

“The Crucifixion”

Luke 23:33-43

Theme: Jesus suffered on the cross to save sinners like us.

I. The Place of the Crucifixion – 23:33

A. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PLACE

1. Luke’s narrative brings us now to the place of the Crucifixion – *“When they came to the place called The Skull ...”*
2. *“The Skull”* [κρανίον] – is the word from which we get our word “cranium” – referring to the top of the head.
3. It appears that the location of the crucifixion is a domed hillside since the Romans always crucified people in the most elevated location near a major road or gate.
4. It is always a hillside outside of the city walls where such an event occurred - – cp. *John 19:17; Hebrews 13:12*.
5. The specific location is uncertain although tradition marks it under the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem where there is a large boulder in which there is a split allegedly caused by the earthquake at Jesus’ death.




6. There is another elevated spot identified near an olive press that would be consistent with the tomb nearby in a garden where they would have hastily buried Jesus.

B. THE CRUELTY AT THE PLACE

1. Luke, with simplicity as most of his audience had personally witnessed crucifixions and knew the details states: *“... there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other*

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on the left.”

2. The details of a crucifixion are as follows fairly well-known – having originated with the Persians under King Darius, used extensively by Alexander the Great, and then by the Romans as well.
3. The condemned is forced to lay on his back with arms stretched out across the horizontal portion of the cross known as the patibulum (likely the part that was carried by Simon).
4. The Roman soldier feels for the depression at the front of the wrist and drives a heavy, square, wrought iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. He repeats this on the other side of the patibulum.
5. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed so that the victim could extend the legs to get relief. Another method is to nail the ankles to the sides of the post as demonstrated by this picture.
6. The cross is then lifted into place and dropped into the hole prepared to receive it with the force of gravity ripping the wounds of the victim as he plunges to the forceful stop at the end of the hole.
7. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain – the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.
8. As Jesus pushed Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He placed His full weight on the nail through His feet.
9. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain.
10. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward

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... air can be drawn into the lungs but cannot be exhaled.

11. He would fight to raise Himself to get even one small breath.
12. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside.
13. Intermittently, He can push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the oxygen.
14. Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber.
15. Finally, a deep crushing pain deep in the chest begins as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.
16. Because of the loss of fluid, the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues – the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air ... until it's over.
17. This could take up to four days to kill the victim, which is why after a time, the soldiers would break the legs to hasten the death – cp. [*John 19:31-33*](#).

II. The Priority in the Crucifixion – 23:34

A. THE PRIORITY OF THE SAVIOR

1. As Jesus is struggling, his heart for sinners is placed on display: *“But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’”*
2. This is the first of the Lord's seven sayings on the cross and displays the very purpose for His suffering – the desire for men to be freed from the consequences of their sin.
3. The word *“forgive”* [ἀφίημι] – literally means to dismiss or release and it emphasizes that Jesus aspired that through

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what He was doing, the application of redemption would be applied to them so that they could be disassociated from their sin.

4. His mercy extends toward them since Jesus was aware that they had no idea of the extent of their depraved activities – “... *for they do not know what they are doing*” – cp. **1 Corinthians 2:8**.
5. Jesus knew the consequences that were coming because of their rejection of Him as the Messiah – having just admonished the “daughters of Jerusalem” to mourn for themselves.
6. However, Jesus’ prayer for their forgiveness demonstrates that He did not come into the world to condemn the world but to save it – **John 3:17**.
7. Again, the Father answers the prayer of His Son and enables this prayer for forgiveness to be answered – to whom does “*them*” and “*they*” refer:
 - a. The immediate context of the Romans soldiers who did the act of crucifixion – **Luke 23:47**.
 - b. Those who are in the crowd mocking Him – **Acts 2:37-41**.
 - c. Those of the religious leadership – **Acts 6:7**.

B. THE PRIORITY OF THE SOLDIERS

1. However, the hardened hearts of the soldiers – before the piercing and quickening power of God’s grace was exerted – the soldiers were only interested in selfish gain.
2. We’re told elsewhere that they were stationed at the foot of the cross – presumably to prevent and rescue attempt by His followers – cp. **Matthew 27:36**.
3. We are told that “*they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*”
4. The four of them each desired something of Jesus who had been stripped down to his loin cloth and hung above them without a need for his clothing – cp. **John 19:23**.

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5. Their crass sporting at the foot of the cross was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy – cp. **Psalm 22:14-18**.
6. We too benefit from the “clothing” of Jesus – not a physical garment, but His *“garment”* of righteousness in which the believer is wrapped through the imputation of that very righteousness by God in response to our faith – **Romans 13:14; Isaiah 61:10**.

So What?

1. Some unsaved people turn to Jesus to save them when they consider what Jesus did for them when He died for their sins.
2. Some unsaved people have suppressed that their lives are offensive to God and they face eternal punishment.
3. No Sinner can “beat death” – sin brings condemnation.

Jesus suffered on the cross to save sinners

Part 2

III. The Proclamations at the Crucifixion – **23:35-42**

A. THE PROFANITY BY THE RULERS – **v. 35**

1. This travesty, this lampoon of justice, was truly a spectacle - *“... and the people stood by, looking on”* – only a few hours previous they had called for the blood of Jesus to be upon them and their children – cp. **Matthew 27:24-25**.
2. Their culpability was palpable as they stood watching the agony of Christ on the cross and were *“sneering”* at Christ [ἐκμυκτηρίζω] – lit. “out of a nostril” – and refers to using the nose to ridicule someone.
3. We know this because of the intensification of what was happening *“... and even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, ‘He*