

**A Brilliant Death [Mark 15]**  
Draft by Steve Carr [[www.houseofcarr.com/thread](http://www.houseofcarr.com/thread)]

## INTRODUCTION

1. I'm a fan of soccer; mostly I watch the English leagues.
  - a. Every week I listen to British play-by-play commentators, and I hear their language.
  - b. Despite similarities in American English and British English, some words stand out.
  - c. One of the words that has an entirely different meaning: Brilliant
  - d. To the British, it's a statement of astonishment. To Americans, it speaks to intellect.
2. I don't know about you, but I've always been fascinated with smart people.
  - a. What does it take to just KNOW more than those around you?
  - b. It's believed that the smartest person who ever lived was William James Sidis.
  - c. Born on April Fools Day in 1898, estimated his IQ was in the low 300's
  - d. Genius level is half of that. Let's compare his development to another human being,

### 18 months old

Sidis: able to read — Me: able to wet myself

### 8 years old

Sidis: wrote four novels — Me: wrote on living room wall

### 11 years old

Sidis: accepted into Harvard — Me: gifted Harvard t-shirt

### 28 years old

Sidis: wrote theory predicting black holes 14 years before they were discovered

Me: discovered black hole in my couch; found 14 Oreo Cookies

- e. Scientists estimate that around 110 billion people have lived throughout history.
  - d. Brilliance in that time has been redefined and continues to morph.
3. But there has been no more brilliant death than that of Jesus Christ
  - a. As we near the end of Mark, tonight we reach the author's destination.
  - b. The entire book has been a prelude to this very moment.

## VERSES 16-20

<sup>16</sup>The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup>They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup>And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup>Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. <sup>20</sup>And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

1. Jesus had now been beaten not only by Jewish leaders, but by Roman soldiers as well.
  - a. As we go through this evening, understand that the Romans were brutal.
  - b. They made an art out of execution, extracting the most pain out of the subject.
2. Jesus had open wounds in his back from flogging.
  - a. Freedmen and military personnel were beaten with rods or sticks.
  - b. Non-Romans would've been whipped with a flagrum or a flagellum.
    - 1) They were scourged with leather whips tipped with spikes at each end.
    - 2) Victim was stripped, tied to a post, beaten until his bones were exposed
3. At the same time, they were mocking the idea that Jesus was a king:
  - a. The purple robe (sign of royalty) was probably soaked in the blood.
  - b. The crown of thorns had been jammed on his head. Eyes swollen shut.
  - c. Our Savior was thrashed to the point that he was no longer recognizable.

4. THE KEY TO THIS SCENE: They mocked him, but they tortured the king of the universe.

### **VERSES 21-26**

<sup>21</sup> A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. <sup>22</sup> They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). <sup>23</sup> Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. <sup>25</sup> It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

1. Plutarch wrote, "every wrong-doer who goes to execution carries out his own cross"
  - a. From Africa, made sense because of Passover.
  - b. **Mark 8:34** "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
  - c. Simon was likely the father of future believers, but no current followers were there.
2. The place of the skull hasn't been identified, likely in a public place.
  - a. Crucifixion was done on road at eye level, often with the criminal being naked.
  - b. This took place at 9am in the morning, so there's some physical exhaustion as well
3. A placard was placed above the cross of every person crucified.
  - a. It was supposed to be a summary of the reason behind execution.
  - b. It was actually fortunate for his followers that Jesus' name was on the cross.
  - c. Because of the beatings he endured, he was probably unrecognizable.
  - d. Other gospels note Jewish objections to the "king of Jews." Mark understands irony.

### **VERSES 27-33**

<sup>27</sup> They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>[28]</sup> <sup>29</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!" <sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!" <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. <sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

1. Let's focus in on the cross.
  - a. None of the gospel writers go in-depth on the brutality of crucifixion
  - b. Its effects were widely known; as I said, the Romans perfected it.
    - 1) First, the brutality was great.
      - a) Usually death was asphyxiation or starvation
      - b) Seneca the Younger "I see crosses there, not just of one kind but fashioned in many different ways: Some have their victims with head down toward the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the crossbeam."
      - c) Archaeological proof of crucifixion: heel bone discovered in Israel w/nail.
    - 2) The religious implications of crucifixion cannot to be ignored.
      - a) **Deuteronomy 21:23**, "Anyone who is hung under a tree is under God's curse."
2. When we talk insult to injury, Jesus was also the recipient of verbal abuse.
  - a. The religious leaders were there to ensure that the punishment was severe.
  - b. If anything, we see a flawed religious expression.
  - c. The religious leaders joined a thief in their mockery of Jesus.
3. Three in the afternoon, meaning it was a six-hour ordeal. Plenty of time for pain.

## **VERSES 37-47**

<sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" <sup>40</sup> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. <sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

1. At his death: earthshaking, Temple curtain, no darkness mentioned.
  - a. Verse 40, 41: note all the women at the scene; where are disciples?
2. Removing a body from the cross wasn't allowed.
  - a. The point of crucifixion was to leave the body there as a message to criminals.
  - b. Commit these crimes, and this could be you hanging here.
  - c. So why would Pilate allow for the early removal from the cross?
    - 1) Passover was the holiest of holidays; leaving him would have been an insult.
    - 2) Or perhaps Pilate merely had sympathy for Jesus' situation.
    - 3) Pilate seems to have disdain for the Jewish teachers.
    - 4) We don't know exactly why, but it's important to see this wasn't normal.
3. Mark is almost as descriptive about Jesus' dead body as his death.
  - a. This is done purposely to clarify that there was no mistake here.
    - 1) Even today, skeptics suggest that Jesus wasn't actually dead. Mark disagrees.
      - a) Pilate wouldn't have let the body out of custody if he was still alive;
      - b) This would've made Pilate look incompetent.
      - c) The point behind removing Jesus from the cross: he was no longer living.
    - 2) This burial description matches Jewish tradition. It wouldn't be a mistake.
      - a) Shortly after death, family members would prepare the body for burial.
      - b) The body was washed, anointed with various oils and spices.
      - c) The body was wrapped with special, white linen grave-clothes.
      - d) The body would have been prepared with spices.
      - e) This was done purposely, because the body wouldn't be put in a coffin.
      - f) The body was laid in a tomb.
  - 4 Joseph's tomb was new. New tombs could be sold, but used tombs could not.
    - a. Once used, only members of that family could be properly buried in it.
    - b. Cost of property near Jerusalem, a rock-hewn tomb was very generous.
    - c. The willingness to sacrifice shows measure of his devotion to him.
    - d. It also fulfilled the prophecy found in **Isaiah 53:9**, "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."
  5. If you're going to challenge the death story of Jesus, the gospels make it a challenge.
    - a. The description of all the steps display an accuracy that's airtight.
    - b. The question becomes: what happens after Jesus is dead in the tomb?

## **CONCLUSION**

1. "The statistics on death are quite impressive. 1 out of 1 people die." George Bernard Shaw
  - a. The Brilliance of the death is directly related to the significance of the individual.
  - b. This point was established by the centurion in verse 39 of this chapter.
  - c. It was the most brilliant death because it was God who died.

2. If you recall Paul's writing from Romans 3:23, death was ultimately the result of sin.
  - a. But Jesus had no sin in him at all.
  - b. If so, then why did he die? The answer: he offered his life as a sacrifice.
  - c. Jesus died, even though he didn't deserve it, so that we can live.
  - d. His is the most sacrificial death in the history of the world.
  - e. That, friends, is sheer brilliance.

End the message in a time of COMMUNION