

# “The Killing of Jesus”

Matthew 27:24-66

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**Matthew 27:24-66** *When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' " Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard. Pilate wanted nothing to do with the crucifixion of Christ. Apparently he knew in the depth of his soul that Jesus was innocent. Perhaps with help from his wife, he understood Him to be even more than just innocent!*

**In the end**, Pilate attempted to literally wash his hands of the whole ordeal. In this he was no different than so many today. The world is full of “Pilates.” Folks who tend to believe...*often even saying that they believe*, that Jesus is the Son of God, but they are unwilling to push the borders...unwilling to swim against the tide, because they don’t want to be viewed as being outside the mainstream. Countless individuals who spend their lives attempting to “straddle the middle.” They have simply joined the unbelieving masses, and in doing so have become indistinguishable from them. Which of course is tragic. For Jesus, while He was walking this earth, drove home the principle that any attempt to live in such a manner would cost us our very soul for eternity. Jesus went to the cross that day and unless we do so also we will “never see the kingdom of God.” Biblical salvation encompasses the dying to ourselves and dying to this world. There is no other path to eternal life. There is no middle! Not for Pilate, and not for any of us.

The voices of verse 25 are still echoing down through the ages. “... *‘His blood be on us and on our children.’*” Like now, the people were more than rejecting. They were hostile. They were adamant and arrogant. Just a few short years later they would receive what they so flippantly declared. Jerusalem would burn, and the Jewish nation began centuries of national dispersion and pain that even yet today has never totally been made right again.

Long before He reached the cross, our loving Savior was paying for my sin. First there was the physical abuse. Before Jesus was even taken to be crucified, He was savagely whipped. Dr. William Edwards in the article "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ" from the Journal of the American Medical Association, 3/21/86 said this: “*Scourging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt. The goal of the scourging was to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse and death. As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim’s back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross. Moreover, hematomas had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus’ physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.*”

In the Roman system, the scourging would be used to illicit a confession of guilt to other crimes the individual may have committed. So the individual could stop the process anywhere along the way in his thirty-nine lashes, by the admitting of his guilt and crimes. But with Jesus that would be a problem. He didn’t *have* any crimes to *admit* to! So He stood silent as they beat Him over and over, thirty-nine times, and he said nothing. Most people would never survive thirty-nine lashes and would die right there. Jesus did not. For He had an appointment with destiny.

Then came the verbal humiliation. The soldiers mocked Jesus and ridiculed His claims of being a king. Part of this process was not just to punish, but to inflict the greatest degree of degradation as possible. Every element of this ordeal was designed to be wrapped in shame and mocking. Can you imagine such a scene? The utter humiliation of the Son of God? And what gets me most, is that He could have stopped it. He could have sucked the air out of the room and dropped them all where they stood. But He didn’t. Not in the beginning nor at any point in this whole horrific process. He *let it happen*.

The text tells us that they spit on Jesus and pretended to worship Him on their knees. I didn’t even have to be there, because to even read about that elicits an eruption of emotion in me that words cannot express. Sadly, such action is not limited to a rare day somewhere in far-gone history. In fact, men are committing this act even as we sit here today: today and every day, throughout the world, the Messiah is being spit upon and mocked in false worship. The only difference is those soldiers were at least open and honest about it.

Jesus was going to go and die now. He was even going to die for those guys who spit on Him.

Jesus began his journey to Golgotha *carrying His own cross*. Along the way the soldiers found a man...one “Simon,” and made him carry the cross. Our tendency in all of this is to see these events from the bleachers, but that’s not what is required of us. We too are rather to be *participants* in this event. We too are called to “pick up our cross and follow Jesus.” The cross you see, is the path of death, and we are to die to this world and to all that would keep us from a discipleship walk with Him.

***“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).***

***“...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed (“being able to share in”) to His death...” (Phil 3:9-10)***

Life can be such a strange thing! Little did this man Simon know when he got up that morning the role that he would play in history! Here we read his name, forever enshrined in every Bible around the world. Being that he was from Cyrene, (northern Africa), it is very likely that he was a black man, and a Gentile, and therefore an “outsider” in every way. Despite all that was occurring *to* Him and *because* of Him, Jesus was still not done. Even on the way up the hill to his crucifixion he was finishing His work. One more thing he had to finish. One last disciples to bring on board.

It is generally believed that in light of some morsels of Scripture found elsewhere that Simon and his children following him would later become believers and would play a significant part in furthering the Kingdom. It has been considered that this Simon is the same man as Simeon of Acts 13:1. The gospel of Mark records that this Simon was “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (Mark 15:21), men who were apparently well known to Mark’s readers. It is speculated that the Rufus mentioned there may be the same man Paul greets in his letter to Rome, whom he calls him “chosen in the Lord” and whose mother “has been a mother to me, too” (Romans 16:13). All of this puts Simon on my short list of people I look forward to meeting in eternity.

In His weakened state, Jesus no doubt was crushed under the weight of the cross and the pain of such a brutal flogging. It is here that it would be well to remember that while Jesus was God in flesh...*He was indeed IN FLESH*. This was an individual that was a MAN in the classic sense. One who could feel pain and death, as well as any of us.

With Simon now carrying the cross, Jesus is delivered to Golgotha, where many folks believe that His ministry came to an end. But there are tens of thousands that clearly see it differently. In fact, it was there on that hill that the masterpiece of salvation...the opera that was His life, rose rather to a triumphant crescendo.

***“But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.” (Isaiah 53:5).***

Ironically, despite all of the concerted efforts of the Pharisees and those who hated Him with a passion, he ultimately was crucified with the title of “King” over His cross. Is there any denying of the fact that it all went down exactly as he wanted it to? It was all planned from the beginning...all the way back in Genesis the plan of redemption was put in place! In between that Genesis account and this day, prophecy spoke of these events. As He was crucified between two thieves, the words of Isaiah 53:12 speak *“and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”* Luke records that one of these thieves found the peace that had eluded him throughout his life, while the other passed into eternity hanging onto his stubborn heart. It has been said that: one died in sin, one died to sin, and one died for sin. **He died between them, identifying with them and their sin.** He was there, ...*with them when they died*, just as He is with us. We will all exit, but “how” is the only thing we can affect.

Even at this point, the enemies of Christ continued to mock, ridicule, and belittle the Son of God. Apparently lying and misquoting Jesus is nothing new. The bystanders and the gawkers taunted and accused, just proving that things really haven’t changed. They came in number to the cross. They always have. Curiosity and an inexplicable searching have kept so many folks always out there...always skirting around the fringes of Christendom. Always watching...always around the faithful. Always at the foot of the cross but never at the “feet of Jesus.” The people were proving the old adages true...“birds of a feather, flock together,” and “strength in numbers.” Would they have believed He was deity if He came down off of the cross? *Probably*. Would they have followed Him? *Not for long*. How do I know that? By watching those of similar hearts today. There are those who *believe* and there are those who believe *and follow*. Which are you?

Verse 45 tells us that “there was darkness over all the land.” Just why it was dark we do not know. For the “sixth to the ninth hour” was from noon until three. So the darkness was certainly not normal and it was recorded herein because of such. I wonder if the curious gawkers who were present with Him that day were beginning to get a little concerned. Such natural darkness does seem *fitting* though doesn’t it? No other state of nature would so adequately demonstrate the anguish of the moment!

In verse 46 we have what I believe to be acknowledgement of the greatest pain of the crucifixion...the most difficult aspect of all that He had endured thus far. It was not the flogging, the humiliation, or even the act of physical crucifixion. It was the departure of the presence of God: ***“My God, My God ...why have you forsaken me?”*** Jesus, bearing all the sin of all of mankind for all of history, had literally *become* our sin, and God turned away from that sin.

John tells us that what Jesus cried out at the last were the words “IT IS FINISHED.” What was finished? *The battle, the struggle of man, the corporate bondage to sin, the constant sacrifices, the death, the pain, the “no-way-out” that we all faced. “It is finished,”* and Jesus won. He won not for Himself, but for *ME*, for *YOU*. All you have to do is walk up to the winner’s circle and claim your prize. You may be saying, *“I ran, but I lost!”* That is true. But you see, Jesus ran *for* you, and yet the prize is yours.

And to make sure that we understand this...*that we have a clear picture of it all*, God did something astounding. In the temple...for hundreds of years, there existed a curtain that hid the place where apparently “God lived.” The Jewish leaders held that behind the

curtain that hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place within the temple, was the residence of the very presence of God. Only once a year the High Priest would venture in there...to offer the blood of the sacrifices. And it would behoove that High Priest to reflectively prepare himself, for if he was not right before that God, he wouldn't be coming out still breathing! This curtain naturally came to symbolically separate man from God. In truth there was a much greater separation between us: *a distance of eternity*.

Physically this curtain was impressive. It is understood to have been a **least** four inches thick, and **as much as** 18 inches thick! And then it was 60 feet tall. Verse 51 tells us that the moment Jesus drew His last breathe this curtain tore from *top to bottom*. Note...*beginning at the top*, it tore in half. After centuries of separation between us and a perfect Holy Creator, the curtain had been torn and the distance bridged by the final sacrifice, one of a perfect man, a holy God. Mankind could now "*boldly approach the throne of grace...*" (Heb 4:16)

The "earth quaked...the rocks were split...graves were opened...the dead were raised." The world would say that all "hell broke loose." The now freshly redeemed would say "all *heaven* broke loose!"

Witnesses were many. When those who were dead now walked among the living, it is difficult to ignore the miraculous. It was a moment of history like no other.

"*Truly this was the Son of God!*" In the end, as certainly as it will be in the *final end*, those who stood against Him clearly saw the truth. Yet it was too late to take it back, just as it will be too late for those who stood against Him in this life to change the years that have passed by. No matter our earthly position, ultimately the same will be on the lips of every man! For "*every knee will bow, and every tongue confess*" that He is the Son of God.

**Suddenly**, there was someone new on stage. In the midst of all the chaos, the theatre and the passion, a rich man by the name of Joseph of Arimathea, stepped out of the crowd...out of the field of the fearful and the self-centered life. By doing so, he risked everything. His prestige, his position, his financial position, even his very life was put on the line. It was his everything. This man was now "all in." This is faith. This is Christianity.

**Ah, it had begun...**

The other gospel accounts tell us that this Joseph, who was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin (the supreme council of the Jewish nation), had some help from a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. We read of **his** interaction with Christ in John chapter 3.

Both of these guys were "in for a penny, in for a pound." There was no going back now. They had burned the bridge of return. They had "gone public." It would all no doubt cost them everything. Ah, but isn't that ultimately the idea? Oh, but what they must have received in exchange! Two such unlikely friends...souls inexplicably thrust together by the belief in this "man"...this proclaimed "Redeemer." Now here they were, destiny had brought them together to lovingly take care for the body of Jesus. How I would love to have heard the conversation between them that day!

As we come to the close of chapter 27, those who were behind the crucifixion apparently began to panic a little. Man always attempts in such situations to scramble about to cover their tracks! "*You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.*" Does anyone else sense a *tone* in those words? One has to wonder just *how* Pilate said what he did! Was that statement made with a bit of irony and cynicism? We may never know for sure. After witnessing the events of the past 24 hours, perhaps inside of him he realized the fruitlessness of such maneuvers. Because certainly, *whether they all realized it or not*, such attempts and efforts were indeed fruitless. It was too late now. Jesus could not be stopped. The doors had been flung open. The "cat was out of the bag." The "genie was out of the bottle." Things would never be the same again.

At the end of this chapter we find a list of the faithful "attendees." Those who stood by Him until the end. Who do we find listed here? The apostles? His friends? Those men who received His miracles throughout the years? No, we find **only the women**.

**Jesus died, just as all men die.** He had walked the same roads, experienced cold weather and hot, hunger and thirst, weariness, laughter, and tears. Jesus *lived*. He experienced life as we have. He faced death, just as we will. He knew temptation; He knew the human state. He shared the walk with us. He shared the experience of death with us. *Why would He do that?*

What other motivation would there be than some incredible love? He didn't die to save us from the international problems of today. He didn't die so a republican can be in office...Nor did He die to save us from the national, the local, or even the individual problems that plague us. He died for *the* problem that plagues us. He died to free us from *sin*.

**He died to rescue us from ourselves.**