

## Abusing Jesus 6-11-06

Matthew 27:27-37 (NIV)

*27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. 30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 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. 32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

The chief priests had their way. Pilate had handed down the sentence. *27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.* Attached to the wall of the temple was the fortress of Antonia. Extra soldiers from Caesarea would have been on hand because the time of Passover was often turbulent. Within the fortress was a large open area called the Praetorium. The word translated here as "company" meant either 200 or 600 soldiers. We often see this depicted in movies as a half dozen or so soldiers. The whole company gathered around Jesus.

These soldiers were probably Syrian. Rome would conscript soldiers from conquered areas and use them in neighboring regions. Syrians spoke Aramaic and so they would be the most likely ones to serve in Israel. More than likely they knew nothing of Jesus. They were there to keep the peace and serve Rome. They probably had some contempt for these annoying Jews. They may have even had a friend or two assassinated by a zealot. A zealot would walk by a Roman standing guard in Jewish town, suddenly pull a knife, and without warning stab him. Zealots practiced an early form of gorilla warfare.

Now this company of battle-hardened men had a Jew turned over to them by Jews. They could vent some of their hatred toward their assignment in Israel on this outcast. The only charge they were probably aware of was that He claimed to be some kind of king. "Another Jewish Messiah," they thought, "let's show Him what we think of Jewish messiahs!"

Jesus had already been beaten and spit on by the Sanhedrin and Temple soldiers. Herod and company had mocked Him. Now the soldiers of Rome are going to have their fun with Him. You do realize that this is still going on, don't you? Everywhere the name of Jesus is slandered, everywhere His followers are physically humiliated and beaten it continues. (2 Timothy 3:12) And if we are really to have the mind of Christ, (1 Corinthians 2:16) it continues wherever the least of these is mocked and

**Commented [notes1]:** 12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16 (NIV)

abused, for Jesus said that if we have done it to them, we have done it to Him. (Matthew 25:40) We are not intentionally attacking God any more than these soldiers of Rome were. We are just exerting our power and trying to make ourselves look superior, just like these soldiers. We are venting our frustration about things not being according to our liking, our disgust with having to do things we do not like, all the while forgetting that man is made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27)

**Commented [notes3]:** 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

<sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, Publicly stripped. It was especially humiliating in the Hebrew culture. (Exodus 32:26) Remember that when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit their eyes were open and they saw that they were naked and were ashamed. (Genesis 3:10) He allowed Himself to be stripped that He might secure for us garments of righteousness. He was publicly humiliated that we might one day be publicly glorified. (Philippians 3:21)

**Commented [notes4]:** 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Exodus 32:25 (KJV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Genesis 3:10 (NIV)

The other gospel writers called it a purple robe. (John 19:2) You have probably noticed that different people can see the same object and call it a different color. Purple would represent royalty. They were mocking Jesus' claim to be a king. Scarlet, on the other hand, is the color of sins. Isaiah declared that if we would just sit down and reason with God, though our sins are like scarlet, they could be made white like wool. (Isaiah 1:18) Jesus was taking on the mantle of the sins of the world to cloth us in righteousness. (Isaiah 61:10)

**Commented [notes7]:** 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe John 19:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. Isaiah 1:18 (NIV)

<sup>29</sup> and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. If we did not get the imagery that God intended by the scarlet robe, any Jew could not miss the meaning of the crown of thorns. Though the soldiers were mocking His claim to royalty by giving Him a thorny crown in imitation of the garland the Caesar wore, God meant it for something much more meaningful. When Adam was cursed, a part of that curse was that there would be thorns. (Genesis 3:18) The thorns placed upon Jesus' head were a picture of Him taking God's curse in our place. We have a similar plant in our area, nicknamed Crown of Thorns.

**Commented [notes10]:** 10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. Genesis 3:18 (NIV)

They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. Can you picture these hundreds of soldiers trying to outdo one another insulting this battered and bruised man? The scepter of a king was a sign of his authority. To kneel in that culture was a sign of respect, even of worship, but for them it was all a game of mockery. Boisterous and laughing aloud, they could never imagine that one day He will return with a rod of iron. (Psalm 2:9) The scepter of His throne will be forever. (Hebrews 1:8) And they will bow in worship not in mockery but in awe of His majesty. (Philippians 2:10) But they are not yet done venting their anger.

**Commented [notes12]:** 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." Psalms 2:9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. Hebrews 1:8 (NIV)

<sup>30</sup> They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. They acted like the chief priests in their spitting in His face. They would wrench the rod from His hand and whack Him on that crown of thorns, no doubt ripping His scalp with every blow. John tells us they struck Him with their fists as well. (John 19:3) There sat their Creator, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He allowed them to treat Him like this. Later He would pray for their

**Commented [notes14]:** 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, Philippians 2:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 3 and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. John 19:3 (NIV)

forgiveness because they did not know what they were doing. (Luke 23:34) In man's worst expression of depravity, the greatness of God's grace is revealed. While these hundreds of soldiers mocked not just the image of God but God Himself, the room was filling up to the ceiling with the grace of Jesus. At any moment He could have put every one of them in eternal hell. He could have revealed His glory and they would have all fallen to the ground like dead men, but this was not the time. In a few days, He will declare that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. (Matthew 28:18) One day they will hear the words of Psalm 2:12, "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.*" But this was the time of Christ's great humiliation for you and me, for those soldiers, for all of mankind. Without a word, He let it continue until they had had enough. Why? Isaiah predicted that it was the Lord's will and was for our iniquity. (Isaiah 53:5,10) *Christ was on the divine schedule, which even His enemies were unwittingly fulfilling in minute detail.*—MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The

**Commented [notes16]:** 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.  
Luke 23:34 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."  
Matthew 28:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.  
Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.  
Isaiah 53:10 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> *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 stripped Him again, the clotted wounds probably reopened, as He continued to spill His blood for us. The cross beam or perhaps the whole cross would have been placed on His shoulders. They often chose a meandering path to wear the victim down even further. Most of the time it only took four soldiers to do the dirty work. One would ride in front with a stallion. Sometimes another would have the end of a rope that was tied around the victim's waist to keep the pace up.

<sup>32</sup> *As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.* Cyrene is in the area of modern day Libya. There was a large Jewish community there and Simon is a Jewish name. He had probably come to celebrate Passover. Rome could ask anyone in an occupied area to carry any burden at any time. As Jesus became physically unable to carry the cross any longer, they looked around and called on the first able-bodied man they saw. Of course, our Sovereign God orchestrates all these coincidences. It appears that by seeing Christ suffer with such dignity and love that he became a believer, along with the rest of his family. Mark tells us that his sons were known in the early church. (Mark 15:21) Paul refers to this man's wife as being like a mother to him. (Romans 16:13)

**Commented [notes20]:** 21 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.  
Mark 15:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.  
Romans 16:13 (NIV)

Though Rome forced Simon to carry the cross, Jesus invites you to carry the cross daily. (Matthew 16:24) It means your life is over and the life of Christ in you is beginning. It means that your will is now wrapped up in His wonderful will. The old is gone and the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Have you joined Simon in carrying the cross of Jesus?

**Commented [notes22]:** 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."  
Matthew 16:24 (NIV)

On the way to the cross, Jesus gave His last public address to the women weeping and wailing behind him on that route. <sup>28</sup> *Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children."* <sup>29</sup> *For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the*

**Commented [notes23]:** 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!  
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

*barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!*  
<sup>30</sup> Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"<sup>31</sup> For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Luke 23:28-31 (NIV)

Jesus looked ahead to 70AD and warned the women of what was to come. There would be thousands crucified along the roads when Jerusalem fell. If they would put to death an innocent man like this, what would they do to those who rebelled and fought against Rome? It is a warning to the unbeliever not to be sentimental about the pain Jesus endured. Weep for yourself when you must face the wrath of God. If you will not accept Jesus facing it for you, then you will have to face it on your own. (Romans 2:5)

<sup>33</sup> They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Just outside the walls of Jerusalem today is a bus stop. It is in the remains of what was an ancient stone quarry. Behind that bus stop is a limestone cliff that looks very much like a skull. It is called Gordon's Calvary, after General Gordon who pointed it out as the possible sight for Golgotha. A limestone hole could securely hold the upright beam of the cross in place. It was near a gate of the city, just as it is today. The road below it today is probably built over an ancient one in which those going in and out of the city would observe Rome's warning to those who would be rebels.

<sup>34</sup> There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. Jewish women often met the crucifixion procession and offered the victims a mixture of wine and myrrh to deaden their senses in an effort to live out Proverbs 31:6. The soldiers would sometimes offer the same bitter (gall) drink to keep the victims stupefied while they crucified them. This too was a fulfillment of prophecy. (Psalm 69:21) Jesus wanted a clear mind. He wanted to be able to pray and speak if necessary. He refused it. He would take the brunt of God's wrath without anything to soften the blow. Every part of His body was probably already screaming in pain, but He refused it. He will go all the way with you through whatever you face. (Isaiah 41:10)

<sup>35</sup> When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. Crucifixion was reserved for only the worst of criminals. It was Rome's deterrent against serious crime. The places of crucifixion were usually at cross roads or gates of cities so that as many as possible would see what Rome does to those who will not obey. The intention was to keep the crucified person in as much pain and yet conscious for as long as possible. It is estimated that by the time of Jesus' crucifixion Rome had done over 30,000 in Palestine alone. Sometimes they did so many that out of sheer boredom they would add variety to the way they carried it out. You can be sure that these soldiers' hearts were as calloused as they came.

There were five garments worn by the Jew of that day, sandals, headpiece, inner cloak, belt and outer cloak or tunic. The soldiers divided the four pieces and cast lots for the woven inner garment. It was without seams like that of the

**Commented [notes24]:** 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 6 Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; Proverbs 31:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes26]:** 21 They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst. Psalms 69:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

priest, and therefore very valuable. (John 19:23-24) Repeatedly they unwittingly fulfilled the details of Scripture. (Psalm 22:18)

<sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup> Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Even as they sat and waited for His death, they fulfilled the details of Psalm 22. <sup>17b</sup> people stare and gloat over me. Psalms 22:17b (NIV) The soldiers had to watch so that no one attempted to free the victims or end their life quickly.

The charges against the victim were written up and tacked over their head on the cross. In Jesus' case, it was the charge the chief priests brought. It was written in Greek, Latin and Aramaic. (John 19:19-20) When they saw the sign they were furious. Understand that the Jews would read it as "The salvation of Jehovah. The King of the Jews." That was their understanding of Messiah. Pilate was declaring that this was their Messiah, crucified. They demanded that Pilate change it to read that Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews. Pilate responded, "I have written what I have written." (John 19:21-22) They bullied him into condemning an innocent man, and Pilate would be bullied no further. Jesus is the King of the Jews and of all mankind. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:16)

Is it not utterly amazing to you that man can act in the vilest way imaginable and yet God is fulfilling His word and fulfilling His plan of bringing mankind to salvation? (Genesis 50:20) And is the gracious restraint that Jesus showed not beyond anything you could ever imagine? To one of those hardened soldiers Jesus' composure and grace in such a horrible death was enough to cause him to say, "Surely this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54)

We cannot get the impact of witnessing that event first hand, but you and I know even more of the story than that soldier did and the amazing fulfillment of the words of the prophets. What kind of a response does it draw from your heart? How should you live, considering what He endured for your salvation? He clothed Himself in the scarlet robe of sin and wore the curse of thorns for you. As Isaiah prophesied, He was crushed for our iniquities. (Isaiah 53:5) Do not let that be in vain in your life.

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. 1 Peter 2:21 Take time to meditate on what that should mean in your life.

Next week we will have some special guests you will not want to miss from Botswana, (no sermon will be sent out) and then the following week we will continue with the story of the crucifixion. At that time we will celebrate communion again.

**Commented [notes28]:** 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. John 19:23-24 (NIV)

**Commented [notes29]:** 18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. Psalms 22:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes30]:** 19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. John 19:19-20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes31]:** 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." John 19:21-22 (NIV)

**Commented [notes32]:** 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes33]:** 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes34]:** 54 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!" Matthew 27:54 (NIV)

**Commented [notes35]:** 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)