

JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND ITS EVENTS

LUKE 23:32–49

Introduction

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is both the most shocking event and the most wonderful event of human history. It is the most shocking event in that it is the creature murdering the Creator. It is the most wonderful event in that it is the Creator saving the creature. (See *Death of Jesus Christ*, Mat 27:26-44.)

MATHEW 27:26–44 DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

The Lord's sufferings and torture were marked by Divine pain and human cruelty.

1. The divine pain of the Lord Jesus came from being fully conscious of the judgment He was to bear for man — separation from God (Mat 27:46-49). The pressure of this hellish experience is seen in Gethsemane. Under great emotional stress, the tiny capillaries right under His skin which lined the sweat glands apparently gave way and burst. Jesus sweated great drops of blood. Such an experience causes marked weakness and sometimes a state of shock. The terrifying mystery of this hellish experience is seen in His cry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This was the point at which the great separation from God began.
2. The physical torture He bore at the hands of men was abhorrent. Before the High Priest, an officer struck Jesus across the face (John 18:22). The palace guards blindfolded, mocked, spat upon and slapped Him in the face: and they kept Him up all night (Luke 22:63-66).

Before Pilate, the Roman trial: His hands were tied to a post above His head and He was flogged (John 19:1). The prisoner was lashed until He was judged near death by the presiding centurion (Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes).

Still before Pilate: the guards called the whole band of soldiers together and began to mock His claim to be King of the Jews (Mark 15:16). They threw a robe around Him and continued to strike Him across the face. They took the sceptre from His hand and used it to whip Him and to drive the thorns even deeper. Finally, they ceased this sadistic treatment and ripped the robe from His back. This tore open the dried blood caked to its lining. Excruciating pain followed (see Mat 27:28-31; Mark 15:16-20; John 10:1-5).

Bearing the cross itself: it was heavy, very heavy. He had to carry it up and down the streets of the city, taking a meandering route. The Romans did this as a living lesson to all that crime does not pay. Christ just broke down under the load; and Simon, the Cyrene, was forced to carry the cross for Him (Mat 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). □

I. *Luke 23:32 Jesus Identified with Criminals: Being Numbered with Sinners*

Jesus Christ, Identified with Sinners: there was the identification with criminals — a picture of being numbered with sinners. Why was Jesus crucified with criminals? Scripture does not say, but perhaps this was a day set aside for execution, or perhaps the Jewish leaders pressed Pilate to execute Jesus with other criminals. By this, they hoped to add weight to their position that He was no more than a mere man, an imposter who deserved to die just as other criminals. Whatever the reason, the fact that the Son of God was executed right along with other criminals adds to the shame and reproach He bore. This event had been prophesied just as many others had (Isa 53:12).

Thought 1. Christ was counted as a sinner that He might bear the sin of many.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

II. *Luke 23:33 The Crucifixion; The Summit of Sin and Love*

The crucifixion was the summit of sin and love. The crucifixion itself was the most horrible of deaths. There was the pain of the driven spikes forced through the flesh of Jesus' hands and feet or ankles. There was the weight of His body jolting and pulling against the spikes as the cross was lifted and rocked into place. There was the scorching sun and the unquenchable thirst gnawing away at His dry mouth and throat. There was the blood oozing from His scourged back. His thorn crowned brow, His stick beaten head. In addition, just imagine the aggravation of flies, gnats and other insects. And for Jesus, there was the piercing pain of the spear thrust into His side. On and on the sufferings could be described. There has never been a more cruel form of execution than crucifixion upon a cross.

The crucifixion took place on a hill called “the Skull” (in Latin, *calvaria*). We get the name Calvary from the Latin word. (See note, pt. 11, Mat 27:26-38.)

Thought 1. In the simplest of terms, Christ was crucified for our sins in order to bring us to God.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

Note that two criminals were crucified with Him. He was dying because of them and because of all other men. Why? Because all men are criminals against God, rebelling against Him and breaking His commandments.

Rom 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

1 Tim 1:15 *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

III. Luke 23:34 The prayer for His enemies; Forgiveness

There was the prayer for His enemies — a picture of love and forgiveness to the end. The picture is of Jesus the Mediator. He had come for this very purpose, to stand as the Mediator between God and sinful man. Therefore upon the cross, He prayed for those who stood below crucifying Him. Note several things.

1. It had been predicted that Christ would pray for transgressors (Isa 53:12).
2. He prayed for God to forgive those who were crucifying Him. The very purpose for His coming was to make provision for forgiveness of sins. Because of His death, God would be able to forgive the sins of men, even those who were now crucifying Him.
3. The men crucifying Him did not know what they were doing. They did not know who He was.

1 Cor 2:8 *None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

Thought 1. The most wonderful truth in all the world is this: God will hold no sin against any man if that man will personally trust His Son. If God forgives the men who killed His only Son. God will forgive any man for any sin — if that man will just ask.

Acts 5:30-31 *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Acts 8:22 *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

Acts 13:38-39 *Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (see Col 2:13)*

IV. Luke 23:34 The Gambling for His Clothes; Being Stripped by Greed

There was the gambling for His clothes — a picture of being stripped by the selfishness, greed and sin of men. Note two points.

1. The custom seems to have been for the executing soldiers to claim whatever they wished of the clothes of crucified criminals. The soldiers stripped Jesus, dividing His

clothes among themselves. However, His coat was valuable: it was seamless, one piece of cloth, woven from top to bottom just as the High Priest's coat or cloak was. The soldiers, therefore, decided to gamble by casting lots for it (John 19:23-24). This event was foretold in Psa 22:18.

2. Jesus was stripped by the soldiers, stripped of His mortal clothes. There is symbolism in this act: He allowed all His mortality to be stripped so that He might abolish death and bring life and immortality to light.

2 Tim 1:10 But it [God's grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

V. Luke 23:35–37 Misunderstanding of Salvation

There was the mockery, the misunderstanding of His salvation. Note those who mocked and taunted Him.

1. The people and religionists mocked His claim to be the Saviour and Messiah. They totally misunderstood God's Messiahship. Both the people and the religionists should have been above this kind of behaviour. In addition, they had every opportunity to believe, for He had not hid Himself or His message of salvation. But being part of a sinful crowd and their own unbelief, they led each other to do shameful things.

1 Tim 2:5-6 Christ [Messiah] Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

1 Tim 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

Thought 1. Leaders, civil and religious, are still men. It is not the position or profession that makes a man, but the heart. A heart of unbelief and enmity, a heart willing to become a participant with the sinful crowd, will stoop to do shameful things, no matter the position or profession.

Mat 23:38 Look, your house is left to you desolate.

2. The soldiers mocked and taunted Him. In particular they mocked His claim to be King, but they did not understand His claim (John 18:36. See John 18:33-37; Mat 27:11.)

LUKE 23:36 WINE

Jesus was offered drugged wine at the beginning of the crucifixion, but He refused it (Mat 27:34; Mark 15:23). He was also offered "wine" just before His death (John 19:29), and here the soldiers use "wine" in some form of mockery with Him. □

VI. Luke 23:38 Jesus Christ, King

There was the inscription on the cross — a misunderstood charge. The sign placed above His head, “The King of the Jews,” was intended to mock the Jewish authorities and to reproach His claim. However, God overruled and used the sign to proclaim the truth to the whole world (Luke 23:38). The very charges against Jesus proclaimed His deity and honour.

Phil 2:08-11 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Tim 6:14-16 To keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen.

VII. Luke 23:39 A Picture of Hardness Even in Death

There was the unrepentant thief — a picture of hardness even in death. The thieves heard the crowd mock Jesus about being the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Hanging there as criminals, guilty before God and men, they should have been searching to see if there were any chance that Jesus could have been who He claimed. They needed to be saved and forgiven. One criminal showed enormous hardness of heart. He mocked the very thought that Jesus was the Christ.

John 3:16-18 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

VIII. Luke 23:40–43 A Picture of True Repentance

There was the repentant thief — a picture of true repentance. The second thief demonstrated the steps to salvation and true repentance.

=> He feared God (v. 40).

=> He declared that Jesus was righteous (v. 41).

=> He asked Jesus to remember him (v. 42).

Note that Jesus promised him eternal life; the repentant man was to be with Christ in paradise *that very day*. (See *Paradise*, Luke 16:23.)

John 17:24 *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”*

2 Cor 5:8 *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

Phil 1:23 *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*

John 12:26 *“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”*

LUKE 16:23 PARADISE — HELL (HADES)

The Greek word Hades is the same as the Hebrew word Sheol (see Gen 37:35). The picture of Hades revealed by Jesus is that of the other world: the unseen world, the spiritual world, the spiritual dimension of being. Jesus says that Hades is a place which is divided into two huge areas or sections or compartments. The two areas are separated by a great gulf that is impassible (v. 26). One area is the place of sorrow (vv. 23-24, 28). The other area is the place of Paradise where believers go. To say that a person is dead is to say that one is in Hades, in the other world.

Note a critical fact: the other world, the spiritual world and the spiritual dimension of being, does exist. And there are two areas or two places in the other world: Paradise, the place of glory, and hell, the place of torment. Jesus said they both actually exist. (See Luke 16:22-23; Mat 27:52-53; Eph 4:8-10; 1 Pet 3:19-20.) □

IX. *Luke 23:44 Darkness — State of Man*

There was the awesome darkness — a symbol of separation and loneliness. The darkness told man something (see *Terrifying Darkness*, Mat 27:45).

1. Man was separated from the light.

John 3:19-20 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

2. Man stood all alone. He could not see in the dark, not well. He was, so to speak, standing in the world all alone, responsible for his own behaviour; and he must face God someday all alone to give an account for his behaviour.

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

MATHEW 27:45 TERRIFYING DARKNESS AT THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

The terrifying darkness. A supernatural darkness hung over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, or according to our time from noon to 3.00 p.m.

Think for a moment. Just imagine...

Who it was hanging on the cross...

- God's only Son, the Sovereign Lord of all beings, both visible and invisible (see Col. 1:16).
- The great architect and creator of the whole universe, of all nature.

What He was doing there on the cross...

- Bearing the sins of all men.
- Bearing the judgment and wrath of God against sin for all men.
- Dying the death of man for all men.
- Doing all that was necessary to free men from sin, death and judgment so that they might live forever.

What the depth of God's plan is...

Rom 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

When one really meditates upon the facts, is there any wonder that all things, including nature itself, were drastically affected by the death of God's Son? The darkness demonstrated and symbolized several things.

1. The darkness demonstrated that Christ was definitely God's Son. Before Him, all mouths are to be stopped in fear and reverence. There is no doubt that fear and wonder stopped the mocking mouths of the crowd standing around the cross. There is no mention of jeering taking place during these hours. The crowd was stricken with a sense of terror, wondering just what was happening (v. 54).

Mark 14:33 *He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.*

John 3:16-18 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not*

believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Phil 2:8-11 *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. The darkness symbolized the darkest day of human history. This was the day when the Son of God Himself was being put to death for the sins of men.

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

3. The darkness symbolized the darkness of sin:

=> sin which demands darkness to carry on its acts.

John 3:19-21 *This is the verdict: "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

=> sin which leads to the most terrible darkness of all — death.

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

4. The darkness symbolized the darkness of the human soul and its works. The darkness of the human soul was now being borne by the Son of God — all for man.

Eph 2:1-5, 13 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air; the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

Psa 22:6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.

5. The darkness symbolized the withdrawal of the light of God's presence from the sinner. Christ hung upon the cross as the sinner — all for us — the sinner who was becoming sin for us.

Mat 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" — which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6. The darkness symbolized the anger of God at sin. Sin and the sinner deserve nothing but the judgment of darkness. Sin deserves no light from God's presence, none whatsoever.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

1 John 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Isa 53:4-6 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. □

X. Luke 23:45 Torn Veil — Symbol of Open Access to God

There was the torn veil of the temple — a symbol of open access into the very presence of God. Note four facts.

1. The veil or curtain which was torn was the *inner veil or curtain* (katapetasma), the curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. There was another veil or curtain, an *outer curtain* (kalumma), which separated the Holy Place from the outer court of the temple.

The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the temple. It was the place where the very presence of God was symbolized as dwelling in a very, very special way. It was closed *forever* to everyone except the High Priest. Even he could enter the Holy of Holies only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Exo 26:33).

2. At the very hour that Jesus died, the High Priest would be rolling back the outer curtain in order to expose the Holy Place to the people who had gathered to worship

in the surrounding court. As he rolled back the outer curtain exposing the Holy Place for worship, both he and the worshippers would stand in amazement. Why? Because they would see the inner veil or curtain rent from the top to the bottom. There they would stand, experiencing and witnessing the Holy of Holies, the very special place where the presence of God Himself was supposed to dwell — a sight that the people had never seen before.

3. The veil or curtain was torn from top to bottom. This symbolized that it was torn by an act of God Himself. It symbolized God's giving direct access into His presence (Heb 6:19; 9:3-12, 24; 10:19-23). Now, through the body of Christ, any man can enter the presence of God anytime, any-place.

Heb 10:10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

4. The torn veil or curtain symbolized that all men could now draw near God by the blood of Christ.

Eph 2:13-14 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

XI. Luke 23:46 Great Cry of Triumph

There was the great cry of trust — a picture of glorious triumph. What Jesus cried out was one word in the Greek, Tetelestai, "It is finished" (John 19:30). It was a cry of purpose, a shout of triumph. He was dying for a specific purpose and that purpose was now fulfilled. The great shout of triumph and the yielding up of Jesus' spirit (Mat 27:50). There are three important points here.

1. Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek word tetelestai is the shout of victorious purpose. Christ had completed His work, mission and task. He was not crying the cry of a defeated martyr; He was crying the cry of a victorious conqueror.
2. He gave up his spirit (apheken to pneuma) means that He willingly yielded and gave up His spirit. It must always be remembered that Jesus willingly died. He willingly came to this moment of yielding and giving up His spirit unto death. Both Paul and Peter cover the Lord's work during the three days immediately following His death until the resurrection.

- a. On the cross:

Col 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (See Eph 6:12)

- b. On the cross and after death:

1 Pet 3:18-20 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

c. After death:

Eph 4:8-10 *This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."*

(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

3. Christ died at the ninth hour, that is, 3:00 p.m. (Mat 45, 50). This was the very hour when the priests began to make the evening offering of the Passover Lamb. While the priests were going about sacrificing the symbolic lamb for the people, the true Lamb of God was being sacrificed for the people's sins outside the city walls (1 Cor 5:7; Heb 13:12).

John 10:9, 11, 15, 17-18 *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep." "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

XII. Luke 23:47 The Centurion's Confession

There was the centurion's declaration — Jesus' righteousness, a picture of the confession to be made by many.

1. The centurion was bound to be a thoughtful and honest man. He was in charge of the crucifixion, which means he was responsible for overseeing all that took place. As the events unfolded upon the cross, he was stricken more and more with the claim of Jesus and the way in which the events were happening. When Jesus shouted out that His purpose was finished, that His death was the climax of His purpose upon earth, the centurion was convinced. The very fact that Jesus' death was purposeful was the clincher. God quickened to the soldier's heart the glorious truth: "Surely this was a righteous man."
2. The centurion was a Gentile. He symbolized all who were to confess Christ in coming generations.

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

XIII. *Luke 23:48 People's Grief*

There was the people's grief — a picture of stricken consciences. The people had come for entertainment, but they went away with saddened, grieving hearts. God, being the Sovereign Lord of the universe, saw to it that they were stricken in conscience. They were being prepared for the preaching to come after Pentecost.

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

XIV. *Luke 23:49 Followers of Jesus*

There were the followers of Jesus — a proof that Jesus lived and served well. Note that the women were at the cross despite the danger. They were off, some distance away, but they were there nevertheless. They still loved and cared, no matter what. They symbolized that Jesus' life was not in vain.

Mark 8:35 *“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”* ■