

#1 Matt. 27:35-44 “The Thief on the Cross”

#2 Luke 23:26 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. ²⁷ And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. ²⁸ But Jesus, turning to them, said, **#2a** “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed *are* the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then they will begin ‘*to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”*’ ³¹ For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?” (This was evidently a proverbial saying in Jesus’ day. If God has not spared Jesus, then the divine judgment will fall in full and undiminished severity on the Jewish people if they persist in unbelief and disobedience.)

Warren Wiersbe makes the point: While the record does not state so expressly, it appears that Jesus was unable to carry the cross, and this was slowing down the progress of the group. When we remember that He had been awake all night, scourged, and abused by the soldiers, we can conclude that He was exhausted. **#3** Jesus started out bearing His cross (John 19:17). Mark 15:22 says, “And they bring Him to Golgotha” (literal translation). This suggests that the soldiers had to assist Jesus in the procession, for the word “bring” has the meaning of “to carry, to bear.”

#4 ³³ And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink. ³⁵ Then they crucified Him,

“a place called Golgotha...Place of a Skull” The word “Golgotha” is a transliteration of the Aramaic *gulgolta* meaning “skull.”

“Calvary” comes from the Latin *calva*, “skull.” (Calvary Rio Rancho!) Its exact location is unknown. Tom Constable

We know it was near the city walls. **#5 John 19:20 (NKJV)** Then many of the Jews read this title, **for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city...**”

#6 a & b There are 2 locations which compete today for the actual site of the crucifixion. **#7** The area inside the present day **#8** church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old city of Jerusalem. **#9** (The Madaba map, is a mosaic on the floor of St. George's Church in Madaba, Jordan, **#10** which show a map of Jerusalem around 500 AD.) **#11 #12 #13** (Location of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher)

#14 There is another place 250 yards NW of the Damascus gate behind a bus station **#15** today called *Gordon's Calvary*. In 1883, near to the Damascus Gate, General Gordon found a rocky escarpment (now situated just behind a bus station), **#16** which from several angles **#17** resembled the face of a skull; since one of the possible etymologies for Golgotha is the Aramaic word for **#18** skull, and may refer to the shape of the place, Gordon concluded that the rocky escarpment was likely to have been *Golgotha*.

“sour wine mingled with gall (Myrrh - At His birth, Jesus was given myrrh (Matthew 2:11). **He would not drink”**

Ed Hinson says: There are 2 opinions about what the soldiers gave Jesus. One is that it was the customary drink given to condemned prisoners to serve as a kind of anesthetic or anodyne. Tradition says women of Jerusalem would prepare and offer this drink to condemned men. **#19 Proverbs 31:6–7 (NLT)** Alcohol is for the dying, and wine for those in bitter distress. ⁷ Let them drink to forget their poverty and remember their troubles no more. If this is the case it was literally a drugged “wine”. The statement that **He**

would not drink indicates that our Lord refused any mitigation of His sufferings on our behalf.

The other opinion based on the word “gall” is that it was **a poison to hasten Jesus death** – a bitter vile substance referred to in: **#20 Psalm 69:19–21 (NIV84)** ¹⁹ You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you. ²⁰ Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. **#21** ²¹ **They put gall (“poison” NLT) in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.**

“they crucified Him” After the beatings and scourging – Jesus was taken through Jerusalem out of the city gate to a small hill where crucifixions were carried out.

Crucifixion was used as a means of capital punishment among the Persians, Seleucids, Jews, Carthaginians, and Romans from about the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. **#22** **“The Phoenicians (Tyre/Sidon) were the first to widely use crucifixion. They tried other methods, but all had been found to be too quick. Wanting a means of punishing criminals slowly and most painfully, they devised the cross. #23** It was almost ideal because in its original form it was as slow as it was painful (men often lived 2 or more days on a cross and there are records of men living as many as 9 days). The victim's necked body was also vulnerable to sunburn, thousands of insects of the air, birds etc. **#24** **The Romans had perfected crucifixion to an exact science as a mean of deterring crime, but reserved it for foreigners, slaves and the vilest criminals; it was considered too degrading a death for a Roman citizen.” #25** We get our word “excruciating” - which means to “torture greatly”. It comes from the word “cruciare” meaning “to torture” the root word: “crux or crucis” (cross). There was nothing to compare to the pain and torture of the cross, so they just named it by this punishment!

Crucifixion is described in Psalms 22 at least 450 years before it was invented: **#26 Psalm 22:14–18 (NIV84)** I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. **#27** ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.

"The Day Christ Died" Jim Bishop 1957 **#28** "The executioner laid the crossbeam behind Jesus and brought him to the ground quickly by grasping his arm and pulling him backward. **#29** As soon as Jesus fell, the beam was fitted under the back of His neck and on each side soldiers quickly knelt on the inside of His elbows. Once begun, the matter was done quickly and efficiently. The executioner wore an apron with pockets. **#3** He placed 2 - 5" -9" nails between his teeth and, hammer in hand, knelt beside the right arm. The soldier whose knee rested on the inside of the elbow held the forearm flat to the board. With his right hand, the executioner probed the wrist of Jesus to find a little hollow spot there. **#31** (Contrary to the prevailing impression, crucifixion nails were never put through the hands) When he found the hollow, he took one of the square cut iron nails from his teeth and held it on the spot, directly behind the wrist socket. Then he raised the hammer over the nail head and brought it down with force. **#32** Many spectators turned their heads. Some cried. Some prayed aloud. Some walked away. The executioner moved to the other wrist. As soon as he was satisfied that the condemned man could not in struggling free himself and fall off the cross, **#33** he ordered the soldiers to raise the crossbeam into place toward its place near the top of the upright beam. When the 6' high upright beam (6' would accommodate most

prisoners with knees buckled) was set firmly in the socket, the executioner knelt before the cross. **#34** Two soldiers hurried to help, each one took hold of a leg at the calf. The ritual was to nail the right foot over the left, and this was probably the most difficult part of the work. If the feet were pulled downward and nailed close to the foot of the cross, the prisoner died too quickly. **#35** Over the years the Romans had learned to push the feet upward on the cross, buckling the knees, so that the condemned man could lean on the nail. When the body sagged in fatigue, its weight hung on the nails in the wrists and the knees bent forward.

#36 Last time I talked to you about the Shroud of Turin. This is an early church “relic” which it was claimed was the burial cloth of Jesus carefully preserved by those believers in Jerusalem at the time and passed down to us today. There is much controversy surrounding this cloth and no one knows for sure but **here are some of the astonishing findings that modern day science has uncovered so far:**

The body that appears on the Shroud is naked. Under Roman law, criminals were whipped and executed in the nude. The man that appears on the Shroud was crucified with nails driven through his wrists. Although artists throughout the centuries have traditionally thought that Christ was nailed to the cross through his palms, it is now known that crucifixion victims were nailed to crosses through their wrists.

The exact way the man was crucified closely matches biblical accounts of Jesus's crucifixion.

#37 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.” (Psalm 22:18) ³⁶ Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

John tells us more of this process: **#38 John 19:23–24 (NKJV)** 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. ²⁴ They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,”

#39 Luke 23:34 (NKJV) Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Consider for a moment the redemption of the world through the death of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was being put to death He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do” (Lk 23:34). There upon the cross Jesus purchased the means of forgiveness for the whole world. Through the shedding of His blood Christ “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Co 5:19). Does this mean that the whole world is actually forgiven and reconciled with God? Surely not. For complete reconciliation to occur between man and God, a person must acknowledge and repent of his sin and ask God’s forgiveness. Only then does God grant the forgiveness He has already determined in His heart. He is ready today to forgive because of the reconciliation that was purchased two thousand years ago. The same principle works in your relationships. Forgiveness cannot be verbally granted until there is an honest acknowledgment of fault and a request for pardon. Yet once you have chosen to forgive *from your heart*, you are also ready to verbally grant forgiveness to that person when they humbly and sincerely acknowledge their fault and seek your forgiveness.

But what happens when a person refuses to acknowledge their fault? Should you still verbally tell them that you forgive them? Absolutely not; simply because the offense is not reconciled. Even though you have forgiven them from the heart, there cannot be complete reconciliation until they acknowledge their fault. Save any verbal granting of forgiveness until this occurs.

A person can't receive forgiveness until they have repented, but you can be ready to offer forgiveness, by forgiving them in your heart, and *release* your anger, resentment, bitterness, vengeance, hurt, and sorrows to God, trusting in His justice, as you lovingly pray for the one who has caused you pain.

#39a “The one perfect life that has been lived in this world is the life of Him who owned nothing, and who left nothing but the clothes He wore.”

#40 ³⁷ **And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

#41 **John 19:19–22 (NLT)** And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it. **#42** ²¹ Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, “Change it from ‘The King of the Jews’ to ‘He said, I am King of the Jews.’ ” ²² Pilate replied, “No, what I have written, I have written.” ***(Pilate was used by God to write the truth, though he didn’t believe it!)***

#43 ³⁸ Then **two robbers were crucified with Him**, one on the right and another on the left...(⁴⁴ Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing)

We get “the rest of the story” from Luke on the reaction of one of the two criminals to Jesus innocence: **#44** **Luke 23:39–43 (NKJV)** Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” ⁴³ **And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

It is amazing that Jesus could be in the midst of so much pain and suffering – having endured so much – and still be thinking about the well-being of the person next to Him (and His mother)! When I am in pain I think only of myself. This is the problem; self-focus – selfishness – this is what Jesus had to die

for – my selfishness. Paul said: **#45 Philippians 2:3–4 (NIV84)** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Funny – he doesn't say if you're in pain it's okay to be nasty and selfish!

Jesus was the criminal on the cross, dying between two criminals: This was spoken by **#46 Isaiah 53:12 (NKJV)** “...And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah says that Jesus was indeed viewed that day as a criminal: **#47 Isaiah 53:4 (NKJV)** Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; **Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.**

Tom Constable: For the Jews crucifixion was even more horrible because it symbolized a person dying under God's curse. **#48 Deuteronomy 21:22** If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, ²³ you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.

Jesus bore God's curse for the sins of humankind so we would not have to experience that curse. **#49 Galatians 3:13–14 (NKJV)** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Jesus became the thief on the cross for us. It should have been Barabbas or you or I instead it was the sinless Son of God, Jesus the Messiah of Israel. Have you received the promise of the Spirit by faith?