

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED

Matthew 27:1-56
Key Verse: 27:46

"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?'"

In this chapter, we find Matthew's account of Jesus' crucifixion and death. In this passage, the cross of Jesus reveals something of the deep meaning of his death. Let's think about how Jesus suffered and died on the cross. Especially, let's think about why he had to die.

First, the tragic end of Judas Iscariot (1-10). Before describing Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, Matthew records the tragic end of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. It was the time when [the Jewish](#) religious leaders had already decided through their overnight meeting to put Jesus to death. But they had no authority in their own country to pronounce a death sentence on criminals (Jn 18:31). So they bound him and handed him over to Pilate to try him quickly and hand down a death sentence (2).

Judas Iscariot had not imagined that the religious leaders would kill Jesus. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse. He regretted what he had done and wanted to undo it. So he returned the thirty [silver coins](#) to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood" (3,4a). What was their response? "'What is that to us?' they replied. 'That's your responsibility'" (4b). Judas wanted to undo what he had done and escape the responsibility of betraying innocent blood. But it was too late. What had been done could not be undone. Judas didn't mean to do so. But history attests that he is the one responsible for betraying the innocent blood of Jesus. Judas was one of the [twelve disciples](#). How did he become a betrayer? It was because he did not follow Jesus to become a disciple, but to get some benefit from Jesus. He had lived a common life together with Jesus. But he had never learned anything from Jesus. Jesus knew that Judas was about to betray him. He tried hard to help him repent and come back to him (Jn 13:22-29). But Judas did not realize Jesus' great love because his motive was money, not Jesus.

Judas took the money back to the religious leaders in order to escape his guilty feelings. But it didn't work as he had wished. So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Finally, he hanged himself. Judas' death was tragic. But the greater tragedy for him was that he was responsible for betraying innocent blood. We must make money for daily bread, but we must not be lovers of money. Otherwise, there is a danger for each of us to be like Judas Iscariot. It's not good to die in remorse like Judas Iscariot. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money" (6). So they decided to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners (7). This small event appeared to be another mischief of the chief priests. But it was not. It was to fulfill what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me"

(9b,10). Man only commits many sins; but God does his work all by himself.

Second, Jesus was tried by Pilate (11-26). Usually, a criminal is tracked down, and if he is arrested, he is tried. At that time, trial was a very shameful thing. They brought in a criminal and dashed him down on the floor to kneel down before a judge to be tried. He was at the mercy of the judge who was in charge of his case. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Judge of the living and the dead. But he was tried in our place.

What was the charge? Look at verse 11. "Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied." The charge was rebellion against the Roman Emperor--claiming himself to be the king of the Jews. If Jesus answered, "No," it would have been a denial of his kingship as the Son of God. If he said, "Yes," he would be charged with insurrection against the Roman Emperor. What did Jesus say? He said, "Yes, it is as you say." Jesus said nothing but the truth. His answer would cause him the death penalty, but he said, "Yes." Then the chief priests and the elders continued to accuse him, but he gave no answer (12). Verse 14 says, "But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge...." Usually, people try to defend themselves in times of trial. But Jesus didn't defend himself at all. How was it possible for him? Isaiah 53:6b,7 says, "...and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." Jesus bore the trial silently in our places.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, and that their accusation was out of envy (18). Besides, his wife sent word to him concerning her terrible suffering in a dream because of Jesus (19). Nevertheless, Pilate did not follow the truth, but decided to compromise. At the Feast, it was customary for the governor to release one prisoner chosen by the crowd. Pilate asked the crowd to choose between Barabbas--a notorious prisoner--and Jesus, hoping to make use of that custom to set Jesus free. But it didn't work. The chief priests stirred up the crowd, and the mob became irrational. They chose Barabbas. In his helplessness, Pilate asked, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all shouted, "Crucify him!" (22) Finally, Pilate became a victim of public opinion. Now, all he could do was escape the responsibility of shedding the innocent blood of Jesus. So he performed an obnoxious hand-washing ceremony before the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility!" (24) History attests that Pilate is responsible for it. The Apostles' Creed says, "...Jesus Christ, His only Son...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified...."

How did the crowd respond? Verse 25 says, "All the people answered, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!'" Pilate could not stand against the mob, so he could not but surrender Jesus to them. According to custom, before handing him over, Pilate had Jesus flogged. At that time, Roman flogging was terrible torture. The victim was stripped and his hands were tied behind his back. They say that the lash was studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bone and lead.

Finally, Jesus was handed over to the soldiers.

Third, Jesus was mocked by the soldiers (27-31). We might shudder at what the soldiers did. They had no idea of who Jesus was; they indulged in soldiers' cruelty against Jesus. They made sport of his kingship. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They spit on him and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. They struck Jesus again and again. What a humiliating mockery it was for him! After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him (27-31). We are the ones who should have been mocked, due to our shame and guilt. But Jesus took upon himself all our transgressions and iniquities (Isa 53:5).

Fourth, Jesus was crucified (32-44). After that, Jesus was again handed over to the soldiers while the cross was being prepared. Crucifixion is the most terrible and cruel death man has ever devised for taking vengeance on his fellow man. Physically, Jesus was too weak to carry his own cross. So they forced Simon of Cyrene to carry it for him. At this time, when his physical body was weak, he refused the drugged drink that would lessen his pain because he had decided to take all the suffering to the fullest (32-34). The soldiers fastened Jesus to the cross, his body already bleeding from the flogging. They drove nails through his hands and feet with hammers. Then they lifted him up to hang between heaven and earth, to die of pain and thirst. His lifeblood was oozing out of his wounds.

Why did he have to be so wounded and crushed? It was for our sins. Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand." He was hanging there as a guilt offering. The Holy Son of God was hanging there like a criminal because of our sins. He was hanging there in our place. Peter also learned the meaning of Jesus' cross and said, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pe 2:24). In verse 54 there is a Roman centurion. He must have been trained to be a tough soldier. He must have conquered many cities and killed many people ruthlessly. This Roman centurion hardened his heart and was executing Jesus of Nazareth. But when he looked at the cross of Jesus, he could not harden his heart anymore. He could see God in Jesus. At the moment he looked at the cross of Jesus, the light of God smeared into his heart, and he said, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Fifth, Jesus did not save himself (38-44). We know well that everyone wants to save himself. In order to save himself, a person cannot but be selfish. But Jesus did not save himself; instead, he saved his people (38-44). What happened when he did not save himself? He became an object of scorn. He was crucified between two robbers. Look at verse 39. "Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads...." It was to fulfill the prophecy concerning the suffering Messiah in Psalm 22:7,8. Look at verse 40. "...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!" They challenged him to come down from the cross and prove that he was the Son of God. It was a great temptation to Jesus. But he did not come down from the cross. We are tempted to come down from the cross many times a day.

The chief priests and their friends also mocked him, saying, "He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him" (42b). They continued to tempt him, saying, "He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (43). They were saying to Jesus, "God doesn't love you. If he did, why would he let you suffer like this? If you were really his Son, he would rescue you, wouldn't he? God doesn't want you." The robbers who were crucified with him also joined in the insults. The religious leaders played the role of Satan to make Jesus doubt God's love. But in the extreme anguish and pain of the cross, Jesus did not doubt the love of God. Jesus could have called more than twelve legions of angels to come and rescue him (Mt 26:53). But he did not try to save himself.

Jesus was God, but he was also fully human. So crucifixion was too hard for him to endure. In his humanness, he wanted to come down from the cross to escape the bleeding and the pain of the nails. He wanted to come down from the cross to wipe the tears from the eyes of his mother and from the eyes of the other women standing beneath the cross crying. But Jesus remained as a man of sorrow to the end. Jesus did not save himself so that he might save all his people from their sins.

Sixth, before his death Jesus suffered great agony of soul (45-48). Look at verses 45,46. As he hung on the cross, the whole world became dark. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in his native language, in great agony of soul, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" His physical pain was great, but his greatest pain was the momentary separation from God (Isa 59:2; 53:6b,12b,c). Jesus had already suffered so much during the time of his earthly ministry, but these sufferings never mattered to him, because he had a personal love-relationship with God. But when he had to die on the cross, his love-relationship with God had to be cut momentarily because of the sins of the world. It was really unbearable punishment for him. So he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He was utterly alone at the time of his greatest agony. Jesus suffered unbearable loneliness for us. Praise Jesus!

Seventh, Jesus gave his life for us (50-53). Look at verse 50. "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit." After crying out in such a way in great loneliness of soul, he gave up his spirit. To give up one's spirit means to die. But Jesus did not die for himself; he died for the sins of the world. He died to fulfill God's will for world salvation. There have been many who have died miserably and selfishly. A Russian novelist died after saying as his last words, "Tragedies, trage dies!" An American novelist died after saying a most sorrowful last word, "It might have been." They all died selfishly. But Jesus died unselfishly. Jesus died not for himself, but for the sin of the world. But it was not the end. It was just the beginning of a new era. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (51). Now, people do not need to go to the temple to make animal sacrifices. Through the death of Jesus as the

Passover Lamb (Heb 9:7,25,26), each of us can go to God directly (1 Ti 2:5).

Look at verses 52,53. "The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people." The tombs opened. The tomb lost its power, and the grave its terror. Through Jesus' death we can see a prelude of his glorious resurrection.

Eighth, Jesus died on the cross to obey the will of God. These days, many people don't like to hear the word "obedience." No one seems to be happy to obey. But Jesus was happy to obey God's will for him to die as the Passover Lamb. In order to obey, Jesus gave up the power and glory of the kingdom of heaven. The first condition of obedience is humbleness. So Jesus humbled himself and made himself nothing. His obedience was not superficial; he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! (Php 2:6-8). His obedience was a bloodshedding one. The ancestor of our human race, Adam, disobeyed God, and sin and death entered the world. But Jesus obeyed God even to death on a cross and became the source of salvation for those who believe in him (Heb 5:8,9).

Let's remember that the cross of Jesus is for the sin of the world.