

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 30

The Crucifixion

The Crucifixion

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will show the students why Jesus died on the cross and how the cross leads to our salvation.

Key Verses

Matthew 27:27-56; John 19:30—Main Teaching Passage*

Mark 15:16-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:16-37 (Parallel Passage)

*All four Gospel writers included different emphases and details in their crucifixion accounts. While we will mostly rely on Matthew for this study, please be sure to familiarize yourself with all four for the lesson.

Memory Verse - 1 Corinthians 1:18

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Romans 6:23.

On the carts will be a sheet. Tell the class that you will teach the lesson today from behind the sheet. Then cover yourself with it or have another teacher hold it in front of you. Ask the students if they think this is an effective way to teach a lesson.

In Jesus' day, there was a curtain in the temple separating the people from the presence of God. This was because the people's sin separated them from Him. Our sin also separates us from God. Today, we are going to see how Christ's death on the cross deals with our separation from God.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

After the crowd sentenced Jesus to death, the soldiers took Him and dressed Him up in a purple robe and crown of thorns. They then began to beat and mock Him. Once the soldiers were finished, they took off His robe and led Him away to be crucified. Now as with all who were to be crucified, Jesus was supposed to carry His cross, but because He was too weak from the beating and whipping, the soldiers had to recruit a man named Simon to carry it for Him.

They arrived at Golgotha, the hill where Jesus would be crucified. There they hung Him on the cross while the soldiers gambled over His robe. Even as this was happening, Jesus was asking the Father to forgive those who were doing this to Him (see Luke 23:34). Over Jesus it was written, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Two thieves were crucified on either side of Jesus. Both the thieves and those around Him taunted Jesus as He was on the cross, though Luke tells us that one of the thieves would later ask Jesus for forgiveness and be accepted into God's Kingdom. As Jesus hung on the cross, the land was covered in darkness from about noon to 3pm. At the end of that time, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" Then, after they gave Jesus sour wine to drink, He cried out, "It is finished," (John 19:30) and died. Once that happened, the curtain in the temple was torn in half. A Roman soldier standing beside Him declared, "Truly this Man was the Son of God."

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

Anyone who has been to church for any length of time has no doubt heard that Jesus died on the cross for us. However, far fewer people know why He died or how exactly His death saved us from our sins. Indeed, all of the Christian life is spent unpacking the meaning of this central event in human history, and certainly we could spend countless lessons studying what the cross means without even scratching the surface of what Jesus did for us, but our goal today is to see how the cross saved us.

The four Gospels record a total of seven statements Jesus made while on the cross. Two of them were concerning forgiveness. He asked His Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him and promised the thief beside Him forgiveness from his sins. Notice, these offerings of forgiveness were directed not toward His followers, but at a criminal and those who were killing Him. At the cross, Jesus died to forgive the sins of humanity in all of our wickedness and rebellion against Him.

In order to forgive our sins, Jesus' death was necessary. That is because God is holy and sin requires justice. Just like we saw last week,

LOOK (Continued)

the Bible says that the punishment for sin is death. If God simply chose not to punish our sins, He would be unjust, like a judge who allows a criminal to get away with his crimes without penalty. But if we received that punishment, that would mean we would be separated from God forever, and God did not want that. Because Jesus had no sin, He was the only One who could take the punishment for every man's sin, receive the penalty, and still rise from the dead to be with God (as we will see next week). His final words from the cross, "It is finished," proclaim that the debt was paid in full, that we can be forgiven and be with God forever.

After Jesus' death, something amazing happened: the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom. This might not mean anything to us, but in those days, that curtain was what divided the people from the presence of God. The curtain created a physical separation between God and the people that represented the spiritual divide between God and man due to our sin and His holiness. When Jesus died, that curtain was torn, and with it, the way into God's presence was opened. Jesus' death has given us the chance to have our sins forgiven and to be in the presence of Jesus forever. All we have to do is trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, ask Him to forgive us from our sins, and make Him Lord of our lives.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Ask the students if they have any further questions as to why Jesus had to die on the cross to pay for our sins and what the cross accomplished. Then give the students an opportunity to ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior if they have not done so before.

As a class, memorize 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Pray: Praise Jesus for being willing to die on the cross to pay for our sins. Thank Him for any students who may have given their lives to Him. Ask Him to help you all to live for Him.

Parent Question: Why did Jesus need to die to forgive our sins?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 27:27-56 by David Guzik

2. ([Matthew 27:27-31](#)) Jesus is beaten and mocked.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

a. **Gathered the whole garrison around Him:** They only needed a regular group of four soldiers — called a *quaternion* — to carry out the execution. Yet they **gathered the whole garrison around Him**. It wasn't to prevent His escape. It wasn't to prevent a hostile crowd from rescuing Him. It wasn't to keep the disciples away.

i. "Take heed of sinning in a crowd. Young man, abandon the idea that you may sin in a crowd. Beware of the notion that, because many do it, it is less a guilt to any one of them." (Spurgeon)

ii. "*The soldiers of the governor* were auxiliaries, not Roman legionaries, and would be recruited from non-Jewish inhabitants of the surrounding areas (*e.g.* Phoenicians, Syrians, perhaps Samaritans)." (France)

iii. **Garrison:** "The detachment is called a *speira*; in a full *speira* there were six hundred men. It is not likely that there were as many as that in Jerusalem. These soldiers were Pilate's bodyguard who accompanied him from Caesarea, where his permanent headquarters were." (Barclay)

iv. **Praetorium:** "Called so from the *praetor*, a principal magistrate among the Romans, whose business it was to administer justice in the absence of the *consul*. This place might be termed in English the *court house*, or *common hall*." (Clarke)

b. **Mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"** Everything about this was intended to humiliate Jesus. The Jewish rulers had already mocked Jesus as the Messiah ([Matthew 26:67-68](#)). Now the Roman powers mocked him as king.

• **They stripped Him:** When a prisoner was crucified, they were often nailed to the cross naked, simply to increase their humiliation. Jesus hasn't been crucified yet, but His humiliation had begun, and He was publicly **stripped**.

• **Put a scarlet robe on Him:** Kings and rulers often wore **scarlet**, because the dyes to make fabrics that color were expensive. The **scarlet robe** was intended as cruel irony.

• **They had twisted a crown of thorns:** Kings wear crowns, but not crowns of torture. The specific thorn-bushes of this region have long, hard, sharp thorns. This was a crown that cut, pierced, and bloodied the head of the King who wore it.

• **A reed in His right hand:** Kings hold scepters, but glorious, ornate scepters that symbolize their power. In their mockery of Jesus, they gave Him a **scepter** — but a thin, weak **reed**.

• **They bowed the knee before Him:** Kings are honored, so they offered mocking worship to this King.

• **"Hail, King of the Jews!"** Kings are greeted with royal titles, so in their spite they mocked Jesus with this

title. It was meant to humiliate Jesus, but also the **Jews** — saying, “This is the best King they can bring forth.”

i. We might say that in contrast, Jesus says to the kings and rulers of this age that their crowns are false and their scepters are reeds.

ii. We can also decide to do the opposite of what these did to Jesus. “Oh, that we were half as inventive in devising honor for our King as these soldiers were in planning his dishonor! Let us offer to Christ the real homage that these men pretended to offer him.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head:** They now shifted from mockery to cruelty. They seized the ironic scepter, took off the mock-royal robe, and began to hurl their spit and their fists at the head of Jesus.

i. “They spat on him and used the staff, the symbol of his kingly authority, to hit him on the head ‘again and again’ (cf. the imperfect tense of the verb).” (Carson)

ii. Even the hands that drove the nails into His hands unto the cross did only what they were commanded to do. Yet they spat in His face just for the pleasure of doing it. “But, my brethren bad as man is, methinks he never was so bad — or rather, his badness never came out to the full so much — as when gathering all his spite, his pride, his lust his desperate defiance, his abominable wickedness into one mouthful he spat into the face of the Son of God himself.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Even in this, Jesus stood in the place of sinners. Rebellious man wants to be a king, yet he is a sorry kind of king. Even so, Jesus endured the mocking kind of royalty that man, left to himself, is capable of.

iv. It is possible for us to mock Jesus today by the way we live. “You have mocked him by a feigned worship, and thus you have put the purple robe upon him. For that purple robe meant that they made him a nominal king, a king who was not in truth a king, but a mere show. Your Sunday religion, which has been forgotten in the week, has been a scepter of reed, a powerless ensign, a mere sham. You have mocked and insulted him even in your hymns and prayers, for your religion is a pretense, with no heart in it; you brought him an adoration that was no adoration, a confession that was no confession, and a prayer that was no prayer. Is it not so?” (Spurgeon)

v. Spurgeon wondered how Matthew heard of this crown of thorns and the mocking that went along with it. He wonders if it was not one of the soldiers that was later converted and came to faith in Jesus. “Our Lord’s marred but patient visage preached such a sermon that one at least who gazed upon it felt its mysterious power, felt that such patience was more than human, and accepted the thorn-crowned Savior as henceforth his Lord and his King.”

d. **And led Him away to be crucified:** The march to the place of crucifixion was useful advertising for Rome. It warned potential troublemakers that this was their fate should they challenge Rome. Normally a centurion on horseback led the procession, and a herald shouted the crime of the condemned.

i. “The criminal was led to the scene of crucifixion by as long a route as possible, so that as many as possible might see him and take warning from the grim sight.” (Barclay)

ii. As Jesus was led away to be crucified, He was — like most victims of crucifixion — forced to carry the wood He would hang upon. The weight of the entire cross was typically 300 pounds. The victim only carried the crossbar, which weighed anywhere from 75 to 125 pounds. When the victim carried the crossbar, he was usually stripped naked, and his hands were often tied to the wood.

iii. The upright beams of a cross were usually permanently fixed in a visible place outside of the city walls, beside a major road. It is likely that on many occasions, Jesus passed by the very upright He would hang upon.

iv. When Jesus said, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me* ([Matthew 16:24](#)), this is exactly the scene He had in mind. Everyone knew what the cross was — an unrelenting instrument of death and only death. The cross wasn’t about religious ceremonies; it wasn’t about traditions and spiritual feelings. The cross was a way to execute people. But in these twenty centuries after the

death of Jesus, we have sanitized and ritualized the cross. How would we receive it if Jesus said, “Walk down death row daily and follow Me”? Taking up your cross wasn’t a journey; it was a one-way trip. There was no return ticketing; it was never a round trip.

3. ([Matthew 27:32-34](#)) On the way to **Golgotha** (in Latin, *Calvary*).

Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.

a. **A man of Cyrene, Simon by name:** This man was probably a visitor to Jerusalem, there as a faithful Jew to celebrate the Passover. Visiting Jerusalem, he was far from **Cyrene** in North Africa (some 800 miles/1300 kilometers away).

b. **Him they compelled to bear His cross:** Simon knew little if anything about this Jesus, and had no desire to be associated with this Man who was condemned to die as a criminal. Yet the Romans ruled, and Simon was not given a choice. **Him they compelled to bear His cross.** Perhaps he was chosen because he was an obvious foreigner and more conspicuous in the crowd.

i. Wonderfully, we have reason to believe that Simon came to know what it *really meant* to take up one’s cross and follow Jesus. There is some evidence to suggest that his sons became leaders among the early Christians ([Mark 15:21](#) and [Romans 16:13](#)).

ii. “How easy it would have been to carry the cross had he known Jesus as he came to know Him afterwards!” (Meyer)

c. **A place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull:** There was a specific place outside the city walls of Jerusalem, yet still very close, where people were crucified. At this **Place of a Skull** Jesus died for our sins, and our salvation was accomplished.

i. **Golgotha** — in Latin, “Calvary” ([Luke 23:33](#)) means “**Place of a Skull.**” It was called that because it was the established place where criminals were crucified. As a place of cruel, humiliating death it was outside the city walls, yet likely on a well-established road. It may also be that the hill itself had a skull-like appearance, as is the case with the site in Jerusalem known as Gordon’s Calvary.

d. **They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink:** It was customary to give those about to be crucified a pain-numbing and mind-numbing drink, to lessen their awareness of the agony awaiting them. But Jesus refused any numbing drug. He chose to face the spiritual and physical terror with His senses awake.

i. “The wine would be the sour wine or *posca* used by Roman soldiers. In Mark Jesus declines the drink, apparently without tasting, desiring to suffer with a clear mind.” (Bruce)

4. ([Matthew 27:35a](#)) **Jesus is crucified.**

Then they crucified Him,

a. **They crucified:** We have yet to see an accurate, full depiction of crucifixion in modern media. If it were ever made, it would be limited to adult audiences, because of its intense horror and brutality.

i. The Bible spares us the gory descriptions of Jesus’ physical agony, simply stating “**then they crucified Him.**” This is because everyone in Matthew’s day was well acquainted with the terror of crucifixion, but especially because the greater aspect of Jesus’ suffering was spiritual, not physical

ii. “It originated in Persia; and its origin came from the fact that the earth was considered to be sacred to Ormuzd the god, and the criminal was lifted up from it that he might not defile the earth, which was the god’s property.” (Barclay)

iii. In 1986, Dr. William Edwards wrote a remarkable article in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical*

Association titled “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” Following are some of the observations of Dr. Edwards and his associates. The quotations belong to the article, and much of the other text is paraphrased from the article.

iv. “Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.”

v. The victim’s back was first torn open by the scourging, then opened again as the congealing, clotting blood came off with the clothing that was removed at the place of crucifixion. When thrown on the ground to nail the hands to the crossbeam, the wounds were again opened, deepened, and contaminated with dirt. While attached to the upright cross, each breath would cause the painful wounds on the back to scrape against the rough wood of the upright beam and were further aggravated

vi. Driving the nail through the wrist severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve caused bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and often resulted in a claw-like grip in the victim’s hands.

vii. Beyond the severe pain, the major effect of crucifixion inhibited normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to lock the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, thus hindering exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which hindered breathing even further. To get a good breath, one had to push against the feet and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced more pain, and flexing the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a sooner death.

viii. “Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.”

ix. Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss; being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration; stress-induced heart attack; or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe.

x. A Roman citizen could not be crucified except by direct order of Caesar; it was reserved for the worst criminals and lowest classes. No wonder that the Roman statesman Cicero said of crucifixion: “It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is an act of wickedness; to execute him is almost murder: What shall I say of crucifying him? An act so abominable it is impossible to find any word adequately to express.” The Roman historian Tacitus called crucifixion “A torture fit only for slaves” — fit only for them because they were seen as sub-human.

xi. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word *excruciating* from the Roman word “out of the cross.” “Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!” (Commentator Adam Clarke)

b. **Then they crucified Him:** It is significant to remember that Jesus did not suffer as the victim of circumstances. He was in control. Jesus said of His life in [John 10:18](#), *no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself*. It is terrible to be forced to endure such torture, but to freely choose it out of love is remarkable. Can we ever rightly doubt God’s love for us again? Has He not gone to the most extreme length to demonstrate that love?

5. ([Matthew 27:35b-37](#)) **The Roman soldiers at the crucifixion of Jesus.**

And divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

**“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”**

Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

a. **Divided His garments, casting lots:** Jesus lost even His clothing at the cross. He was nailed to the cross as a naked, humiliated man.

i. Jesus came all the way down the ladder to accomplish our salvation. He let go of absolutely everything — even His clothes — becoming completely poor for us, so we could become completely rich in Him.

b. **That it might be fulfilled:** Yet even in all this sin, pain, agony, and injustice God guided all things to His desired fulfillment. It may seem that Jesus has *no control* over these events. Yet the invisible hand of God guided all things, so that specific prophecies were specifically fulfilled.

c. **Sitting down, they kept watch over Him:** This was to prevent someone from rescuing Jesus from the cross. “Men were known to have lived after being taken down from a cross.” (Carson)

d. **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS:** In [John 19:21](#) we read that the religious leaders among the Jews objected to this title. They felt it was *false*, because they did not believe that Jesus was **the King of the Jews**. They also believed it was *demeaning*, because it showed Rome’s power to humiliate and torture even the **“King of the Jews.”** Yet Pilate would not alter this, and when asked to take down the inscription he answered, *What I have written, I have written* ([John 19:22](#)).

i. “The written *charge* (or *titulus*) was normally carried before a criminal on the way to execution, or hung around his neck, and would then be fixed to the cross, thus reinforcing the deterrent effect of the punishment.” (France)

ii. “*Over his head* perhaps indicates that Jesus’ cross was of the traditional t-shape, rather than the T-shape frequently used.” (France)

6. ([Matthew 27:38-44](#)) Jesus is mocked on the cross.

Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

a. **Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left:** In His crucifixion, Jesus stood right in the center of sinful humanity. With the mockery of the criminals, the rejection of Jesus by His people is complete. Even criminals rejected Him.

i. “The Jews placed him between these two, perhaps to intimate that he was the *worst* felon of the *three*.” (Clarke)

ii. One of these **robbers** repented and trusted in Jesus, and one did not ([Luke 23:39-43](#)).

b. **And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads:** In the midst of His staggering display of love, Jesus was not honored. Instead, He was **blasphemed** and His enemies sneered, saying, **“Save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”**

i. “Nothing torments a man when in pain more than mockery. When Jesus Christ most wanted words of pity and looks of kindness, *they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.*” (Spurgeon)

ii. Significantly, they mocked Jesus for who He really was and is.

- They mocked Him as a Savior.
- They mocked Him as a King.

- They mocked Him as a believer who trusted in God.
- They mocked Him as the Son of God.

iii. They acted as if Jesus did what they said, they would **believe Him**. Yet it is precisely because He did *not* save Himself that He can save others. Love kept Jesus on the cross, not nails! Jesus did greater than come down from the cross; He rose from the dead, yet they did not believe even then.

iv. Jesus also showed us how we should regard the scorn and mocking of this world — that is, to not regard it at all. “Scorn! Let us scorn scorn. Does the world laugh at us? Let us laugh at the world’s laughter, and say to it, ‘Dost thou despise us? It is not one half as much as we despise thee. Our fathers despised thy sword, O world, thy dungeons, thy racks, thy gibbets, thy stakes, and dost thou think that we shall tremble at thy scoffs, and jeers?’” (Spurgeon)

c. **Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing:** There were many low points to Jesus’ ordeal on the cross, but this is surely one of the lowest. Even among the three crucified men, Jesus was put in the “lowest” position.

i. This was the peak of God’s love for man: to endure this for our salvation. But it was also the summit of man’s hatred for God; God came to earth, and this is what man did to Him.

ii. Jesus had to suffer this alone, outside the gate. He was cut off from the community; both so we could be joined to His community, and also so that our experiences of isolation can be redeemed and made into opportunities of fellowship with Him.

D. The death of Jesus.

1. ([Matthew 27:45](#)) An unusual darkness on the land.

Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

a. **Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour:** From the Roman reckoning of time, this was approximately from 12:00 noon until 3:00 in the afternoon. This unusual darkness lasted for some three hours, much longer than any natural eclipse.

i. This was not the entire time Jesus was on the cross, but the later part of that time. According to [Mark 15:25](#) and [15:34](#), we can surmise that Jesus hung on the cross for about 6 hours (approximately between 9:00 in the morning and 3:00 in the afternoon).

ii. The first three hours of Jesus’ ordeal on the cross were in normal daylight, so that all could see that it was in fact Jesus on the cross, and not a replacement or an impostor.

iii. This darkness was especially remarkable because it happened during a full moon — during which time Passover was always held — and during a full moon it is impossible that there be a *natural* eclipse of the sun.

b. **There was darkness over all the land:** The remarkable **darkness** all over the earth showed the agony of creation itself in the Creator’s suffering.

i. “The darkness is the symbol of the wrath of God which fell on those who slew his only begotten Son. God was angry, and his frown removed the light of day...The symbol also tells us what our Lord Jesus Christ endured. The darkness outside of him was the figure of the darkness that was within him. In Gethsemane a thick darkness fell upon our Lord’s spirit.” (Spurgeon)

ii. There was contemporary evidence for this unusual darkness. “Origen (*Contra Celsus*, ii,33) and Eusebius (*Chron.*) quoted words from Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he made mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion.” (Geldenhuys in his commentary on Luke)

iii. Phlegon, Roman historian wrote: “In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake.” (Cited in Clarke)

2. ([Matthew 27:46-49](#)) Jesus cries out to the Father in agony.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!” Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.”

a. **My God, My God:** In quoting [Psalm 22](#), Jesus declared His fulfillment of that prophecy, in both its agony and in its exultation. The Psalm continues to say, *You have answered Me. I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You* ([Psalm 22:21b-22](#)).

i. “The probability is that Jesus spoke in Hebrew. It is no argument against this that the spectators might not understand what He said, for the utterance was not meant for the ears of men.” (Bruce)

ii. “*Cried* (*anaboao*, used only here in the New Testament) is a strong verb indicating powerful emotion or appeal to God.” (France)

iii. “This is, remarkably, the only time in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus addressed God without calling him ‘Father’.” (France)

b. **Why have You forsaken Me?** Jesus had known great pain and suffering (both physical and emotional) during His life. Yet He had never known separation from His Father. At this moment, He experienced what He had not yet ever experienced. There was a significant sense in which Jesus rightly felt **forsaken** by the Father at this moment.

i. “His one moan is concerning his God. It is not, ‘Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?’ These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut him to the quick.” (Spurgeon)

ii. At this moment, a holy transaction took place. God the Father regarded God the Son as if He were a sinner. As the Apostle Paul would later write, *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#))

iii. Yet Jesus not only endured the *withdrawal* of the Father’s fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father’s *wrath* upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity.

iv. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God’s good and loving plan of redemption. Therefore Isaiah could say, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him* ([Isaiah 53:10](#)).

v. At the same time, we cannot say that the separation between the Father and the Son at the cross was complete. Paul made this clear in [2 Corinthians 5:19](#): *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself* at the cross.

vi. “I even venture to say that, if it had been possible for God’s love towards his Son to be increased, he would have delighted in him more when he was standing as the suffering Representative of his chosen people than ever he had delighted in him before.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Why have You forsaken Me?** The *agony* of this cry is significant. It rarely grieves man to be separated from God or to consider that he is a *worthy* object of God’s wrath, yet this was the true agony of Jesus on the cross. At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. God the Father laid upon God the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and He bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us.

i. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering — the act of being judged for sin in our place — was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross. This was the *cup* — the cup of God’s righteous wrath — that He trembled at drinking ([Luke 22:39-46](#), [Psalm 75:8](#), [Isaiah 51:17](#), [Jeremiah 25:15](#)). On the cross, Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s fury. He did it so we would not have to drink that cup.

ii. [Isaiah 53:3-5](#) puts it powerfully: *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with*

grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

iii. “His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed hitherto throughout his whole earthly life...We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up — I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God.” (Spurgeon)

iv. We can imagine the answer to Jesus’ question: Why? “Because My Son, You have chosen to stand in the place of guilty sinners. You, who have never known sin, have made the infinite sacrifice to become sin and receive My just wrath upon sin and sinners. You do this because of Your great love, and because of My great love.” Then the Father might give the Son a glimpse of His reward — the righteously-robed multitude of His people on heaven’s golden streets, “all of them singing their redeemer’s praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question.” (Spurgeon)

v. Knowing this agony of the Son of God on the cross should affect how we see sin: “O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood? — If I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother’s heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it?” (Spurgeon)

d. **This man is calling for Elijah:** Sadly, Jesus was misunderstood and mocked until the bitter end. These observers thought it was all an interesting test case to see if **Elijah** would actually come.

i. As Jesus hung on the cross, His listeners misunderstood Him by taking the part for the whole. He said, “**Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?**” Not only did they get wrong what they heard (Jesus said, “**Eloi**” not “**Elijah**”), but they also only heard *one word* of what He said. This will not do for the true follower of Jesus; we hear not only *one word* from Jesus, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

ii. One of the first things we know about Jesus was that He was misunderstood. When Joseph and Mary left Him behind at Jerusalem, they didn’t understand that He had to be about His Father’s business. Now at the end of His earthly ministry, He is also misunderstood on the cross.

iii. Jesus knew what it was to have His *motives* misunderstood. He healed people, and others said He did it by the devil. He reached out to sinners, and people called Him a drunken pig. The followers of Jesus also sometimes have their *motives* misunderstood.

iv. Jesus knew what it was to have His *words* misunderstood. He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again,” no doubt motioning towards His own body as He said it. Still, people insisted that He spoke of the literal temple in Jerusalem. Another time He knew Lazarus was dead, and He told others that Lazarus was sleeping. They misunderstood Jesus and thought He meant Lazarus was getting much-needed rest. The followers of Jesus sometimes have their *words* misunderstood.

v. Jesus knew what it was to have His *silence* misunderstood. When He first appeared before Pilate, Pilate sent Him off to Herod. When Herod questioned Jesus, He didn’t say a word. Herod misunderstood the silence of Jesus and saw it as weakness and powerlessness. Herod was blind to the power and dignity in the silence of Jesus. The followers of Jesus also sometimes have their *silence* misunderstood.

3. ([Matthew 27:50](#)) The death of Jesus.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

a. **Jesus cried out again with a loud voice:** Most victims of crucifixion spent their last hours in complete exhaustion or unconsciousness before death. Jesus was not like this; though tremendously tortured and weakened, He was conscious and able to speak right up to the moment of His death.

- i. "The Fathers found in the loud cry a proof that Jesus died voluntarily, not from physical exhaustion. Some modern commentators, on the contrary, regard the cry as the utterance as one dying of a ruptured heart." (Bruce)
 - ii. [John 19:30](#) tells us that Jesus said, "*It is finished*," which is one word in the ancient Greek — *tetelestai*, which means, "paid in full." This was the cry of a winner, because Jesus fully paid the debt of sin we owed, and finished the eternal purpose of the cross.
- b. **And yielded up His spirit:** No one took Jesus' life from Him. Jesus, in a manner unlike any other man, **yielded up His spirit**. Death had no righteous hold over the sinless Son of God. He stood *in the place* of sinners, but never was or became a sinner Himself. Therefore He could not die unless He **yielded up His spirit**.
- i. As Jesus said, *I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* ([John 10:17-18](#))
 - ii. "Every man, since the fall, has not only been *liable* to death, but has *deserved* it; as all have forfeited their lives because of sin. Jesus Christ, was born immaculate, and having never sinned, had not *forfeited* his life, and therefore may be considered as naturally and properly immortal." (Clarke)
 - iii. "He gave up his life because He willed it, when He willed it, and as He willed it." (Augustine)

4. ([Matthew 27:51-56](#)) The immediate results of Jesus' death.

Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

- a. **The veil of the temple was torn in two:** The **veil** was what separated the holy place from the most holy place in the temple. It was a vivid demonstration of the separation between God and man. Notably, the veil was torn from **top to bottom**, and it was God who did the tearing.
 - i. "As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime." (Spurgeon)
 - ii. [Acts 6:7](#) says that in the days of the early church, *a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*. Perhaps this torn veil demonstrated to them the greatness of the work of Jesus. It is also probably *how* the torn veil became common knowledge.
 - iii. "It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage!" (Spurgeon)
- b. **The earth quaked, and the rocks were split:** Nature itself was shaken by the death of the Son of God.
 - i. "Men's hearts did not respond to the agonizing cries of the dying Redeemer, but the rocks responded: the rocks were rent. He did not die for rocks; yet rocks were more tender than the hearts of men, for whom he shed his blood." (Spurgeon)
 - ii. There should probably be a break between the end of [Matthew 27:51](#) and the start of [Matthew 27:52](#). We aren't to suppose that the earthquake that happened and split rocks during the crucifixion also opened graves of some of the righteous dead; who waited in those open graves for three days until **coming out of the graves**

after His resurrection. It is better to understand that Matthew intended us to see that the earthquake happened on the day Jesus was crucified. Then, on the day He was revealed as resurrected, the radiating power of new life was so great that it resuscitated some of the righteous dead.

c. **Coming out of the graves after His resurrection:** This is one of the strangest passages in the Gospel of Matthew. We don't know about this event from any other source, and Matthew doesn't tell us very much. So we really don't know what this was all about, but apparently these resuscitated saints died once again, because they were raised from the dead in the sense that Lazarus was — not to resurrection life, but to die again.

i. They were raised, "Not to converse again, as heretofore, with men, but to accompany Christ, that raised them, into heaven; and to be as so many ocular demonstrations of Christ's quickening power." (Trapp)

ii. "These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till he comes again — rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto *the holy city*, the New Jerusalem." (Spurgeon)

d. **Truly this was the Son of God!** The scene at the crucifixion of Jesus was so striking that even a hardened Roman centurion confessed that **this was the Son of God**. This man had supervised the death of perhaps hundreds of other men by crucifixion, but he knew there was something absolutely unique about Jesus.

i. **This was the Son of God:** The only thing wrong is his verb tense; Jesus *is* **the Son of God**. The Roman centurion seemed to assume that He was *no longer* the Son of God.

ii. "There are those that think that these soldiers, our Saviour's executioners, were truly converted by the miracles they had seen, according to what Christ had prayed for them, [Luke 23:34](#)." (Trapp)

e. **And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar:** Jesus not only made an impact upon rough and hardened men like the Roman centurion, but He also made an impact on women, even women like **Mary Magdalene** (the formerly demon-possessed woman who followed Jesus from Galilee, according to [Luke 8:2](#)).

i. **Many women:** "To their everlasting honour, these women evidenced more *courage*, and *affectionate attachment* to their Lord and Master, than the disciples did, who had promised to *die* with him rather than forsake him." (Clarke)

ii. Think of who was there at the cross.

- Men and women.
- Jews and Gentiles.
- Rich and poor.
- High class and no class.
- Religious and irreligious.
- Guilty and innocent.
- Haters of Jesus and lovers of Jesus.
- Oppressors and the oppressed.
- Weepers and mockers.
- Educated and uneducated.
- The deeply moved and the indifferent.
- Different races, different nationalities, different languages, different classes.

iii. "That mixed crowd was surely a prophecy. All sorts and conditions of men have been attracted by that Cross." (Morgan)