

Countdown to Easter
Did Jesus Really Suffer?
Matthew 16:21

March 29, 2026 am

HDBC

This is palm Sunday, which signals the beginning of what is generally called the Passion Week or Holy Week. Speaking of the last week of the life of Christ. He entered Jerusalem to the worship of the crowds, yet only a few days later, walked out to be crucified.

All of the events of the week were important, but the death, burial and resurrection at the end of the week were the most important. In fact, everything that happened prior to those things simply pointed to them.

In this series we are dealing with some of the important questions surrounding those events. We have considered two so far.

Was Jesus really the Son of God?

Why did Jesus die? What was the purpose of his death.

Who killed Jesus? Who were the guilty parties in his death.

Another question which is sometimes asked is . . .

Did Jesus really suffer?

The thought behind the question is that since Jesus is the Son of God, maybe He really didn't suffer. Maybe He only appeared to suffer. And if He did suffer, how bad could it have been?

Remember that He did not simply die, He died of crucifixion, one of the most diabolical of all methods of execution. Intended not simply to execute but to do so in the most painful way possible.

Because many of us have considered the crucifixion of Christ for so many years, it is easy to lose sight of the magnitude of His suffering. It is easy to **sanitize the ugliness** of the crucifixion and minimize his suffering. To do so is a serious mistake.

The depth of His suffering is a reflection of the depth of our sin. To minimize his suffering is to minimize our sinfulness. If we can convince ourselves that he did not really suffer all that much, we can convince ourselves that our sin is not all that bad. **All of us have a tendency to minimize the ugliness of our own sin.** We want to see ourselves as better than we really are. We minimize the suffering of Christ so that we can feel better about ourselves. That is a serious mistake.

There is something more. When we minimize His sufferings we minimize His sacrifice. **It is an attempt to humanize a super-human event.**

With that in mind, I want us to consider the question, ***Did Jesus suffer?*** Jesus made it clear that he had come to suffer. He knew from the beginning that suffering was in his future. **While teaching the crowds by the Sea of Galilee he was aware that there were thorns growing on a tree that would be woven into a crown and placed on his head.**

While healing the woman with an ongoing hemorrhage, He knew that his own blood would flow onto the pavement of the Antonia Fortress from the blows of the soldiers as they hit, slapped and ultimately scourged him.

While healing the blind man, He knew that His own eyes would be swollen shut from a brutal beating.

As he felt the breeze near the sea of Galilee, He could hear the sound of the scourge flying through the air and landing on His back.

While healing a cripple, He knew that his own legs would buckle under the weight of His cross, resulting in another man having to carry it for him.

While walking on the water He knew he would walk the difficult road to the place of the skull to be nailed to a cross.

While stretching out His hands to heal the leper, he knew that His own hands would be stretched out and nailed to a cross. He knew!

Read the Text - Matthew 16:21

*From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem **and suffer many things** from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*

He knew he would suffer. Yet he set his face toward Jerusalem and courageously accepted it. **The most obvious way** that Jesus suffered is physical. But that was not the only way that He suffered. I want to point to three ways our Lord suffered for our sins.

Emotional. Physical. Spiritual.

1. Emotional Suffering

Let me explain what I mean. You know that a person can be perfectly comfortable physically, and be in great torment emotionally. Those who have experienced the **death of a spouse or child or parent understand this**. The pain of the heart is often the most difficult pain of all. When your heart is broken, it is excruciatingly painful.

In Gethsemane He was under so much emotional pressure that he felt he was going to die. He agonized in his conversation with his father concerning the cup of suffering that he was about to drink. He even asked if there was any other way. Knowing there was no other way, He yielded to His Father's plan. The emotional pressure was so great that **Dr. Luke says his sweat was mixed with blood**. This is a rare but real medical condition brought on by intense pressure.

He suffered the betrayal of those closest to him. When we think of the betrayal of Christ we always think of Judas. He betrayed him face to face with a kiss. It was the kiss of death. Led to the physical death of Jesus, and spiritual death of Judas. But Judas was not the only one to betray him that night.

Jesus had already predicted what would happen. He revealed that

they would all run. Though they talked a good talk and declared their absolute allegiance, He knew they would run. And run, they did. They all scattered.

Oh, the emotional suffering that gripped Jesus as he saw his closest friends run for their lives, leaving him to face his enemies alone. Not only did they run, but one who was among those closest to him even denied that he knew Jesus. The **emotional suffering of Christ was horrendous**. But that was not the only way that Jesus suffered.

2. Physical Suffering

Think for a few minutes about the physical suffering of the Savior. It is hard for us to comprehend the intensity of that suffering. There were many ways that he suffered physically. We could talk about his fatigue from being awake the entire night before. We could talk about how the soldiers beat him on the face not only with their hands, but with rods. I want to zero in on **His 3 most intense forms of physical suffering**.

1) The Scourging

The scourging was designed to inflict maximum pain upon the victim from his lower legs up to his upper back. **Listen to the words of Max Lucado in his book, *He Chose the Nails*.**

The disciples were fast asleep, then fast afoot.

Herod wanted a show. Pilate wanted out. The soldiers?

They wanted blood. So, they scourged Jesus. The legionnaire's whip consisted of leather straps with lead balls on each end. His goal was singular: Beat the accused within an inch of his death and then stop. Thirty-nine lashes were allowed but seldom needed. A centurion monitored the prisoner's status. No doubt Jesus was near death when his hands were untied and he slumped to the ground.

The scourging was ordered. The crucifixion was ordered. But between the two, those soldiers wanted to have a little fun.

2) **The Crown of Thorns**

These strong, powerful soldiers surrounded the exhausted and almost dead man. **They formed a crown of thorns** and placed it on the already bruised and bleeding head of Jesus. It tore through the skin of his head which was now throbbing with additional pain. They took rods and struck it, causing the thorns to dig deeper and to tear larger areas of the skin.

Throughout Scripture, thorns represent the consequences of sin. When Adam and Eve first sinned, it brought with it some horrendous consequences. One of the things they heard from God, was that thorns and thistles would grow up in their garden, when once there had only been the pure fruit and vegetables which were planted. Thorns would invade that which was good.

When Jesus received that crown of thorns it was a picture of something else that was being placed on his brow; the sins of all people. Those thorns represented your sins and mine.

His back, sides, stomach, legs and arms were ripped open through the scourging. His head was torn open through the crown of thorns. The only parts of his body that remained unaffected were his hands and feet. But they were not finished.

C. **The Crucifixion**

They brought him outside the city of Jerusalem. There they laid his lacerated body onto a rugged cross. They stretched out his hands on the cross beam. Placed a nail in his hand. Held it in place. Brought the hammer down.

The nail pierced his hand and entered the wood underneath. Once again the hammer came down, driving the nail deeper into the wood, and causing the nerves in the hand to scream with pain. Then they repeated the procedure with the other hand.

Next, they placed his feet onto the cross, and drove a nail through them. Now he was literally fixed on the cross. He was impaled by the nails. He was completely defenseless and exposed.

They then raised the cross to the vertical position and dropped it into the hole. They drove in the wedges to keep it in place. And there he hung.

The middle eastern sun beat down upon his lacerated and dehydrated body. His mouth became parched and he ached with thirst. His muscles contracted with the weight of his body. Nerves throughout his body were sending millions of messages to the brain, each one signaling a unique sensation of pain.

His arms may very well have quickly come out of joint. He would have to push himself up in order to catch a breath. Then he would slump back down. Only to agonizingly repeat the process for each breath.

Insects would swarm around his head, entering his mouth, his nose and his eyes. He was totally at their mercy. His eyes would begin to dry out because of the dehydration. Every time he blinked it felt like sandpaper.

Yes, our Lord suffered physically. Our Lord suffered emotionally. But those are not the only ways that He suffered. He also suffered spiritually.

3. Spiritual Suffering

Seven times Jesus spoke from the cross. One of those times he cried out ***My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*** In this question we hear the anguished cry of separation. When our Lord was crucified he was separated from His father.

There is a vivid picture in the Old Testament law that is fulfilled in the

crucifixion of Jesus. The sins of the people were symbolically transferred to a pure, unspotted goat. In a special ceremony the priest placed his hands on the goat and made the announcement, *The sins of the people be upon you*. The innocent animal receives the sins of the people. All the adultery, lying, cheating, hatred, wicked thoughts, envy, jealousy, and more and transferred to this animal.

He was then carried to the edge of the wilderness and released. He is banished from the camp. Sin must be purged. He is driven from the camp, never to return. He is isolated, alone, with the sins of the people. He is the scapegoat.

The people are relieved. God is appeased. The sin bearer is alone.

Jesus was bearing the sins of all the world. His father, in his holiness would not look upon sin. So, in some way that we cannot comprehend, the Father turned his gaze away from His son. Could He have rescued him? Sure. Jesus had already indicated that to Pilate. He would only have to ask.

But Jesus did not ask. And the father did not deliver him. And during those hours on the cross something occurred between the Father and Son that had never occurred. A separation. Something came between them. Do you know what it was? It was my sin and yours.

During those hours on the cross Jesus was experiencing the worst of the suffering. Suffering that was worse than the emotional suffering. Worse than the physical suffering. He was satisfying our sin debt for us.

By the way, that's what sin does. It causes all three kinds of suffering. If sin is allowed to remain in your life it will lead to **emotional suffering**. It will to **physical suffering**. And ultimately it will lead to **spiritual suffering** in the form of separation from God. God doesn't want that for you. He is so serious about His love for you that He allowed Jesus to be abandoned, in a sense, for you. In your place.

Great Hymn that I remember singing.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Yes! We were there, because our sins were there.