

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 15:16-32

Life Lesson

The cross shows us that our sin is much more serious than we often admit, but God's love is far greater than we can fully understand. Jesus willingly endured unimaginable suffering, not as a victim but as our substitute. He took our guilt, shame, and punishment so that we could receive His righteousness and freedom. Because of this, we are called to live differently: no longer imprisoned by sin or shame, but marked by humility, gratitude, and obedience. The same Savior who bore the cross now calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him daily. Because Jesus gave everything for us, we are called to surrender everything to Him.

Examine Scripture

16 The soldiers led him away into the palace (that is, the governor's residence) and called the whole company together. **17** They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him. **18** And they began to salute him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" **19** They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage. **20** After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him. They led him out to crucify him. **21** They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of

For Whom Christ Died

In this text, we confront one of the most difficult topics to read and study. We will reflect on the intense suffering of Jesus during His crucifixion. If only there were a way to ease the pain of this account and the horrifying image of what Jesus went through during His beatings and crucifixion. However, we must understand the brutality of crucifixion and the full extent of Jesus' suffering because He endured, bled, and died for us. Our minds should focus on the incredible suffering Jesus endured for our salvation. We need to remember the burden of His cross and the shedding of His blood.

As we approach the crucifixion, we must remember what Jesus has already endured. He has already sweated blood, a condition called hematidrosis that causes the skin to become extremely painful and fragile. Every punch, slap, and tug on His beard caused intense pain to spread throughout His body. Additionally, Jesus was whipped by skilled Roman soldiers whose aim was to inflict maximum pain without killing the prisoner; some did not even survive the flogging. No one has ever suffered as much as Jesus did, and He did it for us! So, with great reverence and fear, we approach this text.

Before we start analyzing our text, have you ever wondered why Jesus came to Earth at this specific time in human history? Paul reminds us in (Rom. 5:6-8): "For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly." Think about it. God sent His Son to face the most brutal form of death we have ever seen in human history: crucifixion. That is the cost of our sin! It took the most brutal and horrific way of dying to make it possible for God to see Jesus' sacrifice as enough payment for our sins.

Vs. 16-20

Jesus has already been abused and mocked by the religious leaders; now he is mocked and abused by the Roman soldiers. They led Him to the Praetorium, the Roman governor's residence in Jerusalem. When they arrived, they called others to join them in mocking Jesus. It is unclear if it was the entire cohort of troops (600 soldiers) or just a

Alexander and Rufus. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull). 23 They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get. 25 Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews. 27 They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left. 29 Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, "Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross!" 31 In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! 32 Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

- Underline "purple robe," "crown of thorns" in (v. 17), and write "mockery yet truth" above it.
- In the margin, write "Gen. 3:17-19." Write "thorns=curse."
- Bracket "tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh" in (v. 23). Write "Jesus wanted to endure the full amount of pain and suffering" in the margin.
- Circle "they crucified him" in (v. 24). In the margin, describe what crucifixion was like.
- Underlined "King of the Jews" in (v. 26). Write "the charge against Jesus" and "mockery yet truth" in the margin.
- Circle "two criminals with him" in (v. 27) and "even those who were crucified with him taunted him." Draw a line connecting the two.

Personal Notes

maniple (200 soldiers); either way, hundreds of soldiers were mocking Jesus. One scholar reminds us that they "were a part of the auxiliary troops Pilate had brought up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. They were non-Jews recruited from Palestine and other parts of the empire. Mark says the whole company took part in their perverted humor."

As part of their mockery, the soldiers dressed Him in a purple robe, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and other Gospels mention that they put a reed scepter in His hand. In their minds, they created a mockery and a false king. They bowed and said, "Hail, king of the Jews!" (v. 18). This shows their disdain for both the Jews and for Jesus. Yet, in the mockery, they were actually proclaiming truth: Jesus is the King of the Jews and the world.

Each item used for mockery reveals a greater truth. The purple robe was a symbol of wealth and royalty. The purple dye from Tyre was made from shellfish; it was rare and expensive. Therefore, this color was reserved for royalty or people of great importance. What was meant to be a moment of humiliation was actually a precursor to Jesus' future exaltation after His resurrection. The reed scepter reveals Jesus as the supreme creator and ruler of the entire created order. The crown of thorns is perhaps the most symbolic of these items. From the very beginning of redemptive history, thorns have been a symbol of the fruit of sin or the curse of sin. In (Gen. 3:17-19), we read: "And he said to the man, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust.'" In (v. 17), we read that the soldiers "twisted together a crown of thorns." So, Jesus was crowned with the very curse from the Fall. He was crowned with sin. Paul writes in (Gal. 3:13-14): "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith." Again, Paul writes in (2 Cor. 5:21): "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The only way to abolish the curse of sin was for Jesus to not only bear the weight of our sin but to actually become sin, so the full wrath of God would be poured out on sin.

After the mockery, the soldiers spat on Jesus. They beat Him over the head with a stick, driving the thorns further into His brow. Then, they ripped the purple robe off His back. The robe that undoubtedly served as a bandage after the flogging was now torn away,

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reopening every wound. Now, as if He had not suffered enough, they led Him away to be crucified.

Vs. 21-23

As was customary, the criminals were forced to carry their own crosses through the city to the place of crucifixion. Likely, it was the patibulum (the crossbar) that they would have to carry. The patibulum weighed about 75-125 pounds. However, Jesus, already weakened by sweating blood, the beatings, and the flogging, could not carry the weight of the cross. Therefore, the soldiers pulled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Him. With Mark naming Simon and his sons, Alexander and Rufus, it is likely they were known in the Church, perhaps becoming believers after witnessing the crucifixion. As they proceeded, every step toward crucifixion was met with shouting and cursing from the crowd.

When they arrived at Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, they began the crucifixion process. The soldiers offered Jesus a drink of “wine mixed with myrrh” (v. 23). This was not given as an act of mockery, but a common practice to provide the criminals with a drink that served as a mild anesthetic to help them endure crucifixion. It was not because the Roman soldiers had compassion; rather, they were skilled in torture and wanted the criminals to endure the cross for as long as possible, prolonging their suffering. Jesus refused, desiring to accept the full cup of the wrath of God and fulfilling His promise “no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (14:25).

Additionally, as part of the process, the criminals would be stripped of their clothes. It is not a coincidence, but providential, that Jesus was crucified naked. Again, what was meant as a form of humiliation was part of God’s redemptive plan. Once Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they hid from God. They realized they were naked and ashamed. Adam and Eve hid because of their shame, but Jesus was crucified publicly because of ours! Jesus was crowned with our shame. He had no wrongdoing or sin to be ashamed of, yet He bore our shame. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us, “For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Because He was crowned with our shame and guilt of sin, we now have the ability to be free from all guilt and shame of sin: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Vs. 24-32

Though Mark does not provide details, the process of crucifixion was designed to cause the greatest possible suffering. Crucifixion was invented by the Persians but perfected by the Romans.

Personal Reflection

1. As you think about the physical and emotional suffering Jesus went through, how does it strengthen your understanding of how serious your own sin is?
2. The soldiers mocked Jesus as a false king, but He is the true King—how do you personally respond to His authority in your daily life?
3. Jesus bore not only your sin but also your shame—are there parts of your life where you still carry guilt or shame instead of resting in His forgiveness?
4. We are not just observers but participants in the crucifixion—how does recognizing your role in Christ's suffering alter your view on grace and repentance?
5. Because Jesus suffered in your place, you now stand righteous before God—how should that truth influence the way you live, think, and relate to others this week?

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

Mt. Zion's Mission

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MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY
disciples of Jesus Christ.

As the patibulum was laid on the ground, Jesus was thrown onto it. His arms would be secured with rope to the patibulum, not to support His weight while hanging on the cross, but to steady His arms as they drove 7-inch nails into the wrists. The nails would be surgically placed between the two bones of the wrists, piercing the median nerve and sending shockwaves of pain throughout the body. Once nailed to the patibulum, the soldiers would raise it to the top of the stipe (the long upright posts) and place it, forming either a “T” or the traditional cross. Jesus would have sat on a crude seat called a sedulum. His knees would be turned and bent, then His feet would be nailed into that position. This would cause Jesus to constantly pull himself up, bearing his weight on His wrists, to avoid suffocation. His bare back, already shredded by the flogging, would constantly rub against the rough wood of the cross. With each pull, the nails would continue to dig into the median nerve, causing pain to radiate throughout His body. Crucifixion was truly excruciating.

If that was not enough, the soldiers placed the titulus, the inscription of the charge, above Jesus' head: “The King of the Jews” (v. 26). That is what He was guilty of: the truth! Yet, everyone walked past the cross and hurled insults at Him, mocking Him. They cursed Him for being on the cross, not realizing He was their curse on the cross.

Before our emotions lead to anger and hatred toward these soldiers, we need to remember that it is ultimately God's sovereignty and providence that bring us to this moment. Listen to (Is. 53:4): “Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.”

You see, before the soldiers turned the thorns into a crown, God sovereignly planned this moment for our salvation. It is through this suffering that the price for our sins was paid. What makes this scene even harder to watch is that we, all of us, are actually part of it. First, we are the soldiers, the religious leaders, the crowd, and the two criminals. We are the ones causing Jesus' suffering, mockery, and shame. It was our hands, our spit, our insults, and our sins that were thrown upon Jesus. Second, at that moment when our sin is hurting Him, Jesus is actually taking our place. He is our substitute. As we beat and pierced Him with our sins, He truly bears them for us. Jesus is receiving the punishment from the very people for whom He is paying the penalty of sin. Lastly, Jesus became our sin and unrighteousness! When the Father looked down at Jesus, He saw us and our unrighteousness; when He looks at us, He sees Jesus' righteousness.

Although the suffering of Jesus is a sobering thought for us, it also remains our greatest source of hope. Because Jesus suffered, we are no longer slaves to sin. Because Jesus stood condemned, we stand in righteousness. Because Jesus embraced the cross, we have salvation. What an incredible love our Savior has for us!