

Title: WHAT THEY SAID, MARK 15:33-39.  
(Chatham, NJ; 04/04/09, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Statements made by Jesus or about Jesus during Passion Week reveal details about his identity and contrast with things said by his detractors.

Purpose: To consecrate and devote ourselves to Christ by reflecting on statements made during the week before he died.

Introduction:

1. Passover coincides exactly with Easter this year.
2. The Jewish Passover celebrates redemption, salvation, and freedom.
3. Easter completes this.
4. The Feast of Pentecost would soon follow, and it was the feast celebrating the first harvest reminding Israel that the Lord was the one who provided for and preserved them.
5. As Passover foreshadowed redemption and freedom through the Resurrection, the Day of Pentecost foreshadows the first fruits of the new Gospel at the church's beginning.
6. That all this happens during spring is no mere coincidence.
7. The renewal of our spiritual lives occurs simultaneously with the renewal of the earth.
8. Things said during the last week of Christ's life uncover some remarkable insights into this renewal.

I. "The very stones would cry out," Luke 19:40. (Nature anticipates it.)

A. Creation itself watched and anticipated.

1. Jesus enters Jerusalem with triumph, vs. 37-38. (Also Mk. 11:9-10.)
2. A coronation is about to take place; the king has arrived.
3. Jesus is not shy about the proclamation.
4. If people had not shouted, nature itself would have responded.
5. Creation recognized the glory of that day and in fact still anticipates deliverance, Romans 8:19-23.

B. This contrasts with Christ's enemies.

1. Christ's detractors were indignant, Luke 19:39.
2. But the created order sees something they can't see.
3. If that weren't enough, Jesus also demonstrates that even children can see what they can't, Mt. 21:16-17.
4. The children cry out; the stones would have if no one else had.

II. "What evil has he done?" Mk. 15:14. (A pagan magistrate declares his innocence.)

A. His enemies sought his downfall.

1. The animosity toward him comes to a boiling point.
2. Many people testify against him, Mark 14:56-60.
3. The Jewish leaders accuse him of blasphemy, Mark 14:64-65.
4. The Roman soldiers also get into the act, Mark 15:16-20.

B. Yet Pilate is bewildered.

1. He asks, "What evil has he done?" Mark 15:14.
2. Pilate was astute enough to see the envy of the high priests, vs. 10.
3. Yet a legitimate answer to his question never materialized.

4. This Gospel even notes the conflicting testimony of the witnesses, 14:59.
5. This was only a pretense of a trial.
6. To no avail Pilate's question was and is left for us to respond to.

III. "This man was the son of God," Mark 15:39. (A Roman soldier has his eyes opened.)

- A. Even his detractors waited to see if he might perform some sign.
  1. People mocked him in death: "Save yourself, come down from the cross," "He saved others; he cannot save himself," "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now...that we may see and believe."
  2. At the moment of his death, some even waited to see (hoped for?) if Elijah would save him.
  3. The biggest sign, of course, was three days in the tomb symbolized by Jonah and followed by the Resurrection.
  4. Everyone was too blind to see the reality taking place before them.
- B. "This man was the (a) son of God."
  1. Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 contain the same statement.
  2. He speaks amid darkness, an earthquake, and the tearing of the temple curtain.
  3. He responds to the final breath of Jesus (37); something got his attention.
  4. How was it that an outsider could utter what no Israelite dared to confess?
  5. What about this pagan testimony? How could a hardened Roman soldier speak truly of what he isn't even familiar with? Did he mean it in the pagan sense that Jesus is one of the gods come to earth?
  6. Most likely it does not contain all the Christological implications that the disciples finally pieced together later.
  7. But the soldier did recognize that there was something different about this man even if he doesn't recognize the full theological implications of his own words.
  8. His words are more profound than he realizes.
  9. Mark finds in his words support for his own testimony (1:1 & 11; 9:7).
  10. From the mouth of a hardened soldier God also ordains praise.
  11. Vindication for this statement will be forthcoming three days later.

Conclusion:

1. Nature, Pilate, and a Roman centurion testify to the truth of Christ.
2. Their testimony persuades us to testify to him as well; and so we do.
3. We come to the same conclusion: he truly is the Son of God.