



# Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

## Behold the Wondrous Mystery - Christmas 2018

### The Cross

**Mark 15:33-36; John 19:28-29; Psalm 22**

**12/16/2018**

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## Main Point

The anguish Jesus endured on the cross reminds us of the ugliness of sin, as well as the lengths that God went to save us.

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## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the toughest thing you have endured? What motivated you to endure?**

**What does a person's willingness to endure reveal about his or her priorities? How so?**

Two of the words proclaimed by Jesus on the cross emphasize the anguish He endured. These two words remind us of the ugliness of our sin and the glory of His love for us. These two words also help us understand why Jesus alone is worthy of being trusted and followed.

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## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:33-34.**

**How would you describe the significance of Jesus' quoting Psalm 22? How do the emotions expressed in Psalm 22:1-21 express the agony faced by Jesus?**

Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22:1-21 includes several phrases that point to the agony and insults endured by Jesus on the cross.

**Which would you rather endure, physical pain or the pain of rejection? Explain.**

**What does the Father forsaking (turning away from) the Son teach us about the character of God? about sin? How does our sin create the same reaction from the Father?**

God is holy, and there is no sin in Him in any form or fashion. As Jesus took on the sin of humanity, the Father turned away from the Son, causing Jesus even greater anguish. The Father's turning away reminds us of the seriousness of our sin, the separation we experience as a result of our sin, and the depth of Jesus' love for humanity.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:35-36.**

**Based on this passage, how would you classify the offering of a drink to Jesus—as an act of kindness, as self-serving, or as some other type of act? Explain.**

**How did the misunderstanding of what Jesus cried lead to a greater insult? How might our misunderstanding of the words of Jesus lead us to commit an insulting act?**

The bystanders misunderstood Jesus' cry to the Father and interpreted it as Jesus calling to Elijah. The effort of the bystander to prolong Jesus' agony only added to the ugly spectacle. The desire to prolong one's agony points to the depth of sin in this world.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 19:28-29.**

In Psalm 22, the psalmist declared that his tongue was sticking to the roof of his mouth. Jesus had already quoted from Psalm 22, so it would make sense that the second cry of agony from the cross relates to that same psalm.

**How do the actions recorded in Mark 15:35-36 compare to what John recorded in these verses?**

**How did Jesus' thirst symbolize that His work on the cross was complete? How does the agony of thirst compare to the pain caused by our sin?**

**What response should believers give as a result of the agony Jesus endured?**

Jesus endured multiple physical, spiritual, and emotional pains while on the cross. The extreme thirst He experienced reminds us of our need for Living Water (see John 4:14). Jesus loved us so much that He took on our sin and the unquenchable guilt we experience when apart from His salvation.

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## **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what areas or situations are you being called to endure for the sake of Christ? How can you draw strength from Jesus' actions on the cross?**

**What actions can you take to show Jesus gratitude for the anguish He endured to provide you salvation? How can learning about His anguish increase your gratitude for His sacrifice?**

**With whom can you share about the anguish Jesus endured in our place? How can you help them understand that Jesus frees them from the anguish of sin?**

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## **Pray**

Thank God for being holy and providing His Son as the only way to the Father. Offer praise to Jesus for taking on the agony of sin in your place.

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## **Commentary**

### **MARK 15:33-38**

Crucifixion was a horrible manner of execution designed to prolong the agony of dying. The nails were carefully placed and driven through the hands or wrists so as not to cause the person to bleed to death. The person hung there only partially supported by placing pressure on the feet, which were also penetrated by spikes. In this position, breathing became difficult. Dehydration, loss of blood, pain from dislocated shoulders, constriction of the lungs, and exposure to the elements took their toll. Slowly, agonizingly, the person's body would eventually succumb and die, usually over a period of around three days.

Verse 33. The robbers who were crucified with Jesus, those passing by, and the religious leaders all mocked and hurled abuse at Jesus on the cross. Mark reported that darkness covered the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hours. This darkness began at 12:00 noon and lasted three hours. Such miraculous darkness may have symbolized God's coming judgment (see Ex. 10:21-22).

Verse 34. About 3:00 in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, quoting Psalm 22:1. Mark recorded only this saying of Jesus from the cross. He gave the quote first in Aramaic and then in Greek. In Psalm 22 the psalmist urgently appealed to God to intervene on behalf of the righteous sufferer. While on the cross, Jesus experienced the situation depicted in this psalm of suffering. Psalm 22 may be viewed as a prophetic description of Jesus' crucifixion.

What did Jesus mean by saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Different interpretations have been proposed. Some view this cry to mean that while Jesus was bearing the sins of the world on the cross, God abandoned Him. In identifying completely with sinners, Jesus experienced God's judgment on sin and the alienation that judgment entails. Hence Jesus' cry expressed the profound horror and pain of separation from God.

Others have suggested that Jesus cited only the first verse of Psalm 22 as a means of referring to the whole psalm. Psalm 22 ends on a note of triumph. Taken as a whole, Psalm 22 expresses assurance that God will deliver from trouble. Perhaps one should not choose between these views, but combine them.

Verse 35. Some of the bystanders misunderstood the first words of Jesus' cry. They taunted Jesus, saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." The Jews regarded Elijah as a deliverer in times of trouble.

Verse 36. Mark did not identify the person who ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, placed it on a reed, and held it up to Jesus' lips (see note on sponge at end of document).

Jesus' crucifixion reminds us of the depths of God's love and the extremity to which He has gone to save us from our sins. Jesus freely offered His life for us, dying on the cross in our place, taking all our sin on Himself, and saving us from spiritual death. We should respond in faith and gratitude.

As Jesus hung on the cross, dehydration caused His mouth and tongue to become painfully parched. At this point, we pick up John's account of Jesus' death.

Verse 28. Jesus had a thorough understanding of the path He was to follow in bringing God's forgiveness to humanity. He possessed this understanding from His knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies and from what God had revealed to Him of His task.

As Jesus hung on the cross, every fiber of His body in agony, He realized that all was now completed. He knew He had accomplished in His life and crucifixion what God had planned for the salvation of humankind. Jesus said with a dry and swollen tongue through parched lips, "I am thirsty."

Verse 29. The soldiers who crucified Jesus had some wine vinegar, a cheap sour wine. They soaked a sponge in it and offered it to Jesus on a stalk of the hyssop plant. This act fulfilled Psalm 69:21, "They . . . gave me vinegar for my thirst."

Note: Spongia in Public Roman Toilets

Bible students often see the offering of the vinegar as an act of mercy. However, Roman toilet practices would indicate otherwise. The Romans used a specific tool to clean up after using the rest room, a spongia which was a sponge tied to a ten-inch stick. In the Roman public toilets spongia were kept in a basin soaking in a vinegar solution. The person would use the spongia, rinse it in the running water in the channel as his feet, and place it back in the basin for another person to use.

If what the man lifted up to Jesus to offer him a drink was a spongia, it was, intentional or not, one of the greatest acts of contempt given Him. The visual was the same; people would have seen the sponge at the end of the stick and thought of a toilet spongia. It was the ultimate of insults.

## PSALM 22

Psalms 22, 23, and 24 form a trilogy on Christ the Shepherd. In 22, the Good Shepherd dies for the sheep (John 10:1–18); in 23, the Great Shepherd lives for the sheep and cares for them (Heb. 13:20–21); and in 24, the Chief Shepherd returns in glory to reward His sheep for their service (1 Peter 5:4). Aijeleth Shahar (or Hash-shahar) is interpreted to mean "the doe (or hind) of the morning" or "help at daybreak." It may have been the name of the tune to which this psalm was sung.

David is the author, but we have a difficult time finding an occasion in his life that would call forth this kind of psalm. According to the record, the Lord never deserted him in his hour of need but always provided friends to help him and deliverance from his enemies. The intense suffering described here isn't that of a sick man in bed or a soldier in battle. It's the description of a criminal being executed! Numerous quotations from the psalm in the four Gospels, as well as Hebrews 2:10–12, indicate that this is a Messianic psalm. We may not know how this psalm related to the author's personal experience, but we do know that David was a prophet (Acts 2:30), and in this psalm he wrote about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first part (vv. 1–21) focuses on prayer and suffering and takes us to the cross, while the second part (vv. 22–31) announces the resurrection and expresses praise to the glory of God. An understanding of Messiah's suffering and glory is basic to grasping the message of the Bible (Luke 24:25–27; 1 Peter 1:11). We will try to see both David and the Son of David as we study the psalm.

### *Prayer in a Time of Suffering (vv. 1–21)*

There were three burdens that moved David to pray for God's help, and they apply to Jesus as well.

He was abandoned by the Lord (vv. 1–5). The opening words of the psalm immediately transport us to Calvary, for Jesus quoted them at the close of a three-hour period of darkness (vv. 1–2; Matt. 27:45–46; Mark 15:34). "I am not alone," Jesus had told His disciples, "because the Father is with me" (John 16:32), and yet He cried out that the Lord had forsaken Him. When He spoke these words, He had been engaged in a mysterious transaction with the Father, dying for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 4:14). On the cross, Jesus was "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) and made "a curse" (Gal. 3:13) for us. In some inexplicable way He experienced what condemned lost sinners experience "away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9, NASB; see Matt. 25:41). However, note that both David and Jesus called Him "my God," making it clear that they still knew and trusted the Father.

This was not the cry of a complaining servant but the sob of a broken-hearted child asking, "Where is my father when I need him?" As David prayed for help, he wondered why God didn't answer him. After all, He was a God of compassion who was concerned about His people, and He was a holy God who practiced justice. Even more, Israel was God's special covenant nation, and He was "enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (v. 3, NASB; see 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 66:1–2). Only Israel had God's divine law and could worship Him in a way acceptable to Him (John 4:21–24). Many times in the past, the Lord had kept His covenant promises to Israel and fought battles, so why was He distant now? Compassion, justice, and the sacred covenant were strong arguments for God's intervention—but He was silent.

He was despised by the people (vv. 6–11). These words especially apply to our Savior. “I am a worm and not a man” (NASB) is a forgotten “I am” statement that speaks of how little value the leaders of Israel and the Roman officials placed on Jesus of Nazareth. A worm is a creature of the ground, helpless, frail, and unwanted. Isaiah 52:14 predicted that Messiah would be terribly disfigured by His enemies and not even look human. (See also Isa. 49:7, 50:6 and 53:3, and for “reproach,” see 69:9 and Rom. 15:3. For the fulfillment of vv. 7–8, see Matt. 27:39 and 43, Mark 15:29, and Luke 23:35–36.) David reminded the Lord that from birth He had cared for him, so why abandon him now? (See 139:13–16.) David had learned to trust in the Lord (“hope,” KJV) from infancy, and was not going to relent now. “Trust” is used three times in verses 4–5 and also in verse 8.

He was condemned by the law (vv. 12–21). David looked around and saw his enemies, and so brutal were they that he compared them to animals: bulls (vv. 12, 21), lions (vv. 13, 21; and see 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 35:17; 57:4; 58:6), and dogs (vv. 16, 20). Bashan was a very fertile area east of the Sea of Galilee and north from the Yarmuk River to Mt. Hermon, now known as the Golan Heights (Jer. 50:19; Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 39:18; Amos 4:1). The wild bulls encircled their prey and then moved in for the kill. The dogs were ravaging savage wild dogs that lived in the garbage dumps and traveled in packs looking for victims. The people involved in arresting and condemning Jesus were only beasts attacking their Creator (2:1–3; Acts 4:23–28). Then David looked within and saw himself (vv. 14–18), and the description is surely that of a man being crucified. He is stripped of his clothing, placed on a cross, and nails are driven through his hands and feet. As he hangs between heaven and earth, his body is dehydrated, intense thirst takes over, and the end of it all is “the dust of death” (v. 15; see Gen. 3:19; Job 7:21; 10:9; 17:16; Eccl. 3:20). Like ebbing water and melting wax, his strength fades away, and he becomes like a brittle piece of broken pottery. (For the application to Jesus, see Matt. 27:35, Mark 14:24, Luke 23:34, and John 19:23–24, 28.) It is remarkable David should describe crucifixion because it was not a Jewish means of capital punishment, and it’s unlikely that he ever saw it occur. David the prophetic psalmist (Acts 2:30) saw what would happen to Messiah centuries later.

Finally, David looked up to the Lord and prayed one more time for the strength he needed (vv. 19–21). In verse 1, he mentioned that God was far from helping him, and he repeated this in verse 11, but he asks a third time for the Lord to come near and intervene. “The sword” in verse 20 may refer to the authority of the Roman government (Rom. 13:4), for it was Pilate who authorized Christ’s death. “Darling” in verse 20 (KJV) means “my only one,” as an only child (Gen. 22:2), and refers to the one and only life that David possessed (see 35:17). Once lost, it could not be regained. We may translate verse 21, “Save me from the lion’s mouth, and from

the horns of the wild oxen you have delivered me” or “you have heard me.” In verse 2, he wrote that God had not answered, but now he almost shouts, “You have answered me!” (See also v. 24.) This is the turning point of the psalm.

### *Praise in the Time of Victory (vv. 22–31)*

We move now from suffering to glory, from prayer to praise (vv. 22, 23, 25, 26). In verses 1–21, Jesus “endured the cross,” but now He enters into “the joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2, and see Jude 24). He had prayed to be delivered out of death (Heb. 5:7), and that prayer was answered. Jesus sang a Passover hymn before He went to the cross (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26), and according to Hebrews 2:12, the risen Christ praised God in the midst of His people after His resurrection (see Matt. 18:20). Note that in His song, our Lord deals with the expanding outreach of the atoning work He finished on the cross.

The great assembly (vv. 22–25). There is no biblical evidence that Jesus appeared to any unbelievers in the days immediately after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1–7). “The great congregation” (assembly) included those who believed in Jesus who became a part of His church when the Spirit came at Pentecost. But the church is made up of believing Jews and Gentiles who form one body in Christ (Eph. 2:11ff), so the song included the seed of Jacob (Israel). The first Christians were Jewish believers, and all Gentiles in the church are, by faith, the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:26–29). God did not despise His Son in whom He is well pleased (v. 24), but accepted His work on the cross and proved it by raising Him from the dead (Rom. 4:24–25).

The glorious kingdom (vv. 26–29). The image here is that of a feast and was a familiar picture to the Jews of the anticipated Messianic kingdom (Isa. 25:6–9; Matt. 8:10–12; Luke 13:29; 14:15). When a Jewish worshiper brought a peace offering to the Lord, he retained part of it to use for a feast for himself, his family, and any friends he wanted to invite (Lev. 3; 7:15ff); and this tradition became a picture of the future glorious kingdom. But believing Gentiles will be also included in this feast (v. 27), and Messiah will reign over all the earth. God promised Abraham that his descendants would bring blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3). This has been fulfilled in the coming of Christ to die for the world, but when He comes again, it will have a glorious fulfillment in the establishing of His glorious kingdom. Both the prosperous and the poor will submit to Him (v. 29) and find their satisfaction in His grace alone. Orthodox Jews close their religious services by quoting Zechariah 14:9—“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord with one name” (Jewish Publication Society translation).

The generations to come (vv. 30–31). The blessings of the atonement and the kingdom will not be temporary but perpetual, from one generation to another. Three generations are listed here: a seed (see Isa. 53:10), a second generation, and a people that shall be born. This reminds us of 2 Timothy 2:2. But the emphasis isn't on what God's children have done but on the fact that the Lord did it all: "He has done it" (v. 31, NIV). "It is finished" is what Jesus cried from the cross (John 19:30).

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 89–93.