

Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin and False Witnesses

Matthew 26:

57 And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58 But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death,

60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward

61 and said, "This *fellow* said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' "

62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?"

63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

64 Jesus said to him, "*It is as you said*. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!

66 What do you think?”

They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.”

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands,

68 saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

A High Priest Cross Examining The High Priest of God

Caiaphas, the high priest, seems to be getting agitated. He wants Jesus to say something in front of the council they can use to charge Him with blasphemy and sentence Him to death. He has demanded Jesus answer a charge from two witnesses, who claimed Jesus said He would destroy the temple in Jerusalem and rebuild it in three days.

The supposed blasphemy—and false quotation (John 2:19–21) was not enough to condemn Jesus to death. Caiaphas needed more. Jesus did not even answer that charge. He knew they had misquoted Him and that He had been talking about His own future resurrection, not the destruction of the city temple. He knew He would have to be sentenced to death by the men before whom He stood.

Jesus Mocked and Beaten on Thursday

Luke 22:63-71

63 Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him.

64 And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, “Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?”

65 And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.

Maundy Thursday Turns Into Good Friday

66 As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying,

67 “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will by no means believe.

68 And if I also ask *you*, you will by no means answer Me or let *Me* go.

69 Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.”

70 Then they all said, “Are You then the Son of God?” So He said to them, “You *rightly* say that I am.”

71 And they said, “What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

Jesus Handed Over to Pontius Pilate

Luke 23

1 Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”

3 Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

He answered him and said, “*It is as you say.*”

4 So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.”

5 But they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

Jesus Faces Herod

Luke 23

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean.

7 And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.

9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

11 Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

12 That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Pilate and Herod Became Friends

That very day Pilate and Herod became friends: Significantly, Herod and Pilate became friends that day. They found no common ground except their opposition to Jesus. Thus far, we have seen three different attitudes towards Jesus; but they all agree on rejecting Him.

- The religious authorities hated Jesus.
- Pilate knew something of who Jesus was, but was unwilling to make an unpopular stand for Him.
- Herod didn't even take Jesus seriously; he was only interested in amusement and entertainment.

Hosanna is Replaced with Crucify Him!

Luke 23:18-25

18 And they all cried out at once, saying, “Away with this *Man*, and release to us Barabbas” —

19 who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

20 Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them.

21 But they shouted, saying, “Crucify *Him*, crucify *Him*!”

22 Then he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in *Him*. I will therefore chastise *Him* and let *Him* go.”

23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested.

25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Give Us Barabbas!

Mark 15:6-15

6 Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested.

7 And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion.

8 Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask *him to do* just as he had always done for them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

10 For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them.

12 Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do *with Him* whom you call the King of the Jews?”

13 So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!”

14 Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!”

15 So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

The Soldiers Participate and Mock Jesus

Mark 15:16-20

16 Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium (the courtyard of the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole regiment.

17 And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*,

18 and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

19 Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.

20 And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

Matthew 27:27-31

27 Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment.

28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.

29 They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!"

30 And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it.

31 When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

On the Way to the Cross

Matthew 27:32-34

32 Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

33 And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull").

34 The soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.

A Battered and Bruised Jesus

Though Jesus was weakened He apparently managed to carry the beam from Pilate's headquarters to the city gates. He could not carry it any further, though. The fact that He remained upright at all after the flogging and beatings is remarkable.

“Simon, Who Was From Cyrene”

The soldiers picked a man coming into the city from the country to carry Jesus' cross for Him. Under Roman law, soldiers could force any subjugated person to carry things for them, for up to a mile. This is part of the background to Jesus' teaching on submission and service for others (Matthew 5:41).

Cyrene was a city in North Africa. For this reason, many suppose Simon was of African descent. Cyrene had a large Jewish population, and Simon was very likely in Jerusalem for the Passover, along with so many others. Mark adds that Simon was the father to Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). They may or may not be the Alexander and Rufus mentioned by Paul in Acts 19:33 and Romans 16:13.

The Crucifixion

Matthew 27

34 The soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.

35 After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.

36 Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there.

37 A sign was fastened above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

The Crucifixion

Crucifixion victims are typically ordered to carry the cross-bar to the crucifixion site. The vertical portion was usually permanently fixed to the ground to make the process faster and easier for the executioners. The horizontal portion of the cross was not a small plank of wood. Rather, it weighed around 100 pounds, looking more like a railroad tie.

The Process of Crucifixion

At the execution site, the cross bar is laid on the ground, and soldiers nail or tie the victim's wrists to the bar. Psalm 22:16 and Isaiah 53:5 say Jesus is nailed. The bar is lifted and attached to the upright post. Often, the victim is not that high, nearly touching the ground. In this case, Jesus is at least high enough that the soldier must use a reed to offer Him vinegar (Mark 15:36). While some crucifixion crosses are "T"-shaped, Jesus at least has enough room above His head for the sign "The King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37).

The Time Span and Designed Suffering of the Crucifixion

The "third hour" is 9:00 a.m. Three hours later the sun will go dark, and three hours after that Jesus will die (Mark 15:33, 37). It is unusual for people to die so quickly on the cross. Although crucifixion is excruciatingly painful, it is not immediately lethal. Romans became adept at driving nails in between bones and veins, but directly through nerves. Victims would bleed, but not profusely. Hanging there in intense agony, those crucified would more likely die of exposure, infection, heart arrhythmia, or a traumatic form of pneumonia. This could take days.

Probably the most common cause of death from crucifixion was asphyxiation. Hanging in the crucified position prevents normal breathing. When hanging loosely, the chest is distorted to the point that the victim can't exchange the air in the lungs. The victim can only breathe if he still has energy to pull the arms in, bracing impaled feet and / or hands against the nails.

Executioners could accelerate the process by breaking the victim's legs. The unusually brutal treatment given by the Roman guards (John 19:1) traumatized Jesus' body considerably. He couldn't carry the cross-beam of the cross less than half a mile to the crucifixion site.

The Blood and Water that Flow from Jesus' Side

Jesus' rapid death is partly explained by His ability to speak until very shortly before death (John 19:30) and the condition of His corpse. The blood and water that flow from Jesus' side when the guard stabs Him with a spear (John 19:34) suggests Jesus died of some combination of fluid buildup in his chest, referred to as either a hemothorax or a pleural effusion, rather than direct asphyxiation. Such a death can happen relatively suddenly, as compared to suffocating.

In the original Greek, "crucify" is referred to as *stauroo*, which is the Greek root word for "stake" or "driving down stakes." In Latin, however, "crucify" takes its origin from *crux*, or "cross." From *crux* comes *cruciare*, to cause extreme anguish, and the English "excruciating." It's no exaggeration to say that the modern term for "the worst pain imaginable" is derived from this specific form of torture.

Jesus Dies

Matthew 27:45-53

45 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.

46 At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

47 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah.

48 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink.

49 But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him."

50 Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart,

52 and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead.

53 They left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

Luke 23:44-46

44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last.

John 19:28-30

28 Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.”

29 A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips.

30 When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The Skies Go Dark As the Earth Mourns the Loss of God's Only Son

The sixth hour is noon; the ninth hour is 3:00 p.m. Jesus has been on the cross since the third hour: 9:00 a.m. At 3:00 p.m., Jesus will die. At that same time, on the other side of the city, the priests will slaughter the lambs for the Passover meals of the people who live in Judea. In the book of Amos, God speaks of a day of judgment when the "songs of the temple shall become wailings"

Amos 8:9-10

9 "In that day," says the Sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth while it is still day.

10 I will turn your celebrations into times of mourning and your singing into weeping. You will wear funeral clothes and shave your heads to show your sorrow— as if your only son had died. How very bitter that day will be!"

Darkness was the ninth plague God put on the Egyptians (Exodus 10:21–29). The darkness enveloped Egypt for three days; here it lasts three hours. The final plague was the first Passover, the origin of the feast celebrated this very moment. As God took the firstborns of the Egyptians to secure the rescue of His people the Israelites, God now accepts the death of His own Firstborn as a "ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The Burial of Jesus

John 19:38-42

38 Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away.

39 With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes.

40 Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth.

41 The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before.

42 And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Matthew 27:55-61

55 And many women who had come from Galilee with Jesus to care for him were watching from a distance.

56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

57 As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus,

58 went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him.

59 Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth.

60 He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left.

61 Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb and watching.

Mark 16:42-47

42 Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

44 Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time.

45 So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

46 Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

Conclusion

Though we can imagine all the graphic details of His physical suffering, the nails and suffocation are not the primary causes of Jesus' pain. Neither is the intense shame and humiliation. For the first time in existence, the Son is separated in some incomprehensible sense from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through no sin of His own Jesus is abandoned.

We don't know when God turns from Jesus; possibly when Judas arrives in the garden of Gethsemane and Jesus says, "The hour has come" (Mark 14:41). Now, Jesus has six hours of extreme pain and even more excruciating separation. Then His work will be finished. He will be reunited with His Father, and His sheep will be saved.