

Task:

- I. Read the passages below the reading questions. These primary source passages come from the New Testament of the Bible, specifically from the end of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, John, and Luke. *Pay attention to the differences as you read.*
- II. Answer the reading questions after having read the passages. You should quote the passages as you feel necessary, but remember to explain quotations to prove your points.
- III. *Note:* This assignment is not about belief or theology, it is about the history of early Christianity and the shaping of the early churches. The passages are short and all describe the same event, obviously the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but they do not agree perfectly.

Reading Questions:

1. Which of the Gospel passages are most similar to each other? How so? (1 point)

2. How does Luke's description of the lead-up to the crucifixion differ from the other gospel accounts? (*be sure to compare with all three other accounts*) (3 points)

3. How do the Gospels of Mark and Matthew differ? (1 point)

4. As Jesus is placed on the Cross, what does Luke say he said? (1 point)

5. After Jesus is on the Cross with the two thieves, how does Luke's account differ from the accounts of the other gospels (of Mark, Matthew, and John)? (1 point)

6. After Jesus is crucified upon the Cross, how does John's account differ from the rest? (*Be detailed, this requires a thoughtful response; 2 points*)

7. Reflect on the following in a paragraph: What are your thoughts and/or conclusions on the differences between these gospel accounts of the Crucifixion? **(5 points)** (*Possible questions to help you get started on this final reflection question: are all the gospel writers writing for the same purpose? If not, can you identify their different motives? Are the differences between the accounts significant? What can we gain by comparing the accounts? Does any account stand out as unreliable, reliable, or intriguing? Why are there any differences at all?*)

Mark 15:20-41

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 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. 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.

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. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. 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, come down from the cross and save yourself!"

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! 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.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*"¹ (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 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.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 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!"

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary² the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. 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.

Matthew 27:31-54

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to [help] carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the

¹ Quoting Psalm 22:1, in Hebrew.

² Mother Mary

skull”). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*”³ (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary⁴ the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Luke 23:26-49

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one named Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then

*they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’
and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’*⁵

For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his

³ Quoting Psalm 22:1

⁴ This is Mary, mother of Jesus - if you didn’t recognize two of his brothers’ names.

⁵ Hosea 10:8 from the Old Testament.

right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."⁶ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."⁷ When he had said this, he let go of the ghost.⁸

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

John 19:16-33

Then he delivered him therefore to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And carrying his own cross, he went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew: Golgotha. There they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side with Jesus in the middle.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews then read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Then the chief priest of the Pharisees said to Pilate, "Write not 'The King of the Jews'; rather what he said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

Pontius Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat and cloak... They said therefore among themselves, "Let's not tear it, but let's cast lots to determine whose it shall be." For then the scripture might be fulfilled, which said

*They parted my clothes among them,
for my garment they did cast lots.*

These things therefore the soldiers did.

⁶ Some early Greek manuscripts do not have this sentence.

⁷ Quoting Psalm 31:5 from the Old Testament, Book of Psalms.

⁸ An old way of saying, he died...he stopped breathing. The other gospels basically use the exact same phrase.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw his mother, and the disciple⁹ standing by, whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, this is your son!"

Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took into his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "I thirst."

Now there was placed a vessel full of vinegar, and [the soldiers] filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon a hyssop branch, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus then had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

⁹ This is John talking about himself, John.