

# Mark 15:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said,  
Behold, he calleth Elias.

## Analysis

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This verse occurs during Jesus' crucifixion, immediately after His cry "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" ("My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"). The Greek *parestēkotes* (παρεστηκότες, "those standing by") likely refers to Jewish bystanders. The confusion about Jesus calling Elijah (Ἐλιαν φόνει, Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ) stems from the similarity between "Eloi" (Aramaic for "My God") and "Elijah" (Elias in Greek). This misunderstanding carries profound irony. Jesus was experiencing absolute God-forsakenness, bearing humanity's sin as the ultimate sacrifice (2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13), yet bystanders thought He was calling for prophetic rescue. The expectation that Elijah would come reflects Jewish eschatological hope—Malachi 4:5-6 prophesied Elijah's return before "the great and dreadful day of the LORD." The bystanders' confusion reveals spiritual blindness to what was actually occurring. They witnessed the pivotal moment of redemptive history—God's Son bearing divine wrath against sin, accomplishing atonement—yet interpreted it as a desperate cry for help. This misunderstanding demonstrates how even those physically present at Christ's crucifixion failed to comprehend its theological significance. Only through divine revelation can anyone understand the cross's true meaning (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:14).

## Historical Context

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Crucifixion was Rome's crudest execution method, reserved for slaves, rebels, and the worst criminals. Jesus' relatively quick death after six hours (9 AM to 3 PM) was unusual, likely hastened by the severe scourging He received beforehand. The

expectation of Elijah's coming had deep roots in Jewish theology. Malachi's prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6) was interpreted to mean Elijah would return before the Messiah. Jesus had already identified John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this prophecy (Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13), but many Jews rejected this interpretation. Popular Jewish belief held that Elijah appeared to help the righteous in desperate situations—numerous rabbinical stories described such rescues. Jesus' cry in Aramaic ("Eloi") rather than Hebrew ("Eli") reflects the common language of first-century Palestine. The bystanders' confusion was linguistically plausible—"Eloi" and "Elijah" share similar sounds.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does this misunderstanding illustrate humanity's spiritual blindness to the true meaning of Christ's crucifixion?
2. What does Jesus' cry of dereliction teach us about the depth of His suffering and the cost of our salvation?
3. In what ways do we, like the bystanders, sometimes miss the profound spiritual reality occurring before us?
4. How should understanding Christ's God-forsakenness on the cross shape our response to feelings of abandonment or difficulty?
5. What does this verse reveal about the necessity of divine revelation for understanding the gospel's true significance?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων ἀκούσαντες ἔλεγον  
And some of them that stood by when they heard it said  
G2532 G5100 G3588 G3936 G191 G3004

Ἰδού, Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ

Behold Elias he calleth  
G2400 G2243 G5455

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