

# *Crucify Him!*

### **What it Means to be Crucified**

There are many images of Christ crucified, but few give an accurate description of what his crucifixion was like. Crucifixion was a Roman type of execution, and was extremely brutal. It is known to have been a borrowed practice from the Carthaginians, which was developed by the Romans. The Jews delivered Jesus to the Roman government, because Jews were not allowed to perform executions. When someone was being delivered to be crucified, they were first beaten with a whip called a cat of nine tails. This was a whip with nine strips of leather that had glass and metal weaved into it. When the person was beaten, their flesh would tear open, and often the bones would be exposed. When the crown of thorns was placed on Jesus, the thorns were very long, perhaps up to six inches. After this, a cross-member was placed on the shoulders of the person and tied to the wrists. They only carried the cross-member, which was extremely heavy, and did not carry the beam. The person was forced to walk to the crucifixion site, where the beam was waiting. The beam was a tree with the bark and branches removed, and was very heavy. The person was laid on the beam while the cross-member was nailed to the beam, and nails were driven into the person's wrists and through the heels. The body was twisted, to make a very uncomfortable position. After the victim was secure, the cross would be propped up and dropped in a hole to hold it straight up. The person would have been at eye level with anyone who walked by. Sometimes a board was placed on the cross to act as a seat, which allowed the person to survive longer. While this might seem like an act of mercy, every aspect of a crucifixion had one thing in mind: to maximize and prolong suffering. Most of the time, the person continued to live for several days, and died of asphyxiation.



The New Testament does not provide the vivid details about the crucifixion of Christ. In fact, Scripture gives us no reason to think that Jesus' crucifixion was more physically severe than that of a common criminal-- from a physical standpoint. It may have been the case that Jesus' physical suffering was a little less than normal. The legs of the criminals on either side of Jesus were broken to accelerate their death (John 19:31). When their bodies could no longer be supported, they could no longer breathe. But Jesus' bones were not broken (19:36). Additionally, Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died as soon as he did (Mark 15:44). One who was crucified might remain on the cross for several days. The idea was to keep the victim alive as long as possible to heighten suffering.

The Gospels did emphasize that the suffering of Christ was much more than the pain of a crucifixion. The suffering of Christ was the cup of wrath from the Father. This is not to say that the wrath of God and the physical sufferings of Christ are completely independent. While the sufferings of Jesus may have appeared standard, God forsook his Son. God's wrath was most potently manifested in the death of Christ. We will consider this as we move through the sequence of events.

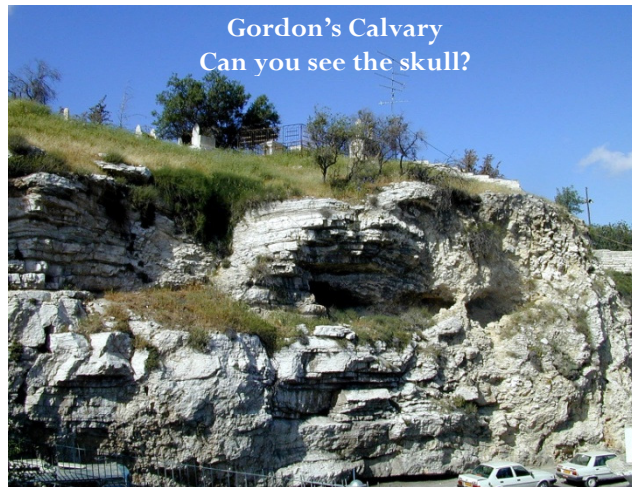
## THE LIFE OF CHRIST: LESSON 14

### To the Cross

The road to Golgotha describes the shame and humiliation that Christ bore on the way to his death. A clear description of his treatment by the Romans is given to us. Remember that while Christ was fully man, he was not only a man. When the Son of God became a man, he had already humbled himself greatly. He humbled himself even more through his birth, earthly vocation, and association with outcasts. Now Jesus was brutalized, not by the Jews, but by Gentiles. He had been mocked, and beaten so severely that he was not able to carry the cross-member all the way to the site. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross for Jesus.



The traditional location for Golgotha is located in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. An alternative location is known as Gordon's Calvary, which had no previous identity as the site of Calvary previous to the late nineteenth century.



### The First Three Hours

When the Lord was crucified, his garments were divided by the soldiers, which fulfilled Scripture (John 19:24). You also ought to realize that this meant that Jesus was completely uncovered. He had nothing. Nothing.

There is no doubt that the Jewish idea of hanging on a tree was related to this. The man who hanged on a tree was cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). The first thing we are told that Jesus said when he was crucified was, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34). When Pilate had an inscription made to place on the cross, he did not concern himself to change what had been written after the chief priests had complained: "What I have written I have written." (John 19:22). In Pilate's mind, he did not want to be bothered with what he saw as insignificant. However, this was a testimony that Jesus is the King of the Jews. Pilate had asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Perhaps he did not realize that by writing this inscription, that he was partially answering his own question. The Lord continued to bear the mockery of those around him. Those passing by referenced Jesus' statement about destroying "this temple." (John 2:19). They did not realize that this was exactly what was happening at that moment. They also used the same kind of language that Satan did when he tempted Christ. Remember that Satan attempted to use the identity of Christ to get him to abort his mission.

THE KING OF THE JEWS  
מלך היהודים  
rex Iudaeorum  
ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων  
Mark 15:25

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“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...” (Matthew 4:6).

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:40).

In both situations, the Lord is told to do something that would cause his entire mission to fail. If he had done what Satan said, he would have wrongly tested God his Father. If he had done what the by passers said, he would not have done the will of the Father. Both Satan and the by-passers had also incorrectly cited similar Scriptures. Satan used Psalm 91:11-12 and the by-passers used Psalm 22:8. Look them up. This was also the time when the two robbers were speaking to Jesus. As this three hour period drew to a close, Jesus looked at his mother, and John (John 19:26-27). His words may echo the time when he replied to Mary at the wedding at Cana (John 2:4). “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus’ hour was now here. He looks at his mother this time and tells her that she will be cared for by John. At the wedding of Cana, Jesus was telling Mary that their relationship would no longer be the same (by use of the word “woman”). Now the relationship between Jesus and Mary is even less maternal. As an act of final provision for his mother, Jesus had John care for her.

### Darkness

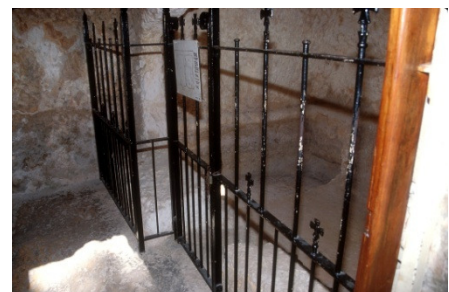
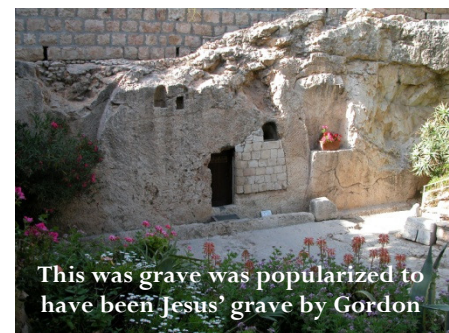
The Synoptic Gospels tell us that darkness fell on the land at the sixth hour. The sixth hour was noon. At the time when the sun should have shined most prominently in the sky, it was dark. Around 3 PM Jesus said, “Eli, eli, lama sabachthani,” which is translated “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (from Psalm 22:1). When his work of suffering was completed, Jesus said that he was thirsty (John 19:28). Whereas he did not drink previous to this, he would experience a taste of relief having accomplished his work. John tells us that before dying, Jesus said, “It is finished.” Luke records Jesus’ last words from Psalm 31:5, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

After the death of Christ, the veil in the temple was torn in two, and there was a great earthquake. At this point, Roman centurions testified that this was God’s Son. In fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus was buried in a rich man’s tomb. He would lie for three days.

### Three Days in the Heart of the Earth

Some have been critical of the Bible because of the foretelling of Christ’s three day burial. Jesus said he would be raised on the third day (Matthew 12:40; 17:23), which was not intended to be taken as a complete seventy two hours. A day in the first century could have been part of a day. Thus, Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon, rested on the Sabbath, and rose on Sunday. Matthew 12:40 is an idiomatic expression. We are to understand it as being in the grave until the third day.

The tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was carved out of stone and had a massive rolling stone placed in front of it. When the body was buried, the stone was rolled in place, and fell in a dip, so it could not be removed. The stone was often sealed as well, and in Jesus’ burial, it was guarded by soldiers.





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We cannot have one hundred percent certainty of the burial site of Jesus. The location inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher has been the traditional location for hundreds of years. The structure to the right has been built around the traditional tomb of Jesus. Below that is a photo of the traditional site where Jesus' body was laid.



The Gospels tell us about the events that took place leading up to the death of Christ. While we are given explanation of the death of Christ, the clearest explanations come from the epistles of the New Testament. You will look up several passages to better understand what Christ's death means. Do not just read the passages. Think about what is written, and how it differs from other passages. However, before you do this, read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.



Romans 5:12-6:14

1 Corinthians 2

Ephesians 2:11-22

Philippians 2:1-11

Colossians 1:15-23

Hebrews 2:5-9

Hebrews 7:27

### Reading Assignment

Colossians

Ephesians

Philippians



Greek	Pronunciation	English	Part of Speech
basileu-	<i>basi-lay-oos</i>	<b>king, monarch</b>	<i>noun</i>
archiepu-	<i>arch-ee-re-oos</i>	<b>high priest, chief priest</b>	<i>noun</i>
mega~, mega h, mega	<i>megas, meg-alay, mega</i>	<b>large</b>	<i>adjective</i>
para	<i>para</i>	<b>from</b>	<i>preposition</i>
paradidomi	<i>paradidome</i>	<b>I betray</b>	<i>verb</i>
swma	<i>soma</i>	<b>body</b>	<i>noun</i>