

“BEARING HIS OWN CROSS”

John 19:17-24

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INTRODUCTION

Surrounded by people, but all alone. Have you ever felt that way? There were the Jewish leaders who had insisted on His crucifixion who went to assure that the terrible deed was accomplished; there were two criminals who were crucified next to Him; there were the crowds of curious people who gathered to watch the event and read the inscription; there were the soldiers who were given the responsibility to carry out the execution.

So many people, and yet Jesus went out of the city bearing His own cross and really all alone. No one was able to really help Him in this hour of His greatest need. And in a few moments even His heavenly Father would forsake Him when He became the bearer of the sins of the world.

He suffered alone so that He would always be able to understand and to help you in the midst of your sufferings. You sometimes suffer apparently alone—no one really seems to see or understand—but He does!

What were these others doing while He suffered so alone? They all had their various interests and concerns—but none of these concerns were for Jesus!

Focus your attention on Him, for He has focused His attention on you.

I. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO KILLED HIM (17-18; Acts 2:23; 3:15)

Though the actual action was taken by the Roman soldiers (v. 23), the grammatical connection is with the Jewish leaders (vv. 15-16) and Peter makes clear just a few days later that these leaders were personally responsible for putting Jesus to death at the hands of wicked men (Acts 2:23).

A. They “received” Jesus—v. 17.

Please note in 1:11 that Jesus had come unto His own place, and that His own people **did not receive** Him in order that they might have life. Yet here they did “receive” Him (or “take”—same verb as in 1:11) in order **to put Him to death!**.

B. They “crucified” Jesus (18).

Brief description of the horrors of this form of execution.

Yet John gives the fact in the briefest form—no sensationalism nor tugging at our emotions. Type of Cross used here?

C. They complained to Pilate about Jesus’ inscription (19-22)

1. The purpose of the inscription (The *titlon* or title) was the accusation often hung about the neck of the criminal on the way to his place of death, and then attached to his cross to identify the crime(s) for which he was being punished.

2. The content of the inscription: “*This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the*

Jews.”

3. The languages in which the inscription was written:
 - Hebrew (Aramaic)—the religious language of the Jewish people.
 - Roman (Latin)—The official language of the empire.
 - Greek—The common language spoken throughout the empire.
4. The meaning of the inscription.
 - The inscription did not really contain an official charge against Jesus.
 - Pilate surely used this to spite the Jewish leaders whom he detested.
 - They had accused Him of claiming to be a king, but utterly rejected Him as their king.
 - The statement was an extreme offence to them—Jesus was not **their** king!
5. The change demanded for the inscription—“He said ‘I am the king of the Jews.’”
6. The stubbornness of Pilate—he had yielded before when his reputation was on the line; he would not yield to them this time.
7. The significance of the inscription—“What I have written, I have written.” He uses the perfect tense twice—it is done and won’t be changed.” Here we really have God’s view of the real person who was hanging here—Pilate spoke better than he realized! Truly, Jesus had come to be King of the Jews, but now that they had rejected Him, He would also become king of the world. He would become their Savior, deliverer, ruler (3:16 etc.). **Let the whole world know this!**

II. THE TWO CRIMINALS WHO WERE CRUCIFIED WITH HIM. (18)

What were these men doing here? Evidently Pilate did this purposefully to ridicule the Jews one more time. **Their king was hanging between two criminals—as the ruler of common criminals.** Note that this was a fulfillment of prophecy (Is. 53:12).

As Luke tells us, one of them *rejected Him and railed upon Him; one of them hung on his right, and one upon his left.*

One of them believed upon Him and received Him and went to Heaven with Him.

III. THE CROWDS OF PEOPLE WITNESSING THE EXECUTION (20)

Why were there so many people here?

- It was Passover season.
- The crucifixion site was near the city.
- Watching an execution was like a spectator sport.
- They were all able to read the inscription.
- But did they really care at all about Jesus?

IV. THE SOLDIERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS EXECUTION (23-24)

- It was customary for a quaternion (4 soldiers) to handle a prisoner—see Acts 12 and Peter—there were four sets of four since Peter would be there for some time, they would take turns, and he was an important prisoner.
- It was also accepted custom for the soldiers to take possession of the prisoners’ clothes.

- Here they divided Jesus' garments into four parts—each soldier taking a part. Mark 15:24 makes clear that they cast lots to determine who would receive each part.
- These were Jesus' outer garments—his tunic, belt, headdress, and sandals.
- The outer tunic may have been torn into parts.
- Jesus' inner garment was a long “undershirt from neck to knees or ankles.
- It was woven seamlessly from top to bottom.
- They decided not to tear it, and cast lots for it.
- This was the fulfillment of Ps. 22:18—Divided His garments and cast lots for His clothing.
- This was not gambling—no money exchanged!
- **Once again, fulfillment of prophecy!**

Note verse 25a: “Therefore the soldiers did these things”—that is because they were prophesied by the Lord!

Even though these men cared not for Christ, and were looking out for themselves, **the Lord was in control even of their wicked and selfish behavior! His will was done.**

V. THE SUFFERING SAVIOR ON THE CROSS (17)

Jesus went out of the city—differently than He had come in one week before to the accolades of the crowd.

A. He bore his own cross—later needing help to carry it and Simon of Cyrene, having just come in from the country, was impelled by the Romans to carry Jesus' cross for Him (Mt. 27:32). Jesus had been weakened by the scourging and mistreatment.

B. The Place of Crucifixion was known as “The Place of a Skull” (**cranium** in Greek); in Hebrew (Aramaic) the name was Golgotha (also meaning “skull”). The English word “Calvary” also means “skull.”

Why this name? Not skulls lying around! Not because Adam's skull found there! More likely because the site was shaped like a skull. Gordon's Calvary fits this.

C. Where is the site?

1. Gordon's Calvary (fits the description much better)
2. The Church of the Ascension (early tradition)

D. What was His suffering like?

- Shameful—naked (cf. Gen. 3 with Rev. 7:13-14—robes of righteousness).
- Cursed—See Deut. 21:23 and Gal. 3:13—those who hang on a tree.
- Rejected—outside the city like the sin-offering (Lev. 4; Hebrews 13:12-13).
- By Himself—the Suffering Servant
- Crucifixion was the **acme of the torturer's art—in its suffering, duration, shame, effect upon a crowd**. The sufferer was immobile, unable to even chase away flies.

- Death distilled slowly—drop by drop.
- Can't be sure what caused death normally—breathing, circulation, heart failure, etc.

But remember, we must not focus upon the physical suffering—His spiritual suffering far outweighed the physical.

He became our SIN-BEARER .

CONCLUSION

There was someone at the cross who cared—we will see that next week. But, none of this crowd cared: *The Religious Leaders of the Jews, the Criminal, the Crowd of people, and the Soldiers.*

Do you Care? Jesus suffered horribly on Golgotha. He did it by Himself. No one could do it for Him.

One person there took advantage of the opportunity and found eternal life—one criminal asked to be remembered and was saved that day!

God accomplished His will that day. Wicked men did their best, but God won!

Let us pause now and thank Him for suffering and dying for us.