

Compassion From a Cross

Mark 15:1-41

Introduction

We will look today, at Mark, chapter 15, as we continue our study through the Gospel of Mark. We find in Mark 15:1, Jesus before Pilate. We will begin there and take this at a rapid pace, yet slow enough to hit the points that I think are necessary for us to understand, as best we can, some of what Christ endured for us.

The Unjust Trial of Jesus

Notice Mark 15:1a.

Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; ...

Understand that this is illegal, or at least a sham. These leaders were supposed to, by law, take the nighttime and sleep on the decision they had made the day before. In that way, if they had decided that a man was guilty and deserving of death, they could spend the night, come back the next morning, consult together, and agree, "Yes, he is deserving of death."

However, as you may remember from our previous discussion, these leaders had, the day before, already decided that Jesus would die. So they came together just for appearances sake; just so the people would say, "Yes, they did get together the morning after." They had, however, already determined in their hearts that they would send Jesus to the cross.

Continue to Mark 15:1b.

... and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.

Jesus before Pilate

Now notice, in Mark 15:2a, Jesus before Pilate.

Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ...

This man was intrigued by the person of Jesus Christ. He was supposed to be an insurrectionist. The Jews were telling Pilate that Jesus was seeking after the throne of Herod. I think Pilate must have scratched his head and thought, "Is this man, who is a carpenter dressed in plain garments, really saying that He's the king?"

I believe Pilate asks in all honesty and wanting to know for himself, "Are You *really* the King of the Jews?"

Jesus responds in Mark 15:2b.

... And He answered him, "It is as you say."

At that moment, in Mark 15:3,

The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly.

Skip to Mark 15:5,

But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

The original word for Pilate's reaction could be translated, "Pilate was astounded." He could not believe Jesus Christ would remain silent before those who accused Him.

However, you and I remember that Jesus remained silent because the prophet Isaiah, many years before, had said that this is what Jesus would do. (Isaiah 53:7) Jesus was fulfilling prophecy from the very moment of these trials. He went as a lamb to

the slaughter, and He was silent before His shearers. So, Jesus Christ fulfills prophecy by not answering His accusers.

Pilate before the multitude

Now we find Pilate before the multitude and this introduces us to a rather interesting custom.

Notice Mark 15:6.

Now at the [Passover] feast he used to release for them [the Jews] any one prisoner whom they requested.

Remember, by the context, that the Jews are approaching the Passover season; the feast. It was a custom that they would release one terrible criminal and forgive, in a sense, that criminal's sins. This was a picture of the Passover in which God had forgiven the sins of the nation. This was, sort of, the visual aid that since God had forgiven them, they now would forgive some criminal.

So Pilate goes to the Jews and says, in effect, "Do you want me to release a prisoner?"

He was thinking that they would say, "Yes, we'll forgive Jesus of all His crimes."

Instead, they choose, in Mark 15:7,

The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.

Jesus would be crucified between two of the members of this cut-throat band, called the Sikari.

The name Barabbas could literally be translated, "son of the rabbi". This is possibly not even his name, but simply a designation. There is a chance, although we cannot be sure, that Barabbas' father was such a well-known rabbi in Jerusalem that Barabbas was simply known as the "son of the rabbi". So this may be the son of one of the men who revered the law, yet he is a member of the Sikari.

This cut-throat band got the name Sikari by the meaning of that name, which is, "the dagger under the cloak". The members kept a dagger under their cloaks and committed assassinations as a way of life. They were constantly in gorilla warfare against Rome. Barabbas was a terrible criminal; a murderer, as we are told in verse 7.

Notice that Pilate understood the jealousy of the leaders. Skip to Mark 15:9-10.

Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

This envy started several years before when Jesus Christ preached and taught. Do you remember what the people said? They heard Jesus' teaching and were amazed and said, "He's different. He preaches with authority, not as the scribes do." (Mark 1:22) From that moment on, the scribes were filled with envy and jealousy.

This was a preachers' quarrel. In other words, "This man has more people listening to Him preach than I have listening to me preach. His congregation is bigger than my congregation."

This is not a new struggle and it is certainly not unique. In fact, I am a history buff of some of the great men who have filled pulpits. It is interesting to study that in Charles Haddon Spurgeon's day, he, as an eighteen year old, was preaching to crowds of more than 10,000 people. He went to London to pastor a church at the age of twenty. The congregation built a building, and it was immediately obsolete. They had to build another tabernacle that seated more than 6,000 people, and he had several services. Spurgeon was a twenty year old, self-taught man, who never went to school.

There were other preachers at this time, who had been preaching for years to twenty-five people. They were seminary graduates. As you might guess, they, kind of, banded together in jealousy against Charles Spurgeon. Finally, one day, the Baptist Union, which he was a part of, decided to censor Spurgeon. In other words, they told their people, "Don't listen to him. Don't go to him. He's a heretic."

We now stand on this side of the century and as we look back, we can see that Spurgeon was censored for one reason – jealousy.

It is interesting that F. B. Meyer, whose books adorn my shelves, was probably one of the greatest writers on the characters in the Bible. If you ever want to study a character in the Old or New Testament, get F. B. Meyer's writings. He had been preaching faithfully to about a thousand people. Then another man came to town, by the name of G. Campbell Morgan. Morgan was a man who would be known as the "Prince of Expositors". Immediately, Morgan's church was packed to overflowing.

F. B. Meyer struggled with jealousy and envy. He was different though, because he gained the victory over that jealousy and began praying that God would fill G. Campbell Morgan's auditorium. He would later, write in his diary, "We have, now at our disposal, that God answered my prayer and the overflow from his church filled mine."

This struggle of envy is certainly not new. Jesus faced it as a result of being so popular with the masses; as a result of the people flocking to hear Him. There was one reason these religious leaders wanted to crucify Him. The motivation of their hearts was not only rejection, but jealousy and envy.

So the people began to cry for Jesus' death. Look at Mark 15:11.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him [Pilate] to release Barabbas for them instead.

Notice the crowd's foolishness. Only a matter of days prior to this, they were lining the streets of Jerusalem saying, "Hosanna!" (Mark 11:9), which means, "Save us!" They were saying, in other words, "You're the Savior! You're the Messiah!"

Now, in Mark 15:13, the crowd is crying,
... ***"Crucify Him!"***

How foolish! How mindless that they could be so easily stirred. Yet, I think that is the picture of many people today. They are stirred by leaders who determine for them their course and they put to sleep the critical faculty of asking, "Is this right or is this wrong?"

Let me speak further on this for a moment, since we are talking about preachers. Do not ever assume that what is said from behind the pulpit is correct. Do not ever take for granted that because someone who wears the collar or has been to school says something, that you are to believe it. Now I am not asking you to question every jot and tittle, but never put to sleep what God has given you. Always use the critical faculty that says, "Is this the word of God?"

Do you remember when Paul preached to the men and women of Berea? This great apostle preached a sermon and what did these men and women do? They searched the Old Testament to see if the things Paul had said were true. (Acts 17:10-12)

This crowd of people did not do that. They were mindless and foolish and as a result, were part of this terrible plot to put Jesus Christ on the cross.

Now notice Pilate's cowardice. Look at Mark 15:14.

But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!"

Note Mark 15:15a.

Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, . . .

Pilate was "wishing to satisfy the crowd". What a coward.

Now we do not need to be too hard on him. We know from history that, at that very moment, he was involved in a squabble with Tiberius, the Emperor of Rome. Tiberius was claiming that Pilate, who was the governor of that very difficult Jewish nation, was inflexible with the Jews. So perhaps, if he said, "No," to the Jews concerning Jesus, they would report back to Tiberias that he, in fact, was inflexible.

So Pilate gave in to the whim of the crowd, hoping to avoid trouble.

The Inhuman Torture of Jesus

What happens next is nothing but inhuman torture of Jesus.

The scourging

Pilate now does something that he did not need to do. In fact, it was illegal to do this to a man who was supposed to die on a cross. He had, in Mark 15:15b,
... ***Jesus scourged . . .***

History records that a scourging was called "the halfway death". In fact, quite often the criminal would not survive the scourging.

There was no prescribed number of lashes in a scourging, it was completely up to the Roman soldiers. If they were feeling vindictive, they could take it out on the poor criminal. If they were feeling merciful, they might give him a dozen or so.

The soldiers would strike the criminal with a flagellum, which was a short, stubby stick with long strips of leather attached. Sewn onto the ends of the leather would be pieces of stone and metal.

The poor person who received the scourging would be stripped naked, bent over a post, and tied by his hands. While in this position, the burly Roman soldiers, one on his left and one on his right, would alternate lashing. The soldiers would do this until

they were through. Many times, after the scourging, the person would be delirious and his back would be raw.

The mocking

Then, notice the mocking of Jesus. Look at Mark 15:16-17.

The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;

The purple dressing is perhaps, a piece of rag with a little purplish dye in it. It is not a full length robe.

Not to be gory, but understand the agony of Christ. He is standing in humiliation, naked, and they throw over His raw shoulders, perhaps down to His elbows, a rag. Then, they weave a crown of thorns and put it on His head. Continue to Mark 15:18.

and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

The soldiers are having fun with this Jew – the One who claims to be the King. They continue their mockery in Mark 15:19.

They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.

My blood begins to boil at this point. The only thing that seems to help me, as I am filled with anger at these people, is realizing that perhaps, I would have been one of them myself.

It is also helpful to look at Revelation 19, where we see Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, coming, robed in kingly robes and holding, not a reed, but a diadem, and ruling the world.

One day, there will be vindication and Jesus Himself will come. Philippians 2:10-11 tells us that then, not in mockery, but in honor,

. . . every knee will bow . . . and . . . every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
...

The journey to Golgotha

Now notice, in Mark 15:20-21, Jesus' journey to Golgotha.

After they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him. They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

It was the practice of that day, when the individual was to be led to the place of crucifixion, to give him the top crossbeam to carry – not the entire cross, but just the top piece. That piece alone, weighed more than a hundred pounds. They would place it on his shoulders and he would carry it. Then, four soldiers, one in front, one on either side, and one behind, would lead him, not the shortest route to crucifixion, but the longest route. They would take him down every side road possible on the way to Golgotha, where Jesus would be crucified. This was to show as many people as possible, the terrific penalty for defying Rome. Crowds would line the streets to watch.

Now Jesus had just been scourged. Of the three criminals, He was the only one that we know of who was scourged. He was so weakened that He could not bear that hundred pound crossbeam. So the soldiers looked around and found a passer-by.

History tells us that this passer-by was a pilgrim from Cyrene on his way to Jerusalem. He had come to celebrate the Passover. Cyrene was a city in North Africa. This man was perhaps, a black man from North Africa who was pressed into service, in a cruel way, by these soldiers.

Notice that the text says, in Mark 15:21, the passer-by was “Simon of Cyrene,” and in parenthesis that he was, “the father of Alexander and Rufus”. Now that is interesting, but what does it mean to us? Nothing. But it meant something to these readers.

They knew of Rufus through Paul's letter to the Romans. He wrote in Romans 16:13,

Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord . . .

So Rufus was a godly man who was part of the church. Perhaps this is the same Rufus who was fathered by Simon of Cyrene. We do not know.

Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service, which means that he was “forcibly” put into service. This tells us that he did not want to do it. He probably argued. This was humiliation. He would carry that hundred pound crossbeam through the streets, as a criminal.

Yet, perhaps he hung around. Is it not fascinating to think that Simon of Cyrene had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover; to celebrate the sacrifice of a lamb; to celebrate the shedding of blood for his sins for a year, and he would meet the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?! Perhaps, during that time, he trusted this Christ and told his sons the truth. Then later, Rufus would be part of the church.

Simon is mentioned in Acts 13:1 as helping Paul in his first missionary journey. Evidently, behind the scenes; in between the lines, there was perhaps, a tremendous conversion on the journey to Calvary.

The Unbelievable Compassion of Jesus

Now, with this cruelty as a backdrop, we come to the place of crucifixion. Sometimes the setting of things helps, at least it does for me, and this is a cruel and black backdrop of agony from which the Savior hangs for mankind.

I can remember when I went to buy the engagement ring for my wife. I went by myself because I wanted to surprise her. I planned to pick out the diamond and kind of hinted around to her about the kind of setting that she might want. Have you ever tried to do that without actually proposing? It is impossible. She knows it is coming. She sort of gave me an idea and I went to pick out the diamond.

I remember that jeweler taking out a piece of black velvet and in one fluid movement, laying it out on the counter. He pulled out a bag of diamonds of the size that I wanted. He then, spilled the diamonds on that black velvet backdrop. I was feeling very poor about this time. I wanted to buy them all and make payments for the rest of my life! I selected one. I do not know how or why. I just thought, "Well, that one looks kind of good there."

He probably chuckled under his breath. He put the eyeglass to his eye and said, "Yes, that's a good diamond."

He sold that diamond to me. But I can remember now, that the diamonds looked so beautiful and so exquisite, not only because they are beautiful, but because they were against the backdrop of that velvet that seemed to bring out the luster of their beauty.

The cross is a beautiful diamond in the history of mankind. It is so beautiful as I understand *all* of the cruelty and *all* of the agony and then, I look at, not the bitterness, but the compassion of Jesus Christ as He

hangs on that cross. I want to take just enough time to give you two episodes in this account, that reveal to us, His unbelievable compassion.

Toward His condemners

We will first notice the compassion Jesus shows toward His condemners. We need to look in the Gospel of Luke for this account. We will begin with Luke 23:33.

When they came to the place called The Skull, [Golgotha], there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

The practice was to reach that hill and then, take the crossbeam off the shoulder of the person carrying it – in this case, Simon. They would lay it down and connect it to the other piece – the vertical piece. Then, they would lay the criminal on top and drive long spikes through his forearms and his feet, with one foot on top of the other.

Now, between the legs of that criminal, they would place what they called "the saddle". This was a small peg that if the man had enough strength in his legs, he could push up, rest on the saddle, and be able to breathe. However, as soon as he lost strength, he would slip off the saddle, and if he was unable to pick himself back up, he would die from suffocation. That is the reason they would come later, and with a stone mallet, break the legs of the criminals so that they would slide off the saddle and hang in such a way that they could not breathe.

After doing this to Jesus Christ, and to the other two men, He is now hanging on Calvary. Notice Luke 23:34.

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." . . .

The tense of the verb "saying" indicates that Jesus continually said this, over and over again. He did not say this just once, but perhaps, every time someone came up and slandered Him or sneered.

. . . "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." . . .

Look at Luke 23:35.

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself . . ."

Every time someone came to the foot of the cross, looked up at Him hanging ten to twelve feet in the air, and mocked Him, Jesus said,

. . . ***“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”*** . . .

Jesus said this many times, according to the text.

The word “forgive” is interesting because the Greek word is “aphiemi,” which literally means, “release them”. That opens a world of implication. Jesus Christ is saying, “Release them.”

Release them from what? Release them from murder in the first degree.

It is interesting, as we study the Old Testament, that they had a practice called “the city of refuge,” if they killed someone by accident. Let us say that we have a city of refuge in this century. You are driving down the street and a little boy runs out in front of you. You accidentally hit that child and kill him. That is manslaughter; that is murder by accident – you did not mean to kill that little boy; you did not know what you were doing.

The law declared that if the relatives caught you, they could slay you. However, you had an opportunity to live by fleeing to the city of refuge before the relatives could catch you. If you made it to the city of refuge and stayed there a prescribed amount of time, you would be safe.

I think Jesus Christ is thinking back to the provisions that the law made for those who killed another by accident or without understanding or knowing. He says, “Father, release them from a murder one ‘rap’. Hold them only to manslaughter, so that they will have the potential to one day, flee to the city of refuge.”

Who is the city of refuge? Jesus Christ.

So there was hope, even for the people who put Jesus on the cross. There is also hope for you and me – we killed Him too.

Jesus Christ evidences tremendous and unbelievable compassion toward His condemners.

Toward the condemned

Jesus also evidences compassion toward the condemned. Let us pick it up again with Luke 23:35.

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him,

saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ . . .”

Notice the word “if”. Do they not understand that because He is the Christ, He cannot come down off the cross? If He came down, it would prove that He was not. If He remains there and dies, it proves that He is the Christ.

Continue to Luke 23:36.

The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine,

It was the practice in that day, that as a person reached the place of crucifixion, certain devout Jewish women in Jerusalem would have a drink of wine mixed with myrrh for them. Myrrh had an anesthetic property to it. This practice was developed from something that Solomon wrote years before. In Proverbs 31:6, he said,

Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter.

So this practice came from this passage of scripture and devout women would, in compassion, give wine mixed with myrrh to the criminals. This drink would dull their senses.

Jesus had refused this drink earlier. Now once again, they offer, on a sponge, something for Him to literally, suck, by way of nourishment.

Look at Luke 23:38.

Now there was also an inscription above Him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

The soldier who would walk in front of the condemned criminal, as they paraded through the streets of Jerusalem, would carry a placard describing the crime of the one who would die. Now think for a moment – that soldier went through the entire city, as many streets as they wanted, carrying the sign that, at one moment at Calvary, would be nailed to the head of the cross. He carried it in front of the criminal as they went through that city, and it said his crime. What was Jesus’ crime?

. . . ***“This is [Jesus] the King of the Jews.”***

How ironic.

Look at Luke 23:39.

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”

“Hurling abuse” is intensive – this criminal was throwing abuses. I think he probably emphasized the “and us,” rather than the “save Yourself.”

Continue to Luke 23:40-41.

“But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; . . .”

The Greek for “the other” literally says, “another of a different kind”. This was a criminal of a different kind. Notice two things about this criminal.

- First, notice his courage, by what he says next. He says, in Luke 23:41b,
“. . . but this man has done nothing wrong.”

I love this! The entire Jewish nation, including all of the scribes and the Pharisees and the religious leaders, are declaring that Jesus has done all of these wrong things, yet, this criminal is declaring from his lips that Jesus is innocent. What a rebuke to the nation that a criminal could see in Him, innocence.

God’s plan has been that way from the first day. When Jesus Christ entered planet earth through human flesh, who declared, by announcement, that He had come? Was it the religious leaders? No. It was the religious outcasts – the shepherds. Now, at His death, who declares His innocence and that He is, in fact, the Christ? Was it one of the religious leaders who had studied the law? No. It was an outcast – a criminal.

This criminal had tremendous courage in saying this because, by saying it, he ostracized himself from any compassion of the crowd and from his friend, who was hanging just a few feet away on another cross. He immediately cut himself off.

- Secondly, notice the humility of this criminal. In Luke 23:42, we read,

And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”

“Remember me” was one Greek word that was found on many tombstones that dotted the Greek countryside. There would be no name, just this one Greek word. It was the practice of many people who feared God, to simply have on their tombstone the word translated, “remember me”. This was a perpetual prayer to God that hopefully, in the

resurrection, they would be remembered. So this criminal used the same word and said to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me . . .”.

Yet, what humility this criminal had. He did not say, “Lord, give me a position of ruling in the kingdom; give me a prominent place.”

He just said, “Lord, at the resurrection, when You bring in Your kingdom, would You mind remembering me?”

Now Jesus’ next statement is one that I love. Look at Luke 23:43.

And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

Four false doctrines that Jesus’ compassionate answer shatters

There are four false doctrines that Jesus’ answer shatters. There are probably more, but I can come up with at least four false doctrines that this answer of Jesus totally wipes away.

1. First, Jesus’ answer shatters the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

Jesus Christ did not say, “After you’re baptized, I’ll remember you in the Kingdom.”

He did not say, “Let’s get this guy off the cross and baptize him. Somebody sprinkle him or do something.”

The criminal was not baptized in *any* form. Yet, he was to be with Christ in Paradise.

Those who say you must be baptized to be saved need to stay at this verse for a moment. It is so clear that salvation does not come through a tub; salvation comes by faith in Christ.

2. The second false doctrine that Christ’s answer wipes away is obviously, salvation by works.

This criminal could not do anything – his hands were either tied or nailed to the cross. He could not go anywhere for Christ – his feet were also either tied or nailed to the cross. He did not have an opportunity to do anything.

We do not know that he testified either. We do not know that he did anything. He certainly did not give any money. There was no church to join on Calvary. He simply could not do a thing. Yet, Jesus says,

. . . *“Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”*

You do not enter the Kingdom through a Bible study; through good works; through church membership; you enter the Kingdom through simple faith.

As it has been said, “It is simply coming to a point in your life where you cease trusting in yourself for your salvation and begin trusting in God for your salvation.”

3. The third doctrine that I think Jesus literally shatters, is the doctrine that perpetuates the idea of soul sleep.

Have you ever heard of this? The idea of soul sleep is that when you die, you just kind of go into an unconscious state and you stay there until Jesus comes back. Jesus Christ said,

. . . *“today you shall be with Me in Paradise!”*

4. A fourth doctrine that is an even more difficult doctrine to hold to by simply studying this passage, is the doctrine of purgatory.

This doctrine says that you must, after conversion, go through the fire to be purified and prepared for the Kingdom.

You are purified; you are prepared at the moment you trust Christ. Romans 5:1 says you are “justified” by the blood of Jesus Christ, and because of that blood and the “faith” in that blood,

. . . *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

There is no purgatory; no need to fear the fire. You are perfect, not in your works, but in the works of Christ.

Conclusion

Now, at this moment, and we will not take the time to go into detail, Mark 15:33 tells us that,

. . . *darkness fell over the whole land . . .*

There was darkness. I think this, once again, simply goes back into the Old Testament history.

There were ten plagues in Egypt. The tenth plague was the death of the firstborn. What was the ninth plague? Darkness.

I think this is a powerful insinuation that Jesus Christ, the only unique Son of God, is about to die. I

want to remind Jews that this is like the plagues. While there is darkness, if you do not put across the doorposts the blood of the lamb, you will face death. I think this is a powerful picture that unless we place the blood of Jesus Christ on the doorposts of our hearts, we will also face death. So, the darkness came.

At some point, after the darkness came, Jesus Christ says, in one Greek word, “tetelestai”. He cried it, which is translated, in John 19:30,

. . . *“It is finished!”* . . .

Jesus did not say, “I am finished.”

Jesus said,

. . . *“It is finished!”* . . .

What is finished? The redemptive plan of God is now complete.

This word was used in Greece by servants who would go to their masters and tell them that the job was completed. It was also used by merchants, who would use this word “tetelestai,” to indicate that the price was paid in full. That is the Greek word that Jesus Christ chose to indicate, as the servant of the Father, that His will was finished; the price was paid in full.

I have been studying this passage all week and appreciate you giving me the benefit of doing that. I spent a couple of hours studying about this word “tetelestai,” and I am giving it to you in about sixty seconds. At the conclusion of that study, the phone rang and a gal was on the other end of the line.

She was from the Unification church and was inviting me to come to a seminar in Washington, all expenses paid, to hear Reverend Sun Myung Moon teach his doctrine. She called at the wrong time because Moon believes that Jesus did not finish the work that He came to do. He believes that the cross prematurely cut the plan that God had to raise up a spiritual nation. So now, God has Moon here to finish what Jesus did not complete.

Was I ever ready for her! As tactfully as I could, I said, “Ma’am, I can’t go because my Bible teaches me that Jesus finished the work. Moon is not needed to finish what Jesus did.”

I gave her about thirty seconds of everything I had studied. Finally, she said, “Well, God bless you,” and she hung up.

I just sat back in my chair and thought, “That’s exactly what God has done. He’s blessed me, and

He's blessed you, because we trusted the One who finished it all."

Christ came and finished what He had come to do. He had come from heaven to build a bridge from earth to heaven. That bridge was in the form of a cross.

As one poet said,

The foot of the cross touched earth,

Declaring that God had moved to touch man.

The top of the cross pointed heavenward,

As if to tell men, "Now there's a way to heaven; to the kingdom."

The arms of the cross stretched outward,

As if to plead with men, "Whosoever will, may come."

This includes even me; even you.

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