



His Crucifixion

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus repeatedly said, *"My hour has not come."* During His last public discourse, He finally said, *"The hour has come."* That hour was the time of His sacrifice ... the time of His crucifixion. I want to take you back almost 2,000 years to that hour ... to the time when Jesus was crucified. We will walk through the last 24 to 36 hours before He died. His popularity had peaked ... but so had His enemies' opposition. The chief priests, scribes, and elders were plotting to kill Him. Judas, one of His own, had already made a deal to betray Him. Jesus spent the day before the cross with His disciples. As evening approached, they gathered in an upper room for the Last Supper. As the humble servant, Jesus knelt and washed their feet. During the meal He took some bread ... blessed it ... broke it ... and gave it to His men. He said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."* He took the cup and gave thanks ... and gave it to them with the words, *"Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins."* He referred to a future time of reunion saying, *"I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* During the meal, Judas left to betray the Savior. The disciples foolishly discussed which of them would be greatest in the Kingdom. Jesus taught them and prayed.

After singing a hymn, they walked to the Mount of Olives. Jesus told them that they would all fall away ... but Peter pledged his allegiance at all costs even if all others turned away. Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times that very night ... three times before the rooster crowed twice. They crossed the Ravine of the Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus took Peter, John, and James on alone to pray. He went a little farther to pray by Himself. His men could not stay awake ... they slept from sorrow. It was the end of a long and difficult day. Jesus knew that His death was imminent ... that He would be nailed to a Roman cross in the morning. More importantly, He knew that He would drink the cup of God's wrath against sin. Jesus fell, face down, on the ground to pray. His sweat became like falling drops of blood. He fervently prayed, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* Jesus would be crucified in the morning ... it was the Father's will.

Jesus woke His men, sometime close to midnight, telling them that the betrayer was coming. Judas came to the Garden with a great crowd. There were officers from the chief priests and scribes. There were 100 to 600 Roman soldiers. They came with lanterns, torches, and weapons. They came with clubs and swords to arrest the Prince of Peace. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The disciples asked, *"Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"* Peter drew his sword and swung it at the High Priest's slave. Peter was a fisherman ... not a swordsman. His sword cut off the slave's right ear. Jesus touched and healed the slave. Jesus asked His men, *"Do you not think that I can appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"* Jesus said to the crowd, *"Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber?"* His disciples fled. The Great Shepherd was about to be struck down. His sheep had scattered. The soldiers seized and bound Jesus. They led Him away to the first of His six trials.

They took Him to Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest. Annas questioned Jesus. However, without witnesses it was an illegal trial. Jesus responded, *"I have taught openly ... Why do you question Me? ... Question those who have heard what I spoke"*. One of the officers standing there struck Jesus. The first blow had landed. A sinner struck the sinless one. The officer rebuked Jesus, *"Is that the way You answer the high priest?"* Jesus responded, *"If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"* Annas sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas, the ruling High Priest. Two disciples, Peter and John, followed their Lord from a safe distance.

Jesus was questioned by Caiaphas, the scribes, and the elders. They brought liars, false witnesses, to give incriminating testimony. Caiaphas interrogated Him, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"* Jesus answered, *"I am."* Then Caiaphas tore his robes as he proclaimed, *"He has blasphemed ... What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy."* His interrogators responded, *"He deserves death!"* They spit in His face. Stop and think about that ... picture that repulsive moment in your mind. Imagine those men stepping up in front of Jesus ... spitting in His face. Imagine their spit on His face, in His eyes, on His lips ... running down and dripping off the Savior's cheeks and chin. They also beat Him with their fists. They slapped Him with their open hands. They blindfolded Him ... and hit Him while taunting, *"Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit you?"*

Peter was in the courtyard with the crowd during this time ... warming himself by the fire. Parts of these first trials were in sight of the crowd. Peter could actually see Jesus being interrogated. Jesus could see him. A servant girl, looking intently at Peter in the firelight, confronted him with, *"You too were with Jesus."* She said to the crowd, *"This man was with Him too."* Peter denied Jesus with the words, *"Woman, I neither know or understand what you are talking about ... I do not know Him."* What had happened to his promised allegiance? The rooster crowed the first time ... but Peter did not react. Another servant-girl said, *"You are one of them too."* She said to those nearby, *"This is one of them ... this man was with Jesus of Nazareth."* Peter answered, *"I am not ... I do not know the man."* About an hour later, others came up to Peter saying, *"Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away ... for you are a Galilean too."* Peter began to curse and swear ... and said, *"Man, I do not know what you are talking about ... I do not know the man!"* While he was speaking, the rooster crowed for the second time. Peter heard it. At that moment, the Lord turned and looked at him. Can you imagine that moment in Peter's life. Peter went out and wept bitterly. During that night, Judas threw his 30 pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary. Then he went out and hung himself ... falling against something and disemboweling himself.

The third trial began at sunup. The full Council assembled for an official Jewish trial. They confronted Jesus, *"If You are the Christ, tell us."* He answered, *"If I tell you, you will not believe."* They continued their interrogation, *"Are You the Son of God?"* Jesus answered, *"Yes, I am."* At that point, this trial was over. No further testimony was deemed necessary. They considered His words to be blasphemy ... to them He deserved to die. They did not have the authority, under Roman occupation, to carry out a death sentence. Therefore, they took Jesus to Pilate, the provincial Roman governor. However, the Jews would not enter Pilate's residence. Entering a Gentile's residence would have made them ceremonially unclean and unfit to celebrate the Passover. They had just condemned the true Passover Lamb to death ... but they would not enter Pilate's Praetorium. What hypocrisy!

His first Roman trial was before Pilate. The Jews presented false testimony that He was misleading the nation and telling others not to pay taxes to Rome. They said that He claimed to be a King. Pilate asked, "*Are You the King of the Jews?*" Jesus answered, "*It is as you say.*" Jesus added, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" Pilate found no guilt in Jesus ... and he told that to the Jews. However, they insisted that He stirred up people all over the region ... beginning in Galilee. When Pilate found out that Jesus was a Galilean, under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod.

His second Roman trial was before Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod had wanted to see Jesus because he had been hearing so much about Him. Herod was hoping to see some sign performed by Jesus. Herod questioned Him at some length. The chief priests and scribes continued to accuse Him vehemently. However, Jesus was silent before His accusers. Herod found no guilt in Jesus ... but he and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt. They mocked Him. They dressed Him in a gorgeous robe to deride Him as a false king. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

His final trial was again before Pilate. The Jews continued their intense verbal attack. Jesus would not respond. That amazed Pilate. He found nothing in Jesus deserving of death. It was the custom to release one prisoner at the feast of the Passover. Pilate was willing to release any one prisoner ... and suggested that he punish and release Jesus. A notorious man, a robber named Barabbas had been imprisoned during the murderous insurrection. Pilate asked the people, "*Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?*" The people said, "*We have no king but Caesar.*" Was God not their king? The people cried out, "*Release for us Barabbas!*" And of Jesus they cried out, "*Crucify, crucify Him!*" Pilate asked, "*Why, what evil has He done?*" They kept shouting even more, "*Crucify Him!*" Pilate, seeing the beginning of a riot, washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "*I am innocent of this Man's blood.*" They answered, "*His blood shall be on us and on our children!*" The crowd had prevailed. Pilate released Barabbas and pronounced sentence on Jesus ... satisfying the demands of the crowd. Then he turned Jesus over to his soldiers to be scourged and executed. In just a few more hours, Jesus would die for the sins of the world ... He would hang on the cross for you. Have you ever described a personally painful event with the phrase, "*That was excruciating!*" Please do not ever say that again. The word *excruciating* comes from the Latin *excruciat* meaning *out of the cross* or *from crucifixion*. Nothing that we could suffer can be comparable to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Pilate gave in to the accusers of Jesus. The crowd had cried out, "*Crucify, crucify Him!*" To appease them, Pilate sentenced Jesus to death. Roman soldiers scourged a condemned man as preparation for execution on a cross. They were expert at inflicting agonizing torture. They could take a prisoner to the edge of collapse ... and then keep him there to prolong the pain. They stripped Jesus and tied His hands with rope. The extended end of that rope, or another tied to it, was used to raise His arms above His head as they tied Him to a whipping post. The rope was pulled to extend His body... pulling Him up onto His toes or just off the ground ... making the flesh of His back taut and ready for the whip. The whip was made of multiple strips of leather with iron balls, small pieces of metal, broken pottery, or sharp pieces of bone imbedded or tied into them. One or two soldiers would have done the whipping ... alternately whipping one side of His back, buttocks, and upper thighs and then the other. These were Romans and not Jews ... they had no limit of 40 lashes. How many lashes were inflicted? We do not know. That would

have been at the whim of His tormentors. The iron balls produced contusions of the skin and underlying tissue. The leather strips and pieces of metal, broken pottery, or sharp bones first ripped His skin ... and then, as the scourging continued, tore into the underlying flesh and muscle. The pain intensified as the whips dug deeper and deeper into His flesh. As each whip stroke was pulled back for the next stroke, a second wave of pain surged through His body as the metal, pottery pieces, and bones that had impaled His skin and muscles were ripped from His flesh. The blood loss and pain produced shock, weakness, and near-death exhaustion. Finally, they took Him down from the whipping post ... but they had not finished.

The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and pushed it down onto His head. The long thorns pierced His scalp and forehead. They put a scarlet robe on Jesus and put a reed in His hand as a scepter ... mocking Him as King of the Jews. They spit on Him. They used sticks to beat the crown of thorns farther down into His scalp and forehead. The scarlet robe was drying into the coagulating blood of the wounds in His back. When they finally pulled the robe off, His flesh ripped open again. They dressed Jesus in His own clothes. Then they led Him off to be crucified at Golgotha ... the place of the skull along the road outside the city. That was no romantic hill caressed by the first rays of the morning sun. It was just a place along the road that led to where they burned the garbage.

The soldiers forced Jesus to carry the horizontal piece of His own cross. That piece of wood, weighing half or more of His body weight, became too much for Jesus to carry. The whole cross, probably weighing at least twice His body weight, could not have been carried in His condition. This forced march was part of the public humiliation of crucifixion. Jesus could not go on. The soldiers pressed a man in the crowd into service to carry it for Jesus. Simon of Cyrene took it up onto his own shoulders and followed Jesus to Golgotha. At the place of execution, they pulled His clothing off ... reopening His wounds. The horizontal cross member was taken from Simon and laid on the ground. Jesus refused the pain-numbing drink of wine mixed with gall. They laid Him, open wounds down, in the dirt across that piece of wood. A soldier hammered large iron spikes through His wrists ... up close to the hands between the two forearm bones. There are no major arteries there ... and that minimized blood loss. However, the Median nerve, tendons, and ligaments were most likely torn. The pain was extreme. The soldiers roughly lifted that piece of wood, with Jesus nailed to it, up onto the vertical piece of the cross. The pain became even more intense as His weight began to hang from the two spikes in His wrists. They bent His legs at the knees to drive the final nail through both feet in a secure place between the bones. Then they left Him hanging there ... suspended by three spikes ... with the open wounds of His back against the rough wooden cross. A sign was placed above His head: *"This is Jesus the King of the Jews"*. Two common criminals were crucified with Him ... one on each side.

Crucifixion was a torturous death that maximized pain, agony, humiliation, and disgrace. Death might come as quickly as in a few hours ... or might take a few days. The victim, weakened by scourging and crucifixion, suffered beyond human description. Breathing was difficult when suspended from a cross. Only shallow breaths were possible ... and that produced excessive carbon dioxide in the body ... cramping muscles into agonizing knots. If necessary, death could be accelerated by breaking the victim's legs ... producing asphyxiation. Speech, even in short sentences, would have been difficult and painful for Jesus. To be able to speak, He pulled up on the hand-spikes with His arms and pushed down against the foot-spike to draw sufficient air into His lungs. His awkward position forced Him to twist His wrists and feet in agony on the spikes as He lifted His body to say,

"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus looked down and saw His mother standing nearby with His disciple John. He lifted His body on the spikes, His raw back grating against the rough cross, to say, *"John, take care of My mom"* (my paraphrase).

Many people mocked Jesus as He hung on the cross. They hurled verbal abuse at Him ... and wagged their heads in disapproval. The soldiers divided His outer garments into four parts ... one part for each of them. They cast lots for His one-piece tunic. The soldiers mocked Him, *"If You are King of the Jews, save Yourself!"* The crowd of spectators mocked Him, *"Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"* The chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him among themselves, saying, *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!"* One of the two crucified criminals mocked Him, *"Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"* The other criminal rebuked him ... and then turned to Jesus saying, *"Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"* Jesus responded to the man's faith, *"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."* Was that man the last Old Covenant believer? Or was he the first New Covenant believer?

Darkness fell across the land at noon. It remained dark for three hours. Jesus painfully gasped for enough air to speak again ... saying, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"* Then He said, *"I am thirsty."* They brought a sponge of sour wine to Him ... lifting it on a reed to His lips. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. It is finished!"* Then He bowed His head and died. At that moment, an earthquake swept through Jerusalem. The earth shook. The rocks split. The veil of the Jewish Temple was torn in two from top to bottom ... Jesus had opened the way for us to enter into the presence of Holy God. Later the soldiers came to break the prisoners' legs. However, Jesus was already dead. They did not break His legs ... none of His bones were broken. However, as added assurance of death, a soldier pierced His side with a spear ... probably slicing between the ribs, through the thoracic cavity, and penetrating a lung and His heart. Blood and water poured from the wound. Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the Council ... and he was a secret disciple of Jesus. He and Nicodemus (the man from John 3) took the body of Jesus down from the cross. They pulled the spikes from His lifeless body. They wrapped Him in a clean linen cloth. Joseph owned a new tomb hewn out in the rock. He and Nicodemus laid Jesus in that tomb. They rolled a large stone against the entrance ... and went away. The soldiers came to guard the tomb.

I have many thoughts as I consider the painful price that Jesus paid on that cross. I think about 1 Peter 2:24, *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."* I think of 1 Peter 3:18, *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit".* As I consider the cross, I can almost hear Jesus saying, *"For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."* Matthew 26:28. I also think of Paul's warning, *"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."* 1 Corinthians 6:20. I often think of one particular soldier. A Roman Centurion stood directly in front of Jesus as He died. That soldier was probably one of the men who drove the nails through His hands and feet ... or most likely, it was done at his orders. A Roman soldier was expected to give unlimited allegiance to the Caesar as his lord and commander. Caesar wanted god-like worship from his citizens and soldiers ... even

desiring to be called the son of god. That one soldier stood at the foot of the cross. He saw how Jesus died ... and he had to choose. Who would be his Lord? Would it be Caesar ... or would it be Jesus? He had to choose. His executioner began to praise God ... and said, "*Certainly this man was innocent. Truly this man was the Son of God.*" The execution that he had carried out produced the sacrifice that saved him from his sins. He made the right choice at the foot of the cross.

I pray that this lesson has taken you to the foot of the cross. I pray that it has caused you think and pray in self-examination. Is Jesus your Savior ... are you sure that He is? He died that excruciating death for you ... so that He could be your Savior. However, you must come to Him on His terms by putting your personal trust in Him. If you have any doubt about where you stand with Him, visit "www.911GOD.org" or send a note to me (John) at the address below.

If you are sure that you are already a believer, I need to ask you a penetrating question. When you think of the cross, when you consider His great sacrifice, can you say that He is your Lord? Is He your Caesar ... your commander and king? Have you given Him your unlimited allegiance? "*If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*" 1 Peter 1:17-19. You were redeemed with His precious blood ... make Him your Lord! There is a second decision you need to make. Your first decision was to accept Him as your savior ... based on His work as priest and sacrifice. The second decision puts you in the dual role as priest and sacrifice. "*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship*" Romans 12:1. Are you living the sacrificed life? For more information on this subject please visit "www.mydisciplemaker.org/MyDSacrificed.pdf" or send a request to the address below.

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