



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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**Mark 15:6-15, 25-26, 33-39**  
**New International Version**  
**June 9, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 9, 2019**, is from **Mark 15:6-15, 25-26, 33-39**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Mark 15:6) Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested.**

After the religious leaders tried Jesus on false charges based on lies and Jesus' confession of the truth that He was the Messiah when He quoted parts of Daniel 7:13 and Psalms 110:11 (see Mark 14:62), they took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, for him to pass a death sentence on Jesus, something Pilate did not want to do, so

he offered to release Jesus since it was his custom to release a prisoner during the feast of Passover.

**(Mark 15:7) A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.**

Abba means “father.” Jesus called His Father “Abba.” Mark 14:36 reads, “And Jesus said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’” Christians also call God their Heavenly Father “Abba.” Romans 8:15 reads, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” The name Barabbas means “son of the father,” but Barabbas and Jesus did not have the same father. In John 8:44, Jesus said that the father of some people is the devil and his children choose to act according to their father’s desires; such as, murder people and tell lies. Barabbas fit that description, and he truly sought to overthrow the Roman authority over Judea; therefore, he was a real threat to Pilate, King Herod, and the Romans who occupied Judea. Some of the religious leaders and Barabbas had the same father.

**(Mark 15:8) The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.**

Goaded by the religious leaders, the crowd asked Pilate to release a prisoner as was his custom. Pilate did this each year as one way of trying to appease the Judeans and

maintain peace in Judea. If Pilate did not keep the peace, the Emperor would have removed him as governor. Pilate agreed to do as they asked, perhaps not knowing in advance that they would ask him to release Barabbas, who had been convicted of leading a violent uprising against Roman authorities and murder—a real threat to peace in Jerusalem and Judea.

**(Mark 15:9) “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate,**

At His trial before the religious leaders, Jesus referred to himself in a way that proved He claimed to be the King of the Jews, the Messiah. Mark 14:61-62 reads, “But Jesus remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” From speaking to Jesus and seeing He was poor and had no band of followers (for they had all fled), Pilate knew Jesus was no political threat to the Romans; therefore, he offered to release Jesus using the title for the Messiah, “the King of the Jews,” when he referred to Jesus.

**(Mark 15:10) knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.**

The religious leaders envied Jesus because He spoke with authority they did not have. The crowds gladly heard Jesus

because He taught them the truth and the good news directly from God. He also had power the chief priests and the other religious leaders did not have. Jesus loved and wanted to help people, and Jesus could heal the sick, raise the dead, and feed large crowds. The religious leaders lied about Jesus because they wanted to murder Jesus—they had the same father as Barabbas.

**(Mark 15:11) But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.**

The chief priests stirred up the crowd to release one of their own type of person—a murderer, for they wanted to murder Jesus. The crowd that was assembled did not see any hope of Jesus freeing them from Roman oppression because He appeared poor, ragged, and had no army; therefore, they placed their hoped-for deliverance from Rome in the revolutionary Barabbas.

**(Mark 15:12) “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.**

People who have not grounded themselves in the truth with a commitment to think, pray, and follow the true God and the Bible no matter what the cost, can be easily misled by falsehoods and emotional appeals. So, when Pilate asked them what he should do with Jesus, the crowd simply followed the loudest voices they heard in order to be “a part of the crowd” or “to go along to get along” with others.

**(Mark 15:13) “Crucify him!” they shouted.**

The crowd could have called out for Jesus to suffer less punishment than crucifixion. Knowing Jesus was a good man who had been good to them, they could have asked for a mild form of punishment. Instead, they asked Pilate to murder Jesus in the most painful and degrading way possible. Not being children of their Heavenly Father, they followed the devil.

**(Mark 15:14) “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”**

Pilate knew Jesus had done no evil. If he could have gotten the people to think rather than follow a mob mentality, they would have had to agree that they could think of no evil that Jesus had done. Some will blindly follow the crowd or do whatever political or religious leaders want no matter what they demand.

**(Mark 15:15) Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.**

Pilate did not have the moral courage to stand against the crowd and set a person free that he knew had done nothing evil and was only on trial before him because of the jealousy of religious leaders. Pilate was committed to maintaining the peace at all costs to retain his power, even at the cost of an innocent person’s life. He knew the chief

priests were appointed by Roman authorities and were collaborators with Roman authorities in order to maintain their privileged positions; therefore, he had to be careful not to rule against their desires, because they might report him to his superiors as ineffective or cause a riot that would lead to his removal as governor.

**(Mark 15:25) It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.**

The third hour was the third hour after sunrise, probably around 9 am. By this time, Jesus had been awake since sunrise of the previous day, and had been mocked, tried, scourged, and forced to carry His cross to Golgotha (in Aramaic, “the place of the skull”).

**(Mark 15:26) The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Pilate insisted that the charge against Jesus be placed on the cross for all to see. The charge told the truth about Jesus: He is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, but Pilate meant to mock the chief priests and the crowds who wanted an innocent man crucified. The inscription also revealed the Father’s desire to send a message to those crucifying Jesus and to all those who would learn about Him—Jesus really was the Messiah that the Father had promised to send the Jews. Despite His shameful crucifixion, after Jesus rose from the dead, many have come to believe in Him.

**(Mark 15:33) At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.**

The sixth hour would be about 12:00 pm, so Jesus would have been on the cross about three hours. Therefore, at the brightest hour of the day, it became dark for three hours (or until about 3:00 pm) which would have given some relief to those suffering on the cross as well as serve as a sign from God that Jesus was indeed His Son.

**(Mark 15:34) And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).**

At about 3:00 pm, Jesus quoted Psalms 22:1 — “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” By reading Psalms 22:1 and by also referring to 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,” some think the Father truly turned His back on Jesus and truly forsook Jesus as He hanged on the cross. But the verse from 2 Corinthians and other parts of the New Testament can more properly be interpreted to mean that Jesus was the sin offering for us and Jesus sacrificed himself for us so God could be just and merciful when forgiving the sins of those who would believe in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. The Father did not forsake Jesus; instead, the Father looked upon Jesus as the appropriate substitutionary sacrifice for us; for Jesus died in our place

as the Father's substitute for the punishment we deserved. These few words of Jesus (for He could only gasp a few words at a time for people to hear) from Psalms 22 should point people to read the entire Psalm 22, which describes and proclaims victory for the faithful and Jesus' victory over crucifixion and death. Jesus truly suffered as Psalms 22 described, and Jesus rose to honor God and lead others to praise God as Psalms 22 described. Jesus quoted Psalms 22 to reveal prophecies about His crucifixion that He expected His disciples and others to understand. For example, consider how His crucifixion experience fulfilled Psalms 22:16-18 — "For dogs (meaning Gentiles, the Romans were Gentiles) encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet (nailed Him to a cross)—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Today, the followers of Jesus still proclaim these fulfilled facts about Him from Psalms 22:30-31 — "Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it." For almost 2000 years, people have heard of Christ's righteousness and have received Him as their living Lord and Savior.

**(Mark 15:35) When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."**

Not believing Jesus was the Messiah, not knowing the Scriptures, not knowing that Jesus quoted Psalms 22, not



knowing that in the coming of John the Baptist that Elijah had already come according to Jesus' teachings, the crowds thought He was calling to Elijah who was to come before the Messiah came. They thought Jesus was calling Elijah to come and save Him.

**(Mark 15:36) Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.**

Jesus did not drink anything that would have mitigated His suffering or would have made His crucifixion less painful or shorter. The soldiers did divide Jesus clothes as Psalms 22:18 foretold. Instead of forsaking Jesus as some interpreters have thought, the LORD heard Jesus' prayer and answered Him in the way Jesus was crucified and died according to Psalms 22:24 — “For he (the LORD) has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted (Jesus), and he (the LORD) has not hidden his face from him (Jesus), but has heard, when he cried to him.” After Jesus' resurrection, He fulfilled Psalms 22:25, and other verses — “From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him.”

**(Mark 15:37) With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.**

After Jesus quoted Psalms 22:1, He cried out, stopped breathing, and His physical human body died. His Father did not forsake Him. Jesus freely chose to obey His Father

and lay down His life so He could take it up again. In John 10:17-18, we read: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” Jesus breathed His last and entered Paradise the day He died, as He promised the thief on the cross beside Him who repented and called out to Him. He also preached to the spirits in prison between the time His body died and the time He rose again on Sunday (see Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:3, Revelation 2:7, 1 Peter 3:18-19, Acts 2:31, Psalms 16:10).

**(Mark 15:38) The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.**

The curtain was about 30 feet tall to keep everyone but the High Priest out of the Holy of Holies except one day a year on the Day of Atonement. The LORD sat enthroned above the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies, but the Ark of the Covenant disappeared sometime before or after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in BC 587. After King Solomon’s temple was destroyed, the LORD never returned to live in the rebuilt second temple as He did King Solomon’s temple. In the beautified and expanded second temple built by King Herod, only a raised area was put in the Holy of Holies, which was where the Ark of the Covenant would have been placed. After the curtain was torn in two, it meant that through prayer and faith in Jesus

Christ as their Lord and Savior, believers in Him could come before the LORD wherever they were and whenever they wanted.

**(Mark 15:39) 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!”**

The centurion had seen many people crucified and had perhaps presided over many crucifixions. He could tell by the way Jesus died that Jesus was the Son of God. All nature was affected during Jesus' time on the cross, and no one died the way Jesus died. Jesus did not curse God or those who crucified Him because of His suffering. Instead, Jesus quoted the Scriptures and asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him. In Luke 23:34, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Who was Barabbas and what had he done?
2. How did Pilate refer to Jesus?
3. Why do you think the religious leaders may have envied Jesus, as Pilate thought?
4. What did Pilate ask the crowd that made them shout even more, “Crucify him”?

5. What did the Centurion think about Jesus? Why do you think he thought this?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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