

57. Jesus Was Crucified on the Cross

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message that Jesus was crucified to pay the penalty for our sins, and the sins of everyone in the world, so He could offer eternal life as a free gift to all. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened as Jesus was taken to be crucified on the cross.

The religious leaders condemned Jesus and brought Him to Pilate. Pilate said, at least three times, that Jesus was innocent, but then condemned Him to death and turned Him over to the Roman soldiers. Mark 15:16-20 says, “Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.” Here, we see that the Roman soldiers treated Jesus with a total lack of respect as they mocked Him.

The Roman soldiers, in Jerusalem, were stationed in the Fortress Antonia. The Praetorium was next to this fortress. The Praetorium had been built by Herod the Great and was a magnificent palace where he, and the future Roman governors, lived whenever they were in Jerusalem. As a result, that was the place where Pilate lived whenever he was in Jerusalem. A Roman cohort (about six hundred soldiers) was normally stationed at this fortress. Here, we see that the entire Roman garrison was called together to mock Jesus. Matthew gives us a more detailed summary of the way these Roman soldiers mistreated Jesus. Matthew 27:27-31 says, “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.” Here, we see that they made a mockery of the fact that Jesus was called the King of the Jews.

The purple robe was normally the color of the robe of a king. The crown of thorns was made from long sharp thorns that were driven into the head of Jesus when the soldiers hit Him on the head with a reed. Then, they put the reed in His right hand so that it was like the scepter of a king. Esther 5:2 says, “So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.” Instead of a golden scepter, like that used by the king, Jesus was given a reed which was like a stick. Then, the soldiers got down on their knees in front of Jesus and with mocking voices said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” When they finished mocking, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him and took Him out to the place where He would be crucified.

Roman prisoners were normally required to carry their own crosses to the place where they were

going to be crucified. However, Jesus had been severely beaten and had already lost much blood. As a result, Mark 15:21-24 says, “Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, “Place of a Skull”. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them *to determine* what every man should take.” The Roman law allowed Roman soldiers to compel any person who happened to come by to carry their burden for a mile. Matthew 5:41 says, “And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.” This was the reason the Roman soldiers could make Simon, the Cyrenian, carry the cross of Jesus to the place where Jesus was crucified.

Simon was originally from the city of Cyrene which is in North Africa. He did not live in Jerusalem but was just coming into the city from the country. As a result, he was the man the Roman soldiers forced to carry the cross of Jesus. We see that Simon had two sons named Alexander and Rufus. The name of Rufus is mentioned again in Romans 16:13, where we read: “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” The fact Mark mentioned that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus meant that these sons were known to the early church. Throughout the book of Mark, he explained Jewish customs, because of the fact that he originally wrote the book to tell Romans, who had become Christians, about the life of Jesus. Since Rufus was one of the leaders in the church at Rome, Mark here mentioned the fact that Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexander, because the Roman Christians would have known the family.

Simon may not have known anything about Jesus prior to this time, since he was originally from Cyrene. However, by being forced to carry the cross of Jesus, he had the opportunity to meet Jesus. As a result, his life and family were changed for eternity. This is a great example of how the Lord uses the circumstances that happen in our lives to bring the Gospel to others. Truly, we can say in the words of Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The Lord had a plan for Simon and his family.

We see that the Roman soldiers took Jesus, and the two other men who were crucified with Him, to a place called Golgotha. The word “Golgotha” means *Place of a Skull*. We do not know the exact place where Jesus was crucified. There are two places, one on the west side of the city and one on the north side of the city, where the side of the hill looks similar to a skull. Many people think that it was one of these two places where Jesus was crucified. The one on the west was first suggested in the fourth century and the one on the north has been suggested in more modern times. Luke 23:33 says, “And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.” The word Calvary also means “a skull”.

The Roman soldiers offered Jesus wine mingled with myrrh to drink but Jesus did not take it. Matthew 27:34 says, “They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.” “Gall” means *something bitter*. We see that Mark mentioned that

it was myrrh, which was used as a temporary pain killer. The Jews did this to one dying because Proverbs 31:6 says, “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart.” The Romans allowed this to be given, because it made it easier to nail the person to the cross without a struggle. When Jesus tasted it, He did not drink it because He did not want to dull His senses in any way. He had seven sayings that He would speak from the cross that day plus the fact that He was bearing our sins and He did not want His senses dulled in any way.

The soldiers took the clothes of Jesus from Him before they placed Him on the cross. Once Jesus was hanging on the cross, we see that the soldiers guarding the cross cast lots for the clothes to see who would get which parts of that clothing. This fulfilled the prophecy given in Psalm 22:18, where we read: “They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” This allowed the soldiers guarding a prisoner on a cross to make a little extra money from the sale of the clothing they received.

Mark 15:25-26 says, “Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.” We know that Jesus was actually the King of Kings. Here, we see that it was the third hour (about 9 a.m. in the morning) when Jesus was placed on the cross. Mark 15:33 says, “Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” It was during the time of the darkness that Jesus would have our sins placed on Him, and He would pay the penalty for our sins so that we could receive forgiveness of sin.

However, before the darkness came, several other very important things happened that are mentioned in the other Gospels. Luke mentions two of those things. In Luke 23:34, we read, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Here, we see that none of the people who were directly involved in the crucifixion of Jesus would be held accountable for those particular sins that happened that day, because Jesus asked the Father to forgive their sins of that particular day. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus became sin for every person, so we were all responsible for His death.

Luke 23:43 says, “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” Jesus was crucified between two others. One chose to ask Jesus for forgiveness. The other did not. The one who asked for forgiveness will be with Christ for eternity because of the choice he made that day. The other will spend eternity in the lake of fire and brimstone because of the choice he made that day. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that every person has a very important choice to make in this life. The choice that each one makes will determine whether they have eternal life or eternal judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this choice to others.