

^{16b} So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Pilate, blackmailed into doing the will of the Jewish leadership, pronounced the sentence. "Put the cross on the man." The soldiers would usually scourge the victim first, which made them much easier to handle. Jesus was already flogged, but there are three forms of flogging. The lightest was a type of warning, *fustigatio*. It was a beating given for lesser offenses. This is the kind Jesus most likely received at first. The second type is *flagellatio*, given for more serious crimes, but not punishable by death. The last is the one Jesus received now before the crucifixion, *verberatio*. We've seen before how deadly that punishment could be. It physically broke down the victim and made them completely unable to resist crucifixion. Many did not survive it. Some went mad. It was not uncommon for the flesh to be flayed to such an extent as to expose bones and internal organs. (Mark 15:15)

The beam would then be laid across His shredded shoulders, with arms tied to opposite ends. Sometimes rope would be placed around the waist for a soldier to lead them like a dog to their execution. If one delayed, a yank on the rope could bring them stumbling forward onto their face with that heavy beam pounding them into the limestone street. The soldiers had done these kinds of executions many times. They were methodically efficient.

¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called *Golgotha*). As Jesus carried the cross bar through the streets, there would be those who saw it as justice for a false prophet. They thought that since He would be hung on a tree, God had therefore cursed him. (Deuteronomy 21:23) They would be jeering and mocking Him as He went by. Keep in mind that this is Passover season and Jerusalem is crowded. Many had never seen or heard Jesus. Others looked on with sympathy, having seen a miracle or heard a teaching that He delivered. Some mocked while others wept.

The phrase "he went out" means out of the city. According to the Levitical law (Leviticus 24:14), blasphemers are to be taken outside the camp to be executed. Another Gospel writer tells us that on the way, Jesus, having lost so much blood and being physically exhausted, fell. The beam would have most likely bruised His heart as He smashed into the paving stones. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way. (Matthew 27:32) The soldiers recognized that Jesus was physically unable to carry it any further.

The place of the skull was probably named because the limestone quarry looked like a skull. The Latin equivalent is Calvary. There is an ongoing debate about whether it is at what is now the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or The Garden Tomb site. The historical evidence seems to point more toward the former, though the latter is more of the atmosphere we would like to see. It was near one of the gates of the city on a heavily traveled street so that all would be warned not to offend Rome.

Jesus would have been thrown down on the cross beam, his wrists were then nailed to the beam. The burial remains of a young man that was executed in this manner were found in Jerusalem in 1968. The bones tell us that the nails went through the

Commented [notes1]: 15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. Mark 15:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 23 you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deut 21:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 14 "Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. Lev 24:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. Matt 27:32 (NIV)

forearm bones that meet at the wrist. The Jews did consider this to be a part of the hand. Sometimes a small piece of wood on the nail was added to keep the nail from pulling through the flesh. He was then raised and lifted up onto what was usually a nine foot tall post, the cross beam fitting into a notch on top forming a T. Amazingly, 700 years earlier, Isaiah describes the suffering servant Messiah being raised and lifted up, but then highly exalted. (Isaiah 52:11) The feet were then nailed, often through the heel or ankle as was the case with the recently discovered crucified remains.

Commented [notes5]: 11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD. Isaiah 52:11 (NIV)

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote that Jesus was "executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate." (Ann. 44.3) Josephus also confirms that "Pilate...condemned [Jesus] to the cross." (Ant 18.63-64)

People would gather round to watch the spectacle. For the victim to fill their lungs with air, one had to push either against the nails in the feet or wrists or both, causing intense pain. Some would last for days in the hot Judean sun before succumbing, usually to asphyxiation after the muscles gave out. As Jesus hung there gasping for breath, the religious leaders mocked Jesus. ⁴² "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." Matthew 27:42 (NIV) He certainly could have, but God had a much greater plan.

¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Crucifixion was reserved for only the worst of criminals. A Roman citizen could not be crucified without the Caesar's approval. The ones crucified on each side of Jesus are described in Scripture as thieves (Mark 15:27), but crucifixion was much too severe for the common thief. They may have tried to rob a tax collector or paymaster working for Rome. It fulfilled another passage in the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53:12: "He was numbered with the transgressors".

Commented [notes6]: 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. Mark 15:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)

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. Criminals would sometimes have the name of their crime hung around their neck or carried in front of them. In this case, it was nailed to the top of the T making it into the cross shape with which we are familiar.

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." Pilate now in no danger of an uprising or of not being a friend of Caesar returned to his usual antagonistic self. He took a stand, but only after much compromise. He wrote it to mock the Jews, but in reality, Jesus actually was the king they rejected, choosing Caesar instead. God used Pilate's mockery to declare the truth to the Jewish leaders. It should have reminded them of the days of Samuel when they had chosen Saul and rejected the LORD God to be their king. (1Samuel 8:7)

Commented [notes8]: 7 And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. 1 Sam 8:7 (NIV)

History is filled with those who claim some other king. Before we came to Jesus we had some other king. For many of us it was self. We wanted to be our own king and

we live in an age where that is not only acceptable but lauded. Michael Jackson died a week ago Thursday. He was the self-proclaimed king of pop. Elvis is called the king, but these are pretty pathetic kings, as was Tiberius, the Caesar in Jesus' day. Pilate mockingly called Jesus who He really is, King of the Jews, but that is only part of His title. He is King of all kings. Is He your King? It's a question each of us must answer. (John 13:13)

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. This is the third clear fulfillment in the Psalm Jesus began to quote on the cross. It begins, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." (Psalm 22:1) It goes on to say they pierced my hands and feet. (Psalm 22:16) As for being crucified surrounded by evil men, "a band of evil men has encircled me." And then the passage we have before us, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." The Jewish person of that day had an outer and an undergarment. The outer one was removed in warm weather or for working. It could be used as a blanket. They divided up His sandals, belt, head covering and outer garment, a part for each soldier of the squad. The other garment that was woven as one piece was more valuable whole, so they cast lots for it fulfilling the details of the prophecy to both divide and cast lots for His clothes. (Psalm 22:18)

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Though the wording in Greek can be 2 to 4 people, this translation is likely correct, three named Miriam and Jesus' aunt whom some believe to be Solome, the mother of James and John. (Mark 3:17; 15:40) The four soldiers callously divided up the clothes as Jesus looked on in agony and while these four women stood in confused grief. What had the angel told Mary? ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." Luke 1:32-33 (NIV) It certainly doesn't look that way now. The words of Simeon came back to Mary, "A sword will pierce your own soul." (Luke 2:35) His words had come to pass.

The disciples had just confessed that they believed He came from God. (John 16:30) They declared His kingdom was at hand (Mark 10:37), and here He is battered beyond recognition hanging from a Roman cross. Consider how hopeless it all must have seemed to them. You'll be faced with those faith-stretching times when it looks like the promises of God cannot possibly come to pass. When you do, remember how hopeless it must have seemed for Mary and the disciples and how gloriously God turned it all around in three days.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. We assume this is John, as he never mentions himself in his own Gospel. Tradition tells

Commented [notes9]: 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. John 13:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? Psalms 22:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. Psalms 22:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. Psalms 22:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Mark 3:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. Mark 15:40 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: Luke 2:35 (NIV) 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Commented [notes16]: 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." John 16:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." Mark 10:37 (NIV)

us that he took her to Ephesus, where he remained the elder of the church until his natural death. Jesus, struggling for breath to speak, took care of his last obligation on earth. As the oldest son, He cared for His mother. Women in that culture had to be supported by a male relative. Now He appointed that responsibility to the one disciple that would outlive her.

You might think that all that Jesus was dealing with on the cross would render this issue insignificant. After all, He was dealing with the sins of the world. Jesus is always our perfect example. Family is important, and family obligations, though second to our commitment to God, are still of great importance. Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12) are godly things because they are a picture of honoring our heavenly Father.

Jesus, the King of kings, hung there gasping for breath, in agony, and then in darkness for three hours as all hell assailed Him. (Mark 15:33) John left out this portion of suffering of which we know so little because of the complete darkness that covered the land. Jesus bore it all, all the evil of all of humanity.

28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." One more fulfillment of Psalm 22, "My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." (Psalm 22:15) There are a total of seven sayings on the cross. John only mentions three. The one that had to do with him personally, and the one that is a fulfillment of Psalm 22 as this seemed to be a focus of his Passion account. The last will come in a moment, mentioned because of its significance.

"I thirst!" speaks to us of the humanity of Jesus. The cross was not easier because He was the Son of God. He felt what we feel. He was tempted like we are and yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) He knew what a hard day of work was like. He knew what it felt like to be pushed beyond your limits. He knew insult and injury, even family rejection. (John 7:5) He was every bit human, but without sin.

We are tempted to think it wasn't as hard for Him as it would be for us. It was worse. He knew the darkness of sin to a greater extent than we will ever understand, and He took it, along with the physical abuse. We can never understand the assault of hell on Him in those hours of darkness. We would have given-in in a second. That is another reason why only He could do this for us, to face the punishment we deserve in our place. Only He could do it because He had no sins of His own to be judged for, and only He could endure the justice our sins deserve and come out victorious. Hallelujah, what a Savior! (1Corinthians 3:11)

29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. Thus fulfilling another prophecy, Psalm 69:21, "They gave me vinegar for my thirst." Hyssop was used to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts in the Exodus. (Exodus 12:22) It was a small common shrub. One couldn't make a long stalk that could hold much, but a soldier would only need about a foot extension which matches with what we know historically about the height of the common cross of crucifixion. These are amazing details with amazing connections with the ancient Scriptures and historical facts. What we are reading is a

Commented [notes18]: 12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
Ex 20:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.
Mark 15:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.
Psalms 22:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.
Heb 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.
John 7:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 Cor 3:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: slaughter the Passover lamb.
22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.
Ex 12:21-22 (NIV)

true account. We must never allow ourselves to be hardened to the agony Jesus endured for us.

Now we look back at Jesus asking His disciples and us to take up our cross and follow Him. He isn't asking us to do anything He wasn't willing to do Himself. He did this for you. Will you take up your cross and follow Him? (Matthew 10:38)

³⁰ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Another Gospel writer tells us that He said this with a loud voice. (Matthew 27:50) All that the Father had sent Him to do was finished. (John 17:4) The word for "finished" is *tetelestai*. It can also mean to be finished paying a debt. Invoices were marked with this word to show they were paid in full. Indeed, our sin debt was paid in full. That is what Jesus came to do. It also means "accomplished" and He accomplished the work His Father gave Him.

Then He gave up His spirit. (Luke 23:46) He didn't just die because of the loss of blood or cardiac arrest. He released His spirit. He said that no one could take His life from Him as He had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again. (John 10:18) Here He used that power to surrender it into the hands of His Father. It was a shout of accomplishment, of victory! So amazing was His conduct in death that one of the four soldiers, a centurion, declared, "Truly this was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39)

He was dead. Now some secret followers would ask for the body, and one of them would put Jesus in their own grave. It seemed like the end of the promises. It looked like evil had triumphed. How could you have any hope if you were there that dark day? Sometimes, we just can't see or even imagine what God is doing.

How can you have hope each and every day of your life no matter how dark things seem? We know this story goes on to produce a wonder that is unimaginable. No matter how disheartening your current situation is, if you are in Christ, then you can know it will not only work for good, but that a glorious future awaits us. (1Corinthians 2:9) I'm not saying you will be free from pain on the way, but you can know that your Sovereign Lord has allowed it for your eternal good. He will help you endure and walk with you through it. The face of God was turned from Jesus during those hours of darkness, so that it would never be turned from you during your hours of darkness.

Jesus endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him. (Hebrews 12:2) There is a joy set before us as well. Let us persevere in carrying our cross each day for the joy set before us as we follow our great example, our Lord Jesus. We need a vision of the glory to come. Keep your eyes on Jesus and not on this passing world.

Are your sins there on the cross with Jesus? If they are, He becomes your King and you become His subject. If not, you are going to have to face the justice your sins deserve. If you are trying to be your own little king, you will go the way of Tiberius, Pilate, Annas, and all the other sad characters in this true story. Choosing Jesus is choosing to serve a king, a king who only asks us to do what He has modeled for us, for our good. He's a king who has graciously provided forgiveness and calls us to abundant life. He's a king who loves you enough to endure the cross for you.

Commented [notes25]: 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Matt 10:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. Matt 27:50 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. John 17:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." John 10:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" Mark 15:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" [1 Cor 2:9 (NIV)]

Commented [notes32]: 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2 (NIV)