

79. Jesus Showed Mercy as He Was Crucified

In our last topic, we saw that both the Jewish religious leaders and Pilate were guilty because of their part in condemning Jesus to death. However, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that it was really our sins and the sins of the whole world that caused Jesus to willingly go to the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of all people. We mentioned that Jesus showed His mercy as He was crucified. We will learn more about that mercy in this topic.

Once Pilate gave his word to crucify Jesus, Jesus was immediately led away for crucifixion. Luke 23:26-31 says, “Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear *it* after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed *are* the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin “*to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’*” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?” The soldiers led Jesus from the place where He was judged to the place where He would be crucified.

Jesus was forced to carry His own cross as they started toward the place where He would be crucified. John 19:17 says, “And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.” However, the scourging that the soldiers had given Jesus had been very severe. As a result, Mark 15:21 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.” The fact that Mark named the two sons of this man is an indication that he and his family became followers of Jesus and were known to at least some of the early Christians. This Rufus may even be the one mentioned in Romans 16:13, where we read, “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” If so, the wife and son of Simon were still alive when the book of Romans was written. Simon was just coming in from the country when the soldiers commanded him to carry the cross of Jesus to the place where Jesus was crucified.

Many people followed Jesus as He was led away to be crucified. This great multitude included both men and women. Jesus turned and spoke to the women to warn them what would later happen to them and their children. Jesus said to these women, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Then Jesus went on to explain why the women of the city of Jerusalem should weep for themselves and for their children. Jesus said that terrible days would be coming for the city of Jerusalem in the near future. Jesus was speaking about the total destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., which happened only forty years later.

Jesus knew that the coming destruction of Jerusalem would bring both great sorrow and also death to anyone who was in Jerusalem at that time. The women who were alive when that destruction came would say that the women who were blessed were those who had no children because they would not have to see their children killed. Such women would never have known the joy of giving birth or the joy of holding those children close as they nursed them after birth. However,

those women who had never experienced that joy would be blessed because they would not have to watch those children as they were tortured and put to death.

Jesus said that the women would cry out to the mountains and hills to fall on them and cover them so that they would not see their children tortured and killed in that coming destruction. Then, Jesus gave a very interesting comparison as He said, in Luke 23:31, “For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?” Jesus compared Himself to a green tree. He was still young and in the prime of His life. He was also the source of life for others. Just a few weeks earlier, Jesus had said, in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” In contrast, the Jewish nation had existed for a long time and had rebelled against God throughout that time. The nation was like dry wood that was ready for judgment and many would soon be destroyed and burned.

Luke 23:32-34 says, “There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 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. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’” Here, we see that there were also two others who were crucified at the same time Jesus was crucified. However, they were criminals and were going to pay the penalty for their own sins. Matthew and Mark mentioned that these men were robbers, but the Romans did not put people, who were just robbers, to death. They had probably also been followers of Barabbas in the rebellion, since Jesus replaced Barabbas. Jesus was crucified at the place called Calvary. Mark 15:22 says, “And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.”

We see that Jesus was placed in the middle with one criminal on each side of Him. This would have been an additional insult by the Roman soldiers, because they treated Him like He was the worst of the common criminals. However, the soldiers did not realize it, but they were fulfilling prophecy from the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:12 says, “Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Jesus was placed between the two criminals because Isaiah had prophesied that He would be numbered with the transgressors. We see in the next verse that Jesus also prayed for all of those who were involved in His crucifixion.

After Jesus was placed on the cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Here, we see that Jesus prayed for the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers, and everyone else involved in His crucifixion that day. Acts 13:27-28 says, “For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.” They did not know Jesus, because they did not believe that He was the Messiah. As 1 Corinthians 2:8 says, “Which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” However, because Jesus prayed to the Father and asked Him to forgive the sins those men committed that day, the sins committed, that day, related to the crucifixion of Jesus, will not be written in the books of the sins of any person who stands before God at the final

judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.

We see the response of the soldiers who crucified Jesus, as we read in Luke 23:35-38, “And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.’ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Here, we see that for the soldiers, this was just another day and they were carrying out the job they were assigned to do.

When the Roman soldiers crucified a person, they were allowed to take the clothes of that person as a bonus for themselves. John 19:23-24 says, “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’ that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: *‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’* Therefore the soldiers did these things.” The soldiers did not realize that they were fulfilling the prophecy given in Psalm 22:18.

We also see that both the rulers and the soldiers mocked and made fun of Jesus. The rulers did their mocking by their words as they sneered at Him. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy given about Jesus, in Psalm 22:7-8, which says, “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” Even though the rulers had probably read the words of Psalm 22 many times, they could not understand the Word of God, because they did not believe God. As a result, they did not realize that they were fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy by their words.

The soldiers showed their contempt both by their words and their actions. They offered Jesus sour wine to drink. They spoke words of contempt as they said, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.” Pilate had ordered a sign to be placed on the cross, over the head of Jesus, which said, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” He refused to change what he had written when the Jewish leaders tried to get him to change it. He just said, in John 19:22, “What I have written, I have written.” We see that each person showed their rejection in their own way. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Christ chose to forgive these particular sins, even though these people all showed their rejection of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help them understand that Jesus why Jesus died for all people.