those to whom he wrote. Rufus may be the same person spoken of in Romans 6:13. 
   d) Carry the cross – Men condemned to death were usually forced to carry a beam of the cross, often weighing 30-40 pounds, to the pace of crucifixion. Jesus started out by carrying his (Jn. 19:17), but her had been so weakened by flogging that Simon was pressed into service 
   e) Cyrene was in what is now Libya in North Africa and included a large Jewish community. “Simon” was a typical Jewish name, and devout Jewish pilgrims from throughout the Mediterranean came to Jerusalem during Passover. Roman soldiers could impress anyone into service to carry things for them. Because it is a feast and work is forbidden, Simon is not coming from “the field” (literally) as a worker; perhaps he is late for the festival, only now arriving from Cyrene or from where he is residing temporarily in the countryside.[7]

2. They were not going to stop until they achieve their purpose.

   a) Jesus’ reaction to all this misguided treatment was a calm, quiet assurance that He was in the center of His Father’s will. They led Him out to crucify Him indicates that the place of crucifixion was outside the city itself (Heb. 13:12). All three synoptic Gospels identify Jesus’ cross bearer as Simon of Cyrene, but only Mark adds that he
was the father of Alexander and Rufus. These men may have been known to Mark’s Roman audience, and it is interesting that Paul greets a Rufus in Rom. 16:13.[8]

b) They forced him to carry the cross (15:21). Normally, a condemned person carried the crossbeam (patibulum) to the crucifixion site, where a vertical post (stipes, staticulum) had already been fixed in the ground. Wood was scarce, and crosses were probably used more than once. Plutarch says that “every criminal who goest to execution must carry his own cross on his back.”[9]

3. The place they took Jesus will always be interpreted as a place of death.

a) According to Roman law (and Jewish, Lev. 24:14), crucifixion was to take place outside the city. Quintilian commended crucifixion as a deterrent and noted that the executioners chose “the most crowded roads where the most people can see and be moved by this fear.” Josephus reports that during the siege of Jerusalem, the Romans crucified five hundred or more victims every day opposite the wall, nailing their victims in different postures as a spectacle for those in the city.[374] The crucifixion site would be near roads leading into the city where people could learn what happens to malefactors and would-be kings.[10]

4. They continuously kept giving Him wine mixed with myrrh to help His pain but Christ refused because He must suffer for our sins.

a) The imperfect tense, edidoun, is better translated they were going to give. Jesus refused the drink after tasting it and discovering what it was (Mt 27:34). Myrrh served as a drug administered to deaden the torture of the horrible death of crucifixion. Jesus, however, refused to allow such a stupifying potion to cloud his senses.[11]

b) Another possibility is that this gesture continues the mocking of Jesus as a triumphant king. At the end of a Roman triumphant procession, the triumphator is offered a cup of ceremonial wine that he refuses to drink but pours out on the altar at the moment of sacrifice. Jesus rejects the offer of wine because he has made a vow of abstinence at the Last Supper (14:25) and wishes to remain fully conscious to the bitter end. He will drink the Father’s cup instead (14:36).[12]

C. Crucified (vs. 24-26):

1. The entire process of nailing Christ to the cross, raising the cross putting a spear in His side was done with the mindset of not stopping until it was fully completed.

a) Of all the people Christ touched and healed, those who ate from the five loaves and two fishes, heard His teaching only four people, who stood a far off, was there for Him.

b) The closest people to the cross never thanked Him the only mocked Him. “What kind of man is this that would lay down His life for a friend?” (John 15:13-14)

c) Crucifixion was recognized as being one of the most cruel forms of execution employed in the ancient world. Often the victim was left on the cross for several days before death relieved his intense suffering. The garments of the condemned man were left to the executioners.[13]

d) The time of the crucifixion is placed at the third hour, which was the Jewish designation for 9:00 A.M. (cf. Jn. 19:14).[14]

i. The Jews divided their day into four parts, which they called hours, namely, the first, from six to nine; the third, from nine to twelve; the sixth, from twelve
to three; and the ninth, from three to six. It was, then, within the third hour, that is, between nine and twelve, that they crucified him; and it was from the sixth to the ninth hour that he was actually upon his cross. St. John employs the Asiatic mode of computing time.[15]

e)  **Crucified** – A Roman means of execution in which the victim was nailed to a cross. Heavy, wrought-iron nails were drive through the wrists and the heel bones. If the life of the victim lingered too long, death was hasten by breaking his legs (Jn. 19:33).

Archaeologists have discovered the bones of a crucified man, near Jerusalem, dating between A.D. 7 and 66, which shed light on the position of the victim when nailed to the cross. Only slaves, the basest of criminals, and offenders who were not Romans citizens were executed in this manner. First-century authors vividly describe the agony and disgrace of being crucified. (NASB notes)

2. The soldiers did what they normally do for any other person. There was no autograph needed, no priceless memoir (the world was at odds over Brady’s Jersey).

3. There was no remorse, no moment of silence, absolutely no respect for a man not found guilty and only did good.

4. Mark will never forget the time. It is marked in infamy.

5. An innocent man charged. He was accused and found not guilty (Mark 15:10-14).

6. The only thing they could charge Christ with is the very thing He is – The King of Kings.

   a)  **Charge against him** – It was customary to write the charge on a wooden board that was carried before the victim as he walked to the place of execution, and then the board was affixed to the cross above his head. (NASB notes)

   b)  **The king of the Jews** – The wording of the charge differs slightly in the Gospels, but all agree that Jesus was crucified for claiming to be the king of the Jews. (NASB notes)

7. While nailed to the cross stripped of all dignity, beaten when found not guilty, they still mocked Him with the inscription “The King of the Jews.”

   a)  The inscription placed over Jesus’ head appeared in three languages (John 19:20): Hebrew (Aramaic); Latin, the official language of government; and Greek, the common language spoken by many. If we piece together details from all four Gospels, the complete sign must have read, “This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” He claimed to be Messiah-King and was officially crucified on this charge.[16]


