

Matthew Chapter 26-28 – The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – Part 9
Matthew 27:27-50 – The Crucifixion of Jesus

Introduction

Jesus is arrested, and He is brought before the Sanhedrin, where they attempt to lie about Jesus and have false witnesses testify about Him, but these prove unsuccessful. Eventually, Caiaphas, the high priest, asks Jesus a direct question, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus responds in the affirmative and then testifies against them: “...hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Caiaphas now closes the case against Jesus, and the Sanhedrin agrees that Jesus deserves death.

From the Sanhedrin, Jesus was handed over to Pilate so that the ultimate punishment would be given to Him. Pilate interviews Jesus, and the conversations are phenomenal. Pilate gives in to fear and orders His crucifixion.

The account of Jesus’ crucifixion is one of the most well-known historical narratives. Normally, we would look at all four Gospels to create a harmony of these events. For this lesson, however, we will only look at Matthew and attempt to understand this message.

Matthew 27:27-31

The crucifixion of Jesus begins at Pilate’s house. Crucifixion was a big deal, and with the popularity Jesus had amassed, Pilate called for a Roman cohort of approximately 600 soldiers to guard Him.

They stripped Jesus and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a cheap “scepter” in His right hand. They knelt before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on Him, took the scepter, and began to beat Him on the head.

Why the brutality; why the mockery?

The Roman culture was drawn to blood and death, both in their games and treatment of their prisoners. This was their purpose; they enjoyed the terror and the brutality of scourging and the torture of crucifixion.

However, let's be clear. The reason that they go after Jesus like this is because Pilate wants it. Pilate wanted to make Jesus a spectacle to satisfy the Jews.

He was clothed with a scarlet robe, signifying royalty. Since they had no crown, they fabricated one out of thorns. Since they had no true royal scepter, they made one out of a reed. Then they bowed before Him as if He were a king and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spit on Him and beat Him with the makeshift scepter they had placed in His right hand.

Matthew 27:32

Jesus was led away to be crucified, but He was in no condition to carry the cross. Typically, a beating would ensue before a crucifixion, but normally the one being crucified was able to carry his cross. The

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condemned did not carry a full cross. In every historical document that we have, he would carry the crossbeam (pics).

An unknown man was conscripted to carry Jesus' cross when He no longer could. The only time that this person is specifically mentioned in Scripture is in the cross-references in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The name Simon would indicate that he was a Jew. His location (a country in North Africa) probably lets us conclude that he was of the Diaspora and was there for the Passover.

In Mark 15:21, we have a little more information: he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. When I see this kind of detail, I always want to know why it's there. Some light theories are acceptable.

1. Simon of Cyrene became known to many; a reference like this would give a backstory.
2. It establishes validity. Providing specific details about a person would allow an investigator to question involved parties.
3. The sons become prominent among believers. Rufus is only mentioned one other time. Romans 16:13 – If this is accurate, then the whole family became valuable to the early church.
4. In 1941, an inscription was found in a tomb in the Kidron Valley, "Alexander of Cyrene" in Aramaic and "Alexander, son of Simon" in Greek. Is it possible that this was the burial site of that Alexander, son of Simon?

Matthew 27:33-50

The word *Golgotha* is a transliteration of the Aramaic "gulgota," which means "skull." Its exact location is unknown, but we do know it was near the city, but outside the gates of Jerusalem. The name probably indicated the established place for crucifixions.

When they arrived at Golgotha, they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall, and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. It is well established that this was a drug that served as a painkiller.

Jesus rejected it, which probably indicates that He did not want to lose control of His senses.

Once they arrived, they stripped Him of His clothes and nailed Him to the cross.

I think Jesus was naked on the cross.

Some disagree, citing that Rome did give concessions to some cultures about nakedness. Did the Jews have this rule? Hard to say. Personally, I think the shame of the cross was not just in its brutality but also in its nakedness.

Jesus' clothes were not rags; they were probably well-made and durable. Therefore, it was decided among the soldiers about who got to keep the pieces of material.

Archaeological remains of a crucified body found near Jerusalem indicate that the nails were made of iron, about 6 inches long, and about ½ inch in diameter. They would have been placed between the carpals in the wrist, but they broke no bones. The same would be done for the feet.

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Verse 36 is interesting. Many times, after hoisting someone on a cross, the soldiers would leave; but with the support Jesus had, they were probably warned that His rescue was a possibility. Jesus was not just crucified and left there to die; they stayed and made sure He died.

The charge against Him was nailed to the cross above His head. The charge is interesting, and we know from John that Pilate instructed this charge to be written. Very consistently in Matthew is the fact that Jesus was not charged, convicted, or crucified for a lie but for the truth.

Two others were crucified, one on the right and one on the left. The translation of *robber* is not exactly accurate.

ληστής *lēstēs* – There are two main meanings: a pirate and a bandit. Also, this can mean an insurrectionist, violent rebel (Matthew 26:55; John 18:40; Acts 3:14).

Jesus was crucified along a main road so that many would see Him. Crucifixion was a strong deterrent against rebellion. They wagged their heads, hurling abuse at Jesus.

hurling abuse - βλασφημέω *blasphemeo* – They were speaking evil falsehoods against Jesus.

The mockery had three main veins:

1. Jesus' well-known statement about rebuilding the temple in three days (John 2:19-22)
2. He saved others – this referred to the healing ministry of Jesus.
3. He is the King of Israel, the Son of God – The prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures indicate that the Messiah King would have a perpetual kingdom, therefore He cannot die. They obviously do not put it together with the other prophecies that the Messiah would die for the people and rise from the dead.

The insurrectionists on either side of Him also insulted Jesus. We know from other passages that one of them changes his mind, believes in Jesus, and defends Jesus to the other criminal.

From the sixth hour, darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. The sixth hour was noon, and the ninth hour was 3 pm. For three hours, during the brightest part of the day, there was darkness. At the end of this darkness, Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

The observers did not understand what He had said. Some thought that He was calling for Elijah to save Him. There was a Jewish myth that Elijah could help the righteous from distress.

Since Jesus was in distress, they thought He was calling on Elijah to come and rescue Him. One of them who heard it gave Jesus a drink of sour wine. Why? This is vinegar water. This would hydrate Him faster. There are many speculations about why; I suspect he wanted Jesus to repeat what He had said, and a moistened mouth would make it easier for Jesus to talk.

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At the end, Jesus cried out again and yielded up His spirit.

Yielded up - ἀφίημι *aphemi* – This word has many nuances. It can mean divorce, forgiveness, or to move away. This is a compound word, “from” and “stand,” to stand or be placed away from the previous location.

This verb is in the Aorist Active Indicative – Jesus commanded His spirit to leave His body.

He didn't physically die of His wounds. He died because He released His own spirit. Matthew clarifies that Jesus willingly laid down His life (John 10:18).

Conclusion

For this lesson, our main takeaway is that the crucifixion is a literal, significant, and undeniable fact. We will discuss what it means in the next lesson. This lesson serves as a retelling of the historical account. The history must first be established to see its significance.