

THE STORY of THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST**Lesson 18****Matthew 27.35****“Then They CRUCIFIED Him....”**

We need to familiarize ourselves with the experiences of CRUCIFIXION in order to more fully appreciate the sufferings the Lord Jesus willingly endured for us and the sacrifice of Himself He made for us.

As you proceed through this study and future further meditations, you need to remind yourself over and over: “HE DID THIS FOR ME!” That will be the best commentary you will ever need to remind you how important you are to God and how much the Lord Jesus loved you...and still does.

The Lord Jesus described the sufferings He would endure and the death He would die as “MY CUP I AM ABOUT TO DRINK” and “THE BAPTISM I AM BAPTIZED WITH.” *Matthew 20.22*. But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” THE CUP signifies THE FULLNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS HE ENDURED and THE FULLNESS OF HIS EXPERIENCING OF THOSE AGONIES. The CUP was full, and He drank it all. BAPTISM, of course, means IMMERSION -- being fully submerged and entirely covered over by the element into which you are immersed.

The more you understand CRUCIFIXION and the depths of suffering into which the Lord Jesus immersed Himself, the more you will understand what GRACE means and how GRACE works. You will find yourself shaking your head in awe and whispering to yourself: “WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?” Usually, we ask that question when we are called upon to suffer some inconvenience or non-preferable discomfort. But, JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION WILL SET IN SHARP PERSPECTIVE JUST HOW FREE AND SOVEREIGN AND GENEROUS GOD’S MERCIES ARE TOWARD US.

Because...WE ARE THE ONES WHO REALLY DESERVED WHAT JESUS SUFFERED!

“For the WAGES OF SIN is DEATH.” *Romans 6.23*.

But, WHOSE SINS ARE THEY? They are OUR SINS.

WHO IS THE ONE DYING? It is Jesus Christ, OUR SUBSTITUTE!

Remember what *Isaiah 53* teaches us concerning WHOSE SINS REALLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION:

Surely He has borne OUR griefs and carried OUR sorrows (vs 4)

But He was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities; the chastisement for OUR peace was upon Him (vs 5)

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of US ALL (vs 6)

For the transgression of MY PEOPLE He was stricken (vs 8)

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear THEIR iniquities (vs 11)

And He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin OF MANY, and made intercession FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS (vs 12)

**DO YOU SEE HOW ALL THAT JESUS SUFFERED WAS NOT ONLY FOR US...
BUT WE BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HAVING IT ALL LAID UPON HIM?**

***2 Corinthians 5.21*: For He made Him who knew no sin TO BE SIN FOR US,
that we might become the righteousness of God IN HIM.**

So, WHAT IS CRUCIFIXION...and HOW WAS IT EXECUTED?
EXACTLY HOW DID JESUS DIE?

MEANS OF MAXIMUM PAIN

The Romans had perfected death by crucifixion to an art of cruelty. They had studied and diagnosed this means of killing someone as scientifically as they could to maximize the pain of the sufferer -- and to prolong the horrors and agonies of dying without permitting the victim to lapse into a state of shock or unconsciousness which might relieve the physical sensations of suffering.

NAILED TO THE CROSS

We know how Jesus was crucified by the Gospel record, and also from historical details which may not be recorded in the Scriptures. For example, we know that Jesus was **NAILED TO HIS CROSS**. (*Some victims of crucifixion were affixed to their crosses by being tied in place with leather straps and thongs.*)

But, Thomas required to see the physical proofs of the actual Jesus who was crucified by saying: **Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails...I will not believe. John 20.25.** The nails were long, tapered iron spikes, probably much like railroad spikes, except maybe a little thinner, more pointed, and sharper.

The spikes were most usually driven through the wrists, not the palms of the hands. This is because the nails must support the weight of the whole body of the crucified. If the nails are driven only through the palms, there is not enough bone structure in the hands to support the weight of the whole body. The flesh will simply tear away and the bones will separate. But, if you are suspended by driving a nail through the wrists, the spike would shatter the carpal bones and ligaments, but the bone structure in your wrist joints would hold the body's weight. The nailing also would damage the sensorimotor median nerve and shoot bolts of pain through both arms.

The feet were impaled to the cross usually by a single spike. The feet would be placed on top of the other and a single nail driven through them both. Sometimes, the spike would be driven through the tops of the feet; other times, the feet would be turned sideways and the nail driven between the ankles and the Achilles' tendons. Yes, this would increase the victim's discomfort exponentially, but that is what crucifixion is all about.

THE CRUCIFIED DID NOT DIE FROM BEING NAILED TO THE CROSS. The nails would, however, produce and compound the physical pains of crucifixion.

THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS

Crosses were made in a variety of shapes and configurations. (1) A victim could be nailed to a single upright stake by nailing his hands over his head. (2) There was also an "X" cross, on which the victim could be spread-eagled with his hands and feet on the four points of the "X". One could be crucified either head-up or upside-down. Traditions say that the apostle Peter was crucified upside-down on an "X" cross. (3) The cross could be shaped like a "T". In this configuration, the head would not be supported at all from behind. (4) The most common shape of the cross is the *crux imissa*, where the top of the upright protruded above the cross-member over the victim's head. This was the shape of Jesus' cross. **Matthew 27.37** says: **And they put up OVER HIS HEAD the accusation written against Him...**

Paul alludes to Jesus' placard of accusation and indictment in **Colossians 2.14**: **...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS.**

BEING “LIFTED UP”

Jesus was nailed to His cross while it was lying flat on the ground. Then, after being impaled to the wooden beams, several soldiers would lift the cross and drop it into a posthole which had been dug in the ground. The cross would hit the bottom of the hole with a jolting thud. The weight and momentum of the crucified's body would immediately tear the flesh and pull at the joints where the nails had been driven in, creating gaping wounds and separating and dislocating the joints. Then would begin the agonizing pull and dislocation of all the joints, muscles, and connecting tissues of the body as the body was stretched downward by its own weight.

One of the other classic, graphic prophetic commentaries on the crucifixion event is *Psalm 22*, written 1000 years before the event actually occurred. Listen to these physical descriptions and you can see their physical symptoms transpiring:

Verse 14: I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax, it has melted within Me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws...

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.

They pierced My hands and My feet.

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

BUT WITHIN REACH OF THE DOGS

The crucified was not suspended out of the reach of his antagonists and torturers. His feet would be suspended just above the ground. *For example, when the soldier later on will take his spear and pierce Jesus' side, he won't need a ladder to reach Him. Jesus won't be much higher than the soldier was.*

The Lord Jesus was crucified close enough to the ground that those who wanted to could gather around His cross and taunt Him and jeer Him to His face, and even physically abuse Him and spit on Him if they desired. Again, *Psalm 22.12-13, 16* describe the vicious scene of the predators who surrounded the Lord Jesus even during the hours of His incapacitation: **Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion...For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me...**

DYING...DYING...SLOWLY DYING

As we have already stated, the crucified didn't die from being nailed or otherwise affixed to the cross. You would die from all the eventual complications which were inflicted upon your body as the resulting effects of crucifixion.

The emperor Tiberius reportedly much preferred crucifixion as a method of capital punishment precisely because it prolonged the victim's torturous pain without granting the relief of death for a long, long time. He believed that instant or immediate death was no real punishment. The victim should suffer as much physical agony as possible before finally dying. Victims of crucifixion usually hung on the cross for three whole days before succumbing to the complications brought on by the crucifixion.

When our Lord was suspended on the cross, He would immediately begin to feel the pains of waves of nausea. All the wretching and convulsing would pull on the already gaping wounds in His hands and feet. Every movement of His body was torturous, but He had to move. He would be constantly shifting His body from one position to another to try to get as comfortable as possible. But, every time He shifted, He would be pushing and pulling against the nails in the open flesh of His hands and feet.

As the hours dragged on, He would suffer from hunger, thirst, dehydration, the constant painful cramping of His muscles, kidney, liver, and heart failure -- and, of course, the incessant driving, throbbing pains all over His body, both internal and external.

Infections began to afflict all His open wounds. He was attacked by fevers and chills.

And, WHO CAN TELL WHAT KIND OF MENTAL TORTURES THE CRUCIFIED SUFFERED FROM? Even the Lord Jesus will cry out in His agony of soul: **MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?**

Others who died this way would be tortured by mental despair and hopelessness and the awful forebodings of certain death...and WHAT THEN?

At least the Lord Jesus had the certainty of Joy and Victory, but that didn't mitigate the depths of His physical agonies. *In fact, you must remember that the Lord Jesus' very nature of being Infinite God also made Him more capable of suffering infinite miseries.* And He was not only bearing the physical and mental sensations which came with crucifixion, but HE WAS ALSO SUFFERING FROM THE SPIRITUAL AGONY OF HAVING ALL OUR SINS TRANSFERRED TO HIS PURE SOUL AND BEING REQUIRED BY HIS FATHER TO ASSUME PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AS THOUGH HE HAD COMMITTED THEM.

FINAL SUFFOCATION

Most victims of crucifixion died by being finally asphyxiated. You say, "How is that?" When the weight of the body pulled downward from the arms, it would compress the chest area and constrict the diaphragm. This would press inward on the lungs and make it extremely difficult to breathe. The only way you could relieve that pressure against your lungs was by pushing upward with your feet against the already-gaping wounds in your feet.

Eventually, though, you would lose the feeling in your legs, or the fatigue, cramps, and atrophy would make it impossible for you to move your legs any more. Then, you would just slowly suffocate when you couldn't push up any more to make room for your lungs to work.

BREAKING THE LEGS

If the soldiers wanted to hasten the process of death, they would break the legs of the crucified. By immobilizing the legs, the suffocation would be expedited and sped up.

They would eventually break the legs of the two criminals crucified on either side of Jesus in order to speed up their deaths well before the usually expected duration. But, when they came to Jesus, they didn't break His legs because He had already voluntarily given up His life. They will be surprised and amazed at how He could die so quickly, but, of course, we know it was because the Scriptural prophecies had said that His bones could not be broken. HE WILL DIE GOD'S WAY.

**Once a Man whom we know as THE SON OF GOD
Hung upon the cruel Tree --
He suffered pain as no mortal can...
He took my place, HE DID IT ALL FOR ME!**