

April 7

Scriptures: Read Mark 15

Key Verse: "...Truly this man was the Son of God."(Mark 15:39)

Overview

So why are you a Christian? Because you were raised that way? Perhaps it's because of Sunday School, or the witness of a friend. Maybe reading the Bible did it. Whatever. But why a Christian, rather than a Buddhist or Muslim? Why not an atheist? There's only one answer to that: "Jesus". Never in the history of this planet has there ever been such a man. For those who've been confronted by His presence, or who've taken the time to study His ministry and personal claims, there's no neutral ground. You either embrace Him or displace Him. There are no maybes.

In this chapter we read about the trial, judgment, crucifixion and burial of Jesus. There are several personalities surrounding the central figure—teachers of the law, the Sanhedrin, chief priests, Pilate, the crowd, soldier, Barabbas, two thieves, Simon the Cyrene, Mary Magdalene, Jesus' own mother Mary, and one Roman centurion. This man wasn't yet a Christian, but in the maelstrom of Jesus' crucifixion he says something that suggests he may have become a believer later.

Jesus died with the heart-rending cry, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Unlike the Jews, some of whom would recognize these words as a direct quote from the messianic Psalm 22, and, unlike the theologians who would debate the issue of God forsaking Himself, the centurion is completely gripped by the divinity of this last gasp, and declares, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" The pathos of the cry, and the way in which Jesus died, caused this Gentile soldier to unequivocally accept the claims of the "king of the Jews".

If he were asked later to defend his faith, the centurion may have had no foot to stand on other than his experience of Christ. Years later, he may have had access to some of the early Christian writings. Maybe he even attended one of the churches Paul established in Asia Minor. Who knows?

But one thing we do know. Whether you're a soldier, sailor, tinker, or tailor, you can know Jesus and even love Him—mainly because He knew and loved you first. His word under girds and nourishes faith. But in the final analysis, it's your experience of Christ that sustains you. Call it a lasting relationship.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, reveal Yourself to us anew. May we experience Your reality today. Like the centurion we exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God". You gave yourself for us, Lord, and we give ourselves to You for this new day.