

# Mark 15:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

## Analysis

This verse records the profound testimony of a Roman centurion who supervised Jesus' crucifixion. The phrase "when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw" emphasizes eyewitness testimony—this wasn't hearsay but direct observation. "That he so cried out, and gave up the ghost" refers to Jesus' final cry and death. What the centurion witnessed convinced him of Jesus' identity. His confession "Truly this man was the Son of God" (*Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ*, *Alēthōs houtos ho anthrōpos huios theou ēn*) is theologically stunning. This Gentile soldier, having overseen countless crucifixions, recognized something unique about Jesus' death. The word "truly" (*alēthōs*) indicates firm conviction, not speculation. "Son of God" may have meant different things to a Roman versus a Jew—Romans used this title for emperors and heroes—but Mark intends readers to understand it in its fullest sense: Jesus is truly God's divine Son. The irony is striking: Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus as blasphemer; Roman authorities crucified Him as insurrectionist; yet a pagan centurion confesses what Israel's leaders denied. This fulfills Mark's opening verse (1:1) and anticipates the gospel's spread to Gentiles. The centurion's confession demonstrates that the cross, intended as shame and defeat, actually reveals Jesus' true identity and accomplishes redemption.

## Historical Context

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Roman centurions commanded units of approximately 80-100 soldiers and were career military professionals. This centurion had likely supervised numerous crucifixions and witnessed many deaths. What distinguished Jesus' death? Possibilities include: Jesus' prayer for His executioners (Luke 23:34), His care for His mother (John 19:26-27), the supernatural darkness (Mark 15:33), His cry of dereliction (v. 34), His voluntary yielding of His spirit ("gave up the ghost" suggests Jesus actively dismissed His spirit rather than passively dying), and the earthquake and temple veil tearing (Matthew 27:51-54). The centurion's confession occurs at a pivotal moment in Mark's narrative—immediately after Jesus' death, before the resurrection. Mark begins with the declaration "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1) and ends (before the resurrection) with a Gentile's confession of the same truth. This inclusion of a Roman soldier's testimony was significant for Mark's audience—likely Gentile Christians in Rome. It demonstrated that faith in Jesus transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. The early church saw this as prophetic—the Jews who should have recognized their Messiah rejected Him, while Gentiles who had no covenant relationship embraced Him (Romans 11:11-24). Church history records that tradition identified this centurion as Longinus, though this cannot be verified.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. What specifically about Jesus' death convinced the centurion of His divine identity, and what does this teach about how the cross reveals Christ's glory?

2. How does the irony of a Gentile soldier confessing Jesus as God's Son while Jewish leaders rejected Him illustrate the gospel's reversal of human expectations?
3. In what ways does the centurion's confession demonstrate that authentic faith can arise from unexpected sources?
4. What does this verse teach about the cross as both apparent defeat and actual victory, shame and glory?
5. How should the centurion's immediate confession after witnessing Jesus' death challenge delayed or reluctant responses to the gospel today?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ  
 saw And which when the centurion which stood over  
 G1492 G1161 G3588 G2760 G3588 G3936 G1537  
 ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως κράξας ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν  
 against him that he so cried out and gave up the ghost he said  
 G1727 G846 G3754 G3779 G2896 G1606 G2036  
 Άληθῶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος νίὸς ἦν θεοῦ  
 Truly which man this the Son was of God  
 G230 G3588 G444 G3778 G5207 G2258 G2316

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 27:54** (References God): Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

**Matthew 27:43** (References God): He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

**Acts 10:1** (Parallel theme): There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

