

EASTER 2021 – PART C**Mark 15:21-41.**

As we enter into the final two phases of this redemptive drama – the crucifixion and the resurrection, it should be obvious to anyone that what transpired on the night in which Jesus was arrested was a complete legal sham. It was what I called “illegal justice”. Jesus was ridiculed and mocked and beaten without any justification whatsoever. He was undeserving of any and all suffering that He endured. This was mockery at its finest because everyone who was mocking Jesus saw Him as a complete joke, a kind of village idiot – making Himself out to be God, yet here He was on a cross about to die. It simply says in **Mark 15:24,**

Mk 15:24 (NKJV) And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.

Here Jesus was hanging on a cross, but the mockery and ridicule from the night and the trial were still continuing. It was like the people could not get enough of taking mocking pokes at Jesus, of scorning Him. Listen to **Mark 15:29-32,**

Mk 15:29 (NKJV) And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days,³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"³¹ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save.³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

People are walking by, many who I am sure that did not know who this was hanging on the cross. This was the Passover, and Jesus was crucified out in the open for all to see as they made their way into Jerusalem for the feast. Many of the people who had come for the Passover had never even seen Jesus, and they would not have known what had happened the night before. He did have this sign above His head which said that He was the King of the Jews, so those who did not know Him, when they saw that sign they just laughed and blasphemed Him. They were shaking their heads in scorn at Him mocking Him because they thought He was just another criminal thug who was getting what he rightly deserved. The chief priests and the scribes were mocking Him as well. It just seemed to never end. In all of this there is hatred and utter contempt. Even the two thieves on the cross had joined the mockery party. We could actually call this kind of merciless behavior a “blood sport” where people were just reveling in some kind of bloodlust similar to what went on at the Coliseum in Rome where they would use Christians as human torches and cast them into the arena for the wild beasts to devour. The irony of all of this for the religious leaders who were mocking Jesus is that it simply revealed their total ignorance of Scripture. All of this had been prophesied to the most detailed of descriptions. Here was the very fulfillment of everything in the Scriptures that they said they believed, and yet they were nailing Him to a cross.

Please appreciate that when we come to the actual crucifixion that the Scriptures do not actually indicate that Jesus was crucified on a hill as we always suppose. People were crucified on the road so that everyone passing on the road could see what happened to those who disobeyed the Roman government. Jesus’ cross was not higher than the other two prisoners. They were all just side by side. Death on a

cross was generally death by suffocation. As the arms were outstretched on the cross bar, the air in the lungs would be pushed out of the lungs. The body would constantly be sinking down from the sheer weight and pain in both the hands and the feet, and so the prisoner would try (if he could) to push his body up with his legs so that he could get some air in his lungs. Eventually, between the horrific pain of the nails in the hands and feet and the lack of oxygen in his lungs, he would die by eventually suffocating to death. Even to this day, the Jews cannot accept that the Savior would die on a cross like a common criminal. It is simply too much for them to accept – that God died on a tree. Hundreds of years before crucifixion was even invented in 6th century BC, David wrote the following in [Psalm 22:14-18](#),

Ps 22:14 (NKJV) I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; ¹⁷ I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me. ¹⁸ They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

[Isaiah 53:5](#) in the NASB, ESV, HCSB, and NIV declares some 300 years after David,

Isa 53:5 (NASB) But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

The KJV says that “**He was wounded for our transgressions**”, but the actual Hebrew word for “**wounded**” means to pierce.

Everytime that I read and meditate on this story of the crucifixion, I find myself wondering how God the Father could take watching all of this. Why did He not just open up the ground and swallow them whole? He could have sent down ten thousand angels and destroyed them all. The reason is because even though the sinners were killing the Son of God, it was the plan of God for the Son of God to die for the sinners.

[Isaiah 53:10\(a\)](#) says,

Isa 53:10 (NKJV) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief.

I actually like the NASB, ESV, HCSB, and NIV versions better which use the word “**crush**”.

Isa 53:10 (NASB) But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;

Isa 53:10 (HCSB) Yet the LORD was pleased to crush Him severely.

The irony of this story is that Jesus was dying for the very ones that were killing Him. For those that would come to Him, they would be God’s gift given back to the Son – men and women that would love and praise Him forever. One of the thieves was saved, apparently a soldier who crucified Him was saved, and later on in [Acts 6:7](#) it says,

Ac 6:7 (NKJV) Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

These were the very people who had Jesus murdered, yet He saves them.

Now, in [Mark 15:33](#) we read of something happening that was so unique.

Mk 15:33 (NKJV) Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Without me overstating or misrepresenting what this event actually was, in my mind this is one of the absolute most significant and monumental events that could ever take place – this darkness, these three hours. This is as transcendent an event as is possible, and yet by just reading it, I doubt seriously that anyone would actually see it that way. The sixth hour is noon day. We have to appreciate that for these people that time was a little more relative simply because they did not have watches and did not deal in minutes and seconds of time like we do. It is impossible for me to be able to understand all that happened in these three hours, nevertheless be able to explain it properly to you. I am not sure of all that was happening to Jesus from 9am to 12noon, but from noon to 3pm, this was that time when the Father was making Jesus to be sin for us. This is that time when all of the wrath and judgment of God that was stored up for you and me was being placed on Jesus. He was literally taking our place. Whatever it was that was happening, it was happening in a realm and in a way that I really do not believe that any of us can understand or absorb. This was all happening in a spiritual dimension that we have never seen. This was something that was happening between God the Father and God the Son. When I read the simple words that “**there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour**”, it just seems simple, uncomplicated, straightforward, minimal. It was anything but any of those. You read these words and they just seem very matter of fact.

Some people seem to think that this was some kind of natural solar eclipse. I seriously doubt that was what was happening. In reality, this is God the Father coming to the cross in judgment on His Son. It is not easy to understand and even more difficult to explain. In the Old Testament, God would often manifest His power through forms of darkness. For instance in [Exodus 10:21-23](#) says,

Ex 10:21 (NKJV) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt." ²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. ²³ They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

This is God judging Egypt, judging Pharaoh. [Zephaniah 1:15](#) speaks about the Day of the Lord as “**a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness**”. Even in the worst of judgments, the Lake of Fire, Jesus called it a place of “**outer darkness**”, a supernatural darkness that cannot be relieved in any way. In [Matthew 25:30](#), it says,

Mt 25:30 (NKJV) And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

At Golgotha, God was manifesting His presence in a form of divine judgment that was so great that it is impossible to understand or to even vaguely grasp. This is not some eclipse that just happened to take place at this moment in divine history. This is God’s statement. This is divine wrath being poured out on Jesus Christ. God did not want anyone to be mistaken about the events of this day. God is literally pouring out His judgment of eternal wrath on His Son. This is Jesus Christ absorbing in a supernatural

way the very anger of God against sin. Jesus is experiencing the full bluntness of hell that you and I should have experienced, but the question is “HOW” was this possible, how did He do this. John MacArthur wrote, and I quote,

“...Jesus suffered the eternal hell of all the people through human history who would be saved. He bore all their eternal punishments together and did it in three hours.”

How could that happen? How could Jesus absorb this kind of punishment whose magnitude is unimaginable and cannot be calculated simply because the divine wrath that we would have suffered would have been eternal. MacArthur simply explains it as “...He could receive an infinite and eternal amount of wrath because He is an infinite and eternal person. His capacity for everything is limitless and eternal.”

My feeble understanding is that **the divine nature of God the Son was the object of God’s wrath, as well as the repository of our sins.** In reality, the divine nature of Christ is the only part of His being, either His divine nature or His human nature, which could actually endure and survive the outpouring of God’s wrath and the outpouring of all of our sin on Him. If we could somehow add up the entire accumulated and deserved wrath that we would have endured in eternity in the Lake of Fire if we had been lost and not saved, and then pour all of that out on Christ, **ONLY THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST COULD HAVE ENDURED GOD’S PUNISHMENT.** That would have been our punishment – an eternity in the Lake of Fire! His humanity, His flesh would simply have been annihilated and utterly consumed with such a monumental punishment being poured out on Him for everyone. He would literally have been vaporized in just a millisecond of time if this wrath had been directed to His physical body. In His physical body, He could never have absorbed such a degree of suffering. It would have been humanly impossible, and that is exactly why the Incarnation was so critical. It is because His incarnation maintained His divine nature, and that divine nature was the only element in all of eternity that could absorb and endure the pain and punishment that He endured. God in His wisdom is amazing. As God the Son in eternity past and before time began, Jesus knew this was His role in the plan of God. This is much more than someone just suffering for a little bit. To the contrary, these three hours of judgment are the greatest suffering that could ever be imagined. There is no description and no valid explanation that any of us could devise to indicate the eternal dimension of what Jesus was suffering in these three hours. If you could add up all of the physical suffering of all of humanity since Adam and pour it out on someone, it would not even register on a scale as to what Jesus had to suffer. This is not me exaggerating.

If someone thinks that all Jesus was suffering was just the pain and agony of being nailed to and hanging on a cross for six hours, to include what He suffered before 9am that morning, then they actually miss the real suffering that was happening in His divine nature. It would be the greatest of miscalculations. I am sure that someone is going to rightfully ask whether or not in His divine nature that Jesus actually experienced all of the suffering for all of the believers who will ever live just as they would have experienced it. The answer has to be an emphatic “YES” and nothing less. If it is not, then it cannot be said of Jesus that He actually took our place.

Please appreciate that I am not in any way diminishing the death of Christ on the cross. Paul said in **[Galatians 6:14](#)**,

14But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

To the contrary, I am elevating the cross beyond measure. It was a brutal, vicious, and inhumane death. It was a cruel and undeserved death, a death that defies a proper narrative. However, most of the time we only see it as a physical death and a spiritual separation from God the Father - which it was. However, in so doing we miss the part of His divine nature being the object of God's wrath as well. When you speak of the cross, you must include this noon to 3pm suffering, or you have not understood the cross. We think it was only His humanity that was suffering, but it was so very much more. It was both His humanity and His divine nature that were suffering – something we will never experience. For all intents and purposes, we can only relate to the physical suffering. We can understand it to some degree because we have witnessed suffering and maybe even experienced it in some way. However, at the peak of our understanding it would be virtually impossible to know what Christ suffered in His divine nature. In essence, the death of Christ was so much greater in magnitude than I personally ever understood it to be – and for that I am deeply ashamed. His sacrifice was much more than just dying. This was a divine suffering. No one in the Godhead had ever suffered and none of them deserved or merited suffering in any form. However, during these last hours of the cross, the Father suffered in an unimaginable way and the Holy Spirit suffered in an unimaginable way. As they watched and as God the Father turned away from Jesus Christ in judgment, their emotional suffering was greater than we could ever imagine.

What happened at the cross was so much more than Jesus Christ simply dying a cruel death. In His divine nature and in His human nature He actually became the object of the holy wrath of God – and both parts of His divine God-Man nature suffered as cannot be explained. His human body suffered the cruelest of all deaths, but His divine nature suffered in a way that will never be understood. If we do not understand the magnitude of the suffering that took place in His divine nature and in His divine essence, then in reality we have diminished the cross. His humanity, even though He suffered the most horrific of deaths, could never have endured what God did to His divine nature. That makes His sacrifice even that much greater. What He suffered was far, far more than we could ever even imagine.

In my feeble comprehension of such a divine truth, I even more fully realize what took place at the virgin birth and why there even had to be a virgin birth. God the Son had to be able to identify with us in a human way, but at the same time He had to remain far above us so that He could actually suffer becoming sin for us in ways that we will never perceive. **“He who knew no sin became sin for us.”** Those three hours of darkness on the cross were so much more that we could ever understand or even explain. There had to be the divine nature at the cross to absorb the totality of God's judgment on sin. It had to be there to take on the sin that was poured out, and to take on the wrath of God that was beyond description. It would be the greatest degree of pride humanly possible for us to think that we could understand the magnitude and the immensity of what it meant for the God-Man to become sin and to literally have the accrued sin of all redeemed men poured out on His divine being – but this is Christ. This is the Son of God who became the God-Man. This is the glory of Christ! This is why we extol Him and worship Him. This has never been about Easter eggs and Easter bunnies and pretty little dresses. All of that is almost a form of blasphemy against the backdrop of what was really happening to Jesus. Easter is about

the resurrected Christ in all of His glory and majesty and it should drive us to utter worship and adoration for His Person and His work on our behalf.

The full judgment, the full wrath, the full vengeance of God the Father on sin is on display in these three hours, but God the Father, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit are the only ones who actually knew what was happening. Some like His mother and John were watching all that was taking place from a distance, but even as intimate as they were with Jesus, they did not have the faintest idea of what was happening when the earth went dark. This is infinite wrath and undeserved punishment being poured out on the eternal God-Man who has given up everything so that we can be saved. God is judging His Son and watching Him suffer in a divine way that defies understanding, and Jesus Christ is willingly going through what He knew He had come to do. No wonder He sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane.

So, it all comes to an end at 3pm, and [Mark 15:34-37](#) says,

Mk 15:34 (NKJV) And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"³⁵ Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!"³⁶ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

I am amazed that after this total darkness from noon to 3pm that people are still mocking Jesus in these verses. I am amazed at how much some people actually hate Someone who loves them so much. This is utter hatred. This is the vilest contempt ever. They knew of His miracles and His casting out of demons. That was no secret at all. I love v37 – **"He cried out with a loud voice"**. After all that He has suffered, He was a man of unbelievable strength. He has laid down His life and He is the One making the final call. No one had the power to kill the Son of God. He gave His life for our salvation willingly.

This was God the Father doing all of this. He revealed Himself in the darkness. Listen how God the Father manifested His presence in [Matthew 27:51-53](#).

Mt 27:51 (NKJV) Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

This is too much. He manifested Himself in the earthquake that took place. He was making Himself known when He literally ripped the veil in the temple in two. God was revealing Himself when He opened graves and Old Testament saints were resurrected and talked with people. I believe I would have gotten on board right then. Between the work of God the Father and the Son of God, people really have no excuses for rejecting what Jesus did for them – yet they still do. The hatred for Jesus is just as strong today as it was on the day that He gave His life for us. I am so deeply grateful for this amazing salvation. I agree wholeheartedly with the centurion when he said in v39 – **"Truly this Man was the Son of God"**. Next week the resurrection. Hallelujah!