

The Crucifixion

Part 1

Introduction

The culmination of Jesus' earthly life and ministry and His sacrifice for the world's salvation was His crucifixion. This study looks at the practice of crucifixion and the events leading to and following Jesus' death.

Although the cruel, inhumane practice of crucifixion is generally regarded as a Roman invention, there is evidence that it was used earlier by the Phoenicians and the Persians. Usually, it was meted out only to those guilty of idolatry and blasphemy. Only slaves and the lowest types of criminals were crucified.

The Jews themselves were not allowed themselves to put anyone to death; that is why they delivered Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. After sentencing, it was the custom to scourge the victim with a whip and leather thongs with small pieces of metal or bone tied to them. The crucifixion was always carried out outside of the city, and the victim carried his own cross, probably just the cross beam.

Death was usually protracted, rarely occurring before 36 hours and some victims lived as long as nine days. A centurion and four soldiers were left as guards to prevent a rescue.

We need to study all four gospels to get a full picture of what Jesus experienced in His death and resurrection. Each gospel begins its recounting at a different place in time: Matthew begins his record with the genealogy of Jesus; Mark cites what the prophet Isaiah says about the mission of John the Baptist; Luke claims to write an orderly account of Jesus' life, beginning with the birth of John the Baptist, while John takes us back to the beginning of time and Jesus' role in creation.

Because much of the material in the four gospels is repetitive, we are primarily using Matthew's account for this study.

It appears that Jesus did not begin to prepare His disciples for His death until the death of John the Baptist.

Our Study

The Scripture: Matthew 16:21

“Jesus began to explain to the disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priest and teachers of the law and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

1. What did Jesus explain to the disciples? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 16:22

“Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, ‘Never, Lord,’ he said. ‘This will never happen to You.’”

2. What was Peter’s reaction? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 16:23

“Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

3. What did Jesus say Peter was? _____

4. Why? _____

Following the Transfiguration and the healing of the young boy with a demon, Jesus again warned the disciples of what was going to happen.

The Scripture: Matthew 17: 22-23

“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him and on the third day He will be raised to life; the disciples were filled with grief.”

5. What was the disciples' reaction this time? _____

Apparently, what Jesus told the disciples of His fate was beginning to sink in. Once again, Jesus predicted His death. This time His prophetic words drew a response from James' and John's mother, but it was primarily a selfish request.

The Scripture: Matthew 20:21

“She said, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom.”

6. What was her request? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 20:23

“To sit at My right or left had is not for Me to grant. Those places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by My Father.”

7. How did Jesus respond? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 20:27-28

Jesus continued: “Jesus said, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.’”

8. What did Jesus say He had come to do? _____

When something is stolen, a ransom is often demanded.

Personal Question: From whom did Jesus imply His life was a ransom? _____

Time is moving quickly!

The Scripture: Matthew 21:12-13

"Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' He said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.'"

9. What did Jesus do? _____

10. What did He say? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 21:12-13

"The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the Teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the Temple area, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were indignant."

11. What did Jesus do? _____

12. What was the reaction of the chief priests and the Teachers of the law? _____

Jesus and His disciples moved into Jerusalem where Jesus planned to celebrate the Passover. By now Jesus' fame preceded Him, and wherever He went He was followed and worshiped by crowds. This infuriated the chief priests and elders.

Jesus became very specific in His prophecy. Perhaps we should not judge the disciples too harshly for not truly understanding what Jesus was prophesying. Here, He was talking about His death against a backdrop of His enormous popularity with the people. Perhaps they reasoned that the crowds would not let anyone harm Him.

The Scripture: Matthew 26:1, 2

"He (Jesus) said to His disciples: As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

13. What did Jesus say would happen during the Passover season? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 26:3, 4

“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest...and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill Him.”

14. What did the chief priest and elders plot to do? _____

Apparently, only one person - a woman - seemed to understand what was about to happen to Jesus.

The Scripture: Matthew 26:6-8

“While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume which she poured on His head as He was reclining at the table.”

15. What did the woman do? _____

In his gospel, the apostle John reveals that the woman was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

The Scripture: Matthew 26:8-12

“When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. ‘This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me. When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.’”

16. What was the disciples’ reaction? _____

17. How did Jesus respond? _____

How this act must have blessed Jesus. Knowing His own future and the fact that no one else understood must have filled Jesus with an incredible feeling of loneliness.

In the next part of the study we will look at the events leading up to the crucifixion, the crucifixion and resurrection, and Jesus’ remaining days on earth.

The Answers

1. That He must suffer many things and be killed, and on the third day be raised to life.
2. He said, "Never, Lord, this will never happen to You."
3. A stumbling block
4. Because Peter had in mind the things of men, rather than the things of God.
5. They were filled with grief.
6. That her sons could sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in His kingdom.
7. Jesus said that this request was not His to grant.
8. To serve and to give His life as a ransom for many

Personal Question: For many

9. He drove out all who were buying and selling and overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.
10. "You are making [the temple] a den of robbers."
11. He healed the blind and the lame who came to Him.
12. They were indignant.
13. That He would be handed over to be crucified.
14. To arrest Jesus and kill Him
15. She anointed Jesus with a very expensive perfume.
16. They criticized her, saying the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor.
17. He said the woman had prepared His body for burial.

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