

Luke 23:33-43 *And when they [the execution procession] were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him [Jesus], and the malefactors [criminals], one on the right hand, and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And they [the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus and the criminals] parted his raiment [clothes, see John 19:23], and cast lots [gambled for Jesus' clothes]. ³⁵ And the people stood beholding [watching]. And the rulers also with them derided [ridiculed] him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." ³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, ³⁷ And saying, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." ³⁸ And a superscription also was written over him [a sign was placed above Jesus' head] in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁹ And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on [hanged yelled insults at] him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." ⁴⁰ But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." ⁴² And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."*

I. Introduction: Understanding the cross of Christ

A. The Power of the Cross

1. Power to save you from an eternity separated from God

John 3:36 *He that believeth on the Son [of God, Jesus] hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God abideth on him.***

2. Power to change your life for the better

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁶ *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators [any sexual act outside of marriage], nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [male prostitutes], ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers [verbally abusive people], nor extortioners [swindlers], shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ **And such were some of you** [And some of you were doing those things]: **but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified** [separated from the world for God], **but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.***

Romans 6:21 *What fruit [beneficial result] had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed [in the things you are now ashamed of]? for the end [final result] of those things is death.*

B. The Preparation for the Cross

1. The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem: Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy, stating clearly that He was the Messiah
 - a. Prophecy: Zechariah 9:9 *Rejoice greatly, **O daughter of Zion**; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: **behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass** [donkey], and upon a **colt the foal of an ass.***
 - b. Fulfillment: Matthew 21:4-5 *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye **the daughter of Sion** [Zion, different spelling], ⁵ **Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.***
 - c. Prophecy: Psalm 118:26 **Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.**
 - d. Fulfillment: Matthew 21:9 *And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David: **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**; Hosanna in the highest."*
2. The Garden of Gethsemane: Jesus understood the price He was about to pay for our salvation.

Matthew 26:39 *And he [Jesus] went a little further [into the garden of Gethsemane], and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me [let some other way to save people be found]: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

3. The betrayal by a friend and arrest of Jesus

Mark 14:43-44 ⁴³ *And immediately, while he [Jesus] yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves [clubs], from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ And he that betrayed him had given them a token [a prearranged signal], saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him and lead him away safely. [Whomsoever I kiss is the man you are to arrest; lead him away under guard] "*

4. The trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish rulers

Matthew 26:57, 59, 66 ⁵⁷ *And they [the great multitude with swords and staves] that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled ... ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death. ... "What think ye [What is your verdict]?" They answered and said, "**He is guilty of death.**"*

5. The trial and condemnation before Pilate

Luke 23:1, 14, 23 ¹ *And the whole multitude of them* [the high priest, the scribes and the elders] *arose, and led him* [Jesus] *unto Pilate ...* ¹⁴ *Said unto them, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people* [that turns the people against Roman authority]: *and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him" ...* ²³ *And they were instant* [insistent] *with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*

6. The trial before the crowd (The trial of public opinion)

Mark 15:6, 7, 11-13, 15 ⁶ *Now at that feast* [of Passover] *he* [Pilate] *released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.* ⁷ *And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound* [which was bound with chains in prison] *with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection...* ¹¹ *But the chief priests moved the people, that he* [Pilate] *should rather release Barabbas unto them.* ¹² *And Pilate answered and said again unto them* [the crowd], *"What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?"* ¹³ *And they cried out again, "Crucify him..."* ¹⁵ *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.*

7. The procession to Calvary

- a. Simon of Cyrene; Matthew 27:32 *And as they* [the procession with the three prisoners to be executed] *came out* [of Pilate's courtyard], *they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled* [forced] *to bear his cross.*
- b. The women along the way; Luke 23:27-28 *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented* [which were mourning and grief-stricken for] *him.* ²⁸ *But Jesus turning unto them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children..."*
- c. The arrival at Calvary; John 19:17-18 *And he* [Jesus] *bearing his cross went forth into a place called 'the place of a skull', which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:* ¹⁸ *Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst* [in between them].

In Jesus' day a cross was NOT a piece of jewelry (as it is today.) This was a place of indescribable cruelty. No one wanted to be around a cross, for it was a place of horrible death. Those crucified were stripped naked and fastened helplessly to a wooden cross only by nails. Every breath was a struggle. The soldiers were there to keep scavenger birds off the crucified, and to keep any people gathered from throwing things at them. The soldiers who had to perform these executions had to find a way to deal with the suffering they caused. The screams and curses of those crucified would pierce to the soul. Victims of crimes often went to see their attackers executed. Perhaps loved ones were there to support the

condemned on their final day in this life. Jesus' mother and the Apostle John were both there, see John 19:26-27.

II. The Place of the Cross (verse 33)

A. A Prepared Place, created by Jesus Himself when He created the world. He also created the trees that were cut for His cross and the iron which was refined to make the nails.

1. A picture of that place: It looked like a skull (<https://wcbc.edu/golgotha>)

*Matthew 27:33 And when they [the procession with the three prisoners] were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, **a place of a skull...***

2. The purpose for that place

a. A place of death: Golgotha was a hill north of Jerusalem, visible from most of the city at that time, where Roman executions took place. Public executions were a way for the Roman government to warn people who might think of rebelling. Barabbas rebelled against the government and committed murder in the process (Mark 15:6-7). Jesus took his place on the cross.

b. The place of salvation: No other place on earth was the price for every person's sin paid. Salvation cannot be found in the tomb of any religious leader or teacher in the past. The price was paid on Golgotha and validated by an EMPTY tomb.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other [than Jesus]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

B. A Painful Place, verse 33 "...there they crucified him..."

1. Capital punishment for criminals: Crucifixion was described in brutal detail, see Psalm 22. It was never used in Israel. The Jews didn't experience it until about 600 years after that Psalm was written, when it was introduced to them by the Roman occupiers. This form of execution had a particular horror for Jews because of the curse of Deuteronomy 21:23

2. Cruel punishment for the condemned

a. Brutal: Nails hammered through arms and legs

b. Bloody: In addition, Jesus had a crown of thorns driven into his head (Mark 15:17-19)

c. Breathing nearly impossible: When the cross is set upright the body falls away from the cross. The collarbones constrict the airway to the lungs. The only way to breath is to pull back with the arms and push up with the legs in order to take another breath.

d. Breaking bones to hasten death: When the legs are broken they cannot support the body for another breath. The condemned dies of suffocation

(John 19:31-33). It was prophesied that none of Jesus' bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20, see John 19:36).

3. Cross a place of sin: All the sin-debt of all mankind throughout history was laid on Jesus for those six hours that Spring day.

1 Peter 2:24 **He** [Jesus] himself **bore our sins in his body on the tree**, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Romans 3:23-25 ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom **God hath set forth to be a propitiation** [the price paid for an offence you committed] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance [to voluntarily refrain from asserting a legal right for a period of time] of God;

III. The People at The Cross (verses 34 - 42) "...the people stood beholding..."

Jesus predicted there would be spectator to His execution, John 12:20 [Jesus speaking] "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all men unto me.*"

A. The Rulers (verse 35)

1. The same people who listened to false witness testimony in their trial (Mark 14:61-64) and spoke false testimony to Pilate in his trial (Luke 23:1-5) now mocked Jesus in His helpless state (Matthew 27:39-43)

Psalm 22:7-8 *All they that see me [God's anointed One] laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip [they cruelly insult me], they shake the head, saying, ⁸ "He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."*

2. All the tragedy and passion around Jesus' crucifixion was foretold hundreds of years prior, and is according to God's plan. These authorities wanted Jesus out of their lives. They never gave a thought to the prophecies they were fulfilling. They were supposed to know these signs of their Messiah.

Psalm 22:16 *For dogs [hypocritical, immoral people] have compassed me [have gotten near enough to hit me]: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me [have surrounded me]: **they pierced my hands and my feet.***

Acts 2:23 *Him [Jesus], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye [the people of Jerusalem] have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

B. The Soldiers (verses 36 - 38)

1. They offered Him vinegar to drink. A person being crucified has no way to drink during the hours of torture. The soldiers used vinegar to clean their hands from the blood of those executed.

Isaiah 53:3-5 *He [God's anointed One] is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him*

[we didn't want to look at Him because he was so disfigured]; *he was despised, and we esteemed him not* [we judged that He had no value]. ⁴ *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* ⁵ **But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**

2. They placed a mocking sign over His head proclaiming in three languages that this is how the Jews treat their King. All three languages were commonly used in Jerusalem at that time.

C. The Thieves (verses 39 - 42)

These two men had spent time with the now-pardoned Barabbas in jail awaiting execution.

1. The evil thief, verse 39. This man spent his time in prison hardening his heart and justifying his crimes in his own mind. He refused to take the responsibility for his crimes. He hurled insults at the only One who could save him from his ultimate fate.
2. The repentant thief, verses 40-42. This man knew of his own guilt, and of the guilt of his friend. He also knew that Jesus had done nothing to deserve the punishment He was now receiving. He testified to his friend about Jesus' innocence and called on the name of the Lord. It did not stop him from receiving the punishment due his crime. His legs were later broken to hasten his physical death. But Jesus, Himself struggling for every breath, was able to assure him that his faith was well-placed.
 - a. A tender heart, verses 40-41 "...*Dost not thou fear God...[but Jesus] hath done nothing amiss* [wrong]..."
 - b. A believing mind, verse 40. He feared God and realized Jesus had a relationship with God that he didn't. He recognized that Jesus was not just another man.
 - c. A yielded spirit, verse 42 "...*he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me...*" His repentance was sincere and it was rewarded.

Romans 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

IV. The Pardon of The Cross (verses 34 and 43) "...*Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...*"

A. A Pardon for Sin

1. Where forgiveness for sin is not found
 - a. The church, any church, regardless of faithfulness to the Truth.
 - b. A man or woman, any person, regardless of his religious authority (a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam, etc.)

- c. Rituals, regardless of how spiritual, Biblical, or traditional (baptism, communion, personal sacrifice, etc.)
 - d. Belief, regardless of how sincerely it is held, in anything that doesn't pay the full price for sin
2. Where forgiveness is found: in the shed blood of Jesus Christ

Romans 5:8-9 ⁸ *But God commendeth [shows] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* ⁹ *Much more then, **being now justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

B. A Place for the Saved

- 1. A place to live, verse 43 "...today shalt thou be with me in paradise..." {See 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 to see that paradise (verse 4) is the same as heaven (verse 2)}
- 2. A place to be with Jesus

John 14:2-3 ² *In my [Jesus'] Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.*** ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that **where I am, there ye may be also.***

- 3. A place to receive the ultimate gift that God offers to anyone

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:***

V. Conclusion

- A. The Place: the only place on earth where salvation was purchased. See Acts 4:12, above
- B. The People: Anyone can come. The sign above Jesus' head was written in three languages so that anyone who came by could read what Jesus' crime was.

1 Peter 1:25 *But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And **this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.***
- C. The Pardon: so that people can be saved
- D. 2 Corinthians 5:20 *Now then **we are ambassadors** [representatives] **for Christ**, as though God did beseech you by us [as though God used us to plead earnestly with you]: **We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.***