

## **This is Glory 6-25-06**

Matthew 27:38-50 (NIV)

<sup>38</sup> Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>39</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> 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!" <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup> "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." <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, "I am the Son of God." <sup>44</sup> In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. <sup>45</sup> From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup> The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." <sup>50</sup> And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Two weeks ago, we looked at the abuse by Rome's soldiers and the journey to the cross. We ended with the guards waiting for the slow death of those crucified. I did not go into the details of crucifixion for lack of time. Crucifixion was reserved for those criminals who were not Roman citizens, for those who committed crimes against Rome. Our text mentions those crucified with Jesus. <sup>38</sup> *Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.* I would guess that they had dared to steal from Rome or attempted to rob a Roman paymaster or tax collection booth. The word used for them implies that they would injure or maim in their robbery attempts. (*Lestes* can also mean one who plunders.) Jesus' crucifixion between these two robbers fulfilled the wording of Isaiah 53:12b, *...he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.*

The treatment dealt to Jesus was typical, whipped first, leaving their backs so torn that they could offer little resistance. Then, what strength they had left was exhausted carrying the crossbeam to the site of crucifixion. The more strength they had the longer the route chosen. This was to make a public spectacle of them. Once at the site, near a gate or crossroads, the cross beam was laid on the ground. There was a great deal of variation; some were tied to it. Others were nailed to it with 5 to 7-inch iron spikes. The feet were usually secured in some way. Sometimes one was placed over the other and a nail driven through the arch. Sometimes each ankle was nailed to the sides of the upright beam. (Psalm 22:16)

Already thirsty from the abuse, the relentless sun would further dehydrate them. One of Jesus' seven expressions from the cross was, *"I thirst"*. He had to have His mouth moistened to speak. This very physical reality of the crucifixion keeps us from avoiding the fact that Jesus suffered. Some have tried to say that this only appeared

**Commented [notes1]:** 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)

to be Jesus, or that because He was God, He could avoid the physical element. Jesus went through the crucifixion as a man and suffered as a man.

Perhaps the most painful part of crucifixion was enabling one's self to breathe. The muscles of the chest would cramp. Air could be taken in but not exhaled. To exhale you had to pull against the nails in the wrists and push against those in the feet. That is why Jesus' expressions on the cross are so brief. Every breath required to speak each phrase was sheer agony. The first labored phrase once hoisted up, on display for all to see, was, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Luke 23:34a

Part of the cruelty endured on the cross was the mockery by those watching. We can be incredibly judgmental and at the same time ignorant or dismissive of our own faults. <sup>39</sup> *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads.* There hung God incarnate dying for the sins of mankind, (Romans 5:8) the innocent mercifully dying in place of the guilty, (Romans 5:19) and the words that resounded in His ears were insults. If any one of us were in that position, we surely would have destroyed mankind and decided to start over. But Jesus is full of grace. (John 1:14) This is glory! This is the outshining of the very heart of God!

Just the day before, He had declared that the time for His glorification had come. (John 12:23) We think of glory as honor and respect and applause of men. Jesus sees glory as the expression of the heart of God. The contrast of the depravity of man and the love and grace of God is glorious. Could there be a more glorious expression than the cross? Could any event reveal the heart of God in a greater way than the cross? (John 3:16)

Think of it! At one moment in time, we see how much God deplores sin. What Jesus is enduring is God's estimation of the just punishment your sin and mine. It is what sin justly deserves. (Romans 2:5) It was also a picture of true justice, and at the same time, it was a display of the grace and mercy of God to take that justice in our place. It was a display of the loving heart of God to make a way for those who are powerless to make it themselves. Jesus expressed every fruit of the Spirit of God as He hung on that cross. He expressed the heart of God to us in its fullness. That is glory.

We are yanked back to a display of the depravity of the men in the next verse. <sup>40</sup> *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!"* Mislead by the false accusation about Jesus' expression, they used it to mock what they knew to be a claim of uniqueness and power. The real power was staying on the cross, not coming down. It would have been easy for Him to come down. The greatness of God, the glory of God, was in that He chose to stay there.

It is interesting that they use this expression to mock Him. Of course He meant that if they destroyed His body, He would raise it in three days. (John 2:19) The words they used to mock Him were the very words He was fulfilling. In three days He would restore the temple they were destroying, His body. To get some insight into the source of this mockery look at the closing phrase, "*if you are the Son of God!*" Have you heard that before? The temptations by Satan in the wilderness used the

**Commented [notes2]:** 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.  
Romans 5:19 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.  
John 1:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."  
John 12:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."  
John 3:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 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 [notes8]:** 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."  
John 2:19 (NIV)

same phrase. (Matthew 4:3) It should cause us to tremble when we realize we can be the mouthpiece of Satan. (Matthew 16:23)

**Commented [notes9]:** 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."  
Matthew 4:3 (NIV)

<sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup> "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. The chief priests understood His claim of restoring His body in three days. That is why they asked Pilate for guards for the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-64) They used a different line of attack, one that Jesus predicted they would use. <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' Luke 4:23 (NIV) "You saved others, save yourself!" They mocked His claim of being the King of Israel. They mocked what they thought was His inability to come down from the cross. Jesus would leave them an even greater reason to believe, victory over death!

**Commented [notes10]:** 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."  
Matthew 16:23 (NIV)

Consider for a moment if Jesus had transfigured Himself as He did on the mountain and floated down from the cross to the ground right in front of all those who were mocking Him. (Matthew 17:2) What kind of conversion would they have had? I suppose conversion at the point of impending judgment could be real, but more than likely it is the temporary submission that fear demands for self-preservation. That kind of conversion does not transform the heart. The heart is what Jesus is after. (Matthew 22:37)

**Commented [notes11]:** 62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.  
63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'  
64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."  
Matthew 27:62-64 (NIV)

It could result in a mental conversion. "I can't deny what I am seeing so I believe." Many of us started on our road to faith with a conversion of fear or mental ascent, but that does not change our heart. (Romans 10:10) Jesus did the very thing that can win the heart of man. He displayed the heart of God. (Romans 5:8) He took our punishment. He defeated death and hell for you and me. (Revelation 1:18)

**Commented [notes12]:** 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.  
Matthew 17:2 (NIV)

<sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" They mocked His claim to be the Son of God and in so doing they mocked God. Now who is blaspheming? Imagine the heart of God when they said, "If He wants Him." According to Mark, Jesus was crucified at 9 A.M. (Mark 15:25), the time of the morning sacrifice. Two more events happen before noon. Neither of which were recorded in Matthew.

**Commented [notes13]:** 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'  
Matthew 22:37 (NIV)

<sup>44</sup> In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. When we are in a stressful situation with others, we try to find the lowest one to pick on. It makes us feel at least superior to someone. But something happened that caused one of these two to fear God. We do not know what it was. Perhaps it was a look of sadness from Jesus' eyes. Or maybe it was the realization that he would soon be dead. Something broke through and caused that robber to confess that he deserved to be there. He asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus told Him that that very day, he would be with Him in paradise. (Luke 23:43)

**Commented [notes14]:** 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.  
Romans 10:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.  
Revelation 1:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.  
Mark 15:25 (NIV)

Jesus had one act of unfinished business. He placed His mother in John the Beloved's care. He told Mary that John was her son. (John 19:26) Why not one of her flesh and blood children? Apparently they became believers after the

**Commented [notes18]:** 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."  
Luke 23:43 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 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,"  
John 19:26 (NIV)

resurrection. (Mark 3:21) Jesus said His real family are those who hear the word and live it. (Luke 8:21)

**Commented [notes20]:** 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."  
Mark 3:21 (NIV)

In these first three hours on the cross, He asked for forgiveness for the ignorant Roman soldiers. They thought the charge was insurrection. They really did not have a clue as to what was happening. He promised salvation to the robber crucified next to Him. He took care of any earthly responsibility He had of providing for His mother. Forgiveness for the ignorant, mercy and salvation for the lost, and care and concern for family. Is that what you would expect from a man hanging in agony, mocked and scorned by on-lookers, within an inch of His life?

**Commented [notes21]:** 21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."  
Luke 8:21 (NIV)

Then the darkness fell. God the Father let the Son take care of the immediate need around Him before placing the sins of the world on Him. A schism took place that we cannot fully fathom. For three hours in eternity, the Father and the Son were separated. Those that were always one and always fully satisfied in one another, were somehow torn apart by the ugliness of sin. I cannot fathom it, and so I cannot explain it to you. I just know it happened. From noon to 3 P.M. there was no light. (1 John 1:5) Lucifer and all the fallen angels surely rejoiced that their archrival was now enveloped in darkness. The scorn of man was certainly nothing compared to what the forces of darkness heaped upon Him in those three hours.

**Commented [notes22]:** 5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.  
1 John 1:5 (NIV)

On-lookers must have been silent. Jews would be thinking about the curse of darkness that fell on Egypt and remember that they had light during that time, but not this time. (Exodus 10:22-23) Now they were the ones enveloped by darkness. The slandering mouths were silent. People probably asked for help, wondering if they had gone blind. When they realized that no one could see, they must have just sat and waited. Nothing else could be done except to stumble around and risk falling off that hill. We will probably never comprehend all that He endured in those three hours. <sup>45</sup> *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.* <sup>46</sup> *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

**Commented [notes23]:** 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.  
23 No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.  
Exodus 10:22-23 (NIV)

These were the hours over which Jesus had sweat those drops of blood in the Garden. (Luke 22:44) He is alone to resist the forces of hell. He cried out the opening words of Psalm 22. There is no clearer passage in all of ancient Scripture regarding the crucifixion. Those present who knew the Psalm might have quoted it to themselves in the darkness and realized that King David predicted this a thousand years earlier. They would have understood from the end of the Psalm that the conclusion of this event would somehow be victorious. I think Jesus was encouraging Himself to fight on through the words in that Psalm. The Psalm ends with the promise of God hearing His cry. The closing words in the Psalm predict the salvation for many and the earth worshipping Him. He was fighting with Scripture, just as He had fought Lucifer in the wilderness with Scripture. (Matthew 4:4) It is my conviction that this was not a cry of despair, but a battle cry. Read the Psalm for yourself and see if the ending is not declaring to Satan that though he does his worst, God will be victorious, and Jesus will rule over the nations!

**Commented [notes24]:** 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.  
Luke 22:44 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" " " " "  
Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

<sup>47</sup> *When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."*

Light must have returned at the end of those three hours. It was nearing 3 P.M., the time of the afternoon sacrifice. Jesus said, "I thirst."<sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. Jesus needed some moisture to get out his last expressions. There is a very physical dimension that we can relate to. As He was every bit God, He was also every bit man.

<sup>49</sup> The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." The darkness had many guessing. They did not understand His Hebrew quotation of Psalm 22 and thought He was calling for the prophet Elijah. He was not calling for His salvation, but theirs, yours, and mine.

Lips now moistened He shouted as loud as He could, "It is finished." (John 19:30) It could be translated "Paid in full". Invoices that were paid were marked with the same words. Jesus paid it all! He finished the work of salvation. He paid every debt to God that every human that ever lived or would live owed. He fully satisfied the justice of God. He paid what we could never pay on our own.

<sup>50</sup> And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. There is one more expression from the cross. *Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit.* He knew He was safe in His Father's hands. He bowed His head and breathed His last breath. He did not just die. He gave up His Spirit. He released it into His Father's hands. That is what each one of us should do when that time comes unless we hear the trumpet call first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

What a display of glory! Consider what took place in those six hours: forgiveness for the ignorant, salvation for the lost, care for family, battling the forces of darkness with the Word, completing the work God gave Him, and leaving His Spirit in His Father's hands. He fulfilled every prophetic word about the Redeemer. He perfectly displayed the heart of God. He was obedient even to death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8) There could be no greater display of love, of the very heart of God, than the one we see on the cross.

Do you want a glorious life? Now we may not be so fast to answer as we once would have. Glory is often seen best with a backdrop of adversity. What causes these red rocks around us in this beautiful city to really glow is when the backdrop is dark storm clouds. Glory in our lives will look something like it did in Jesus', forgiveness for the ignorant, offering salvation to the lost, care for family, battling the forces of darkness with the Word, completing in obedience the work God gives us, and leaving our Spirit in the Father's hands. It may not be glorious in the eyes of the world, but it will be in the eyes of God, and that is the only opinion that really counts. How should we respond to the suffering Christ endured for us? We should live a glorious life by the grace of God! Show people the heart of God; this is glory!

**Commented [notes26]:** 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.  
John 19:30 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.  
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NIV)

**Commented [notes28]:** 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!  
Philippians 2:8 (NIV)