

### Luke 23:32-38

32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,

37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Jesus has reached Calvary. Why do we call it Calvary anyway?

Well, the origin of the name Calvary for the place of his crucifixion, is somewhat convoluted. The other Gospel writers use the Aramaic name *Golgotha*, and the actual Greek word that Luke wrote is *Kranion*. *That sounds like Cranium doesn't it? Kid's what is a Cranium? Right, the English word Cranium and the Greek word Kranion mean the same thing – SKULL.*

But for centuries before the King James Version of the bible had been produced, Christians had been calling that place *Calvaria* which is the Latin word for skull referring to the shape of the hill itself. So the translators of the original KJV chose to render it Calvary probably because it was a name so pregnant with meaning for Christians not because of the place of course but because of what happened there, for it was on Calvary that Jesus the Messiah was Crucified, the place where He died.

But why, why did all of this take place? Why did Jesus, whom the Bible tells us is not only the Son of God, but the anointed one, the Messiah, the true King of the Jews, die on Calvary if He had the power not to? The Bible answers that question in several places, but even here in the text describing Christ's crucifixion, we have an abundance of clues that tell us what Jesus was doing.

First the text tells us that Jesus was not crucified alone, He was crucified between two criminals, and treated the same way as these lawbreakers who had also been sentenced to die by Pilate. He died literally in the midst of the transgressors. In this he literally fulfilled the Old Testament prophesy that this would be the manner of the Redeemer's death from Isaiah 53:12

***Is. 53:12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.***

He was counted as transgressor and died with them, because he was bearing the sins of transgressors, making atonement for them.

Secondly, another detail adding weight to that is the fact that the place of execution, Calvary, was located outside of the city of Jerusalem. Now that might not strike us as important until we consider what the Bible taught considering the bodies of the animals that were sacrificed as a blood offering to atone for the sins of the people on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement:

***Lev. 16:27 "The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal.***

The author of Hebrews makes the connection between Jesus and this offering absolutely clear –

***Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.***

***12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.***

That atonement that Jesus made there, bearing the sins of his people, suffering the righteous wrath of the Father in their place, is the key to everything that happens here. I want you to notice that the idea of Christ's atonement is what is central, and that is yet another reason why all the pictorial representations of the Crucifixion, whether it be *The Passion of the Christ*, or the countless paintings and etchings, and T-Shirts, and decals on the back of pick-up trucks, that have been created all miss the mark so badly. Because what they portray is inevitably Christ's *physical suffering*.

Now don't get me wrong, the physical suffering associated with Crucifixion is intense, it was as I said last week the cruelest way the Romans could think of to kill someone. It could take days to die, and every moment of it excruciating. But in one sense there is so little interest on Luke's part in the physical side of it that he only devotes four words "there they crucified Him." Luke wants us to consider not the *how* of the crucifixion, but the *why* of it. And even the most cursory consideration should make clear to us that the spiritual punishment that Jesus endured for the sins of His Sheep was infinitely greater than any of the physical torment of being nailed to a cross.

We have seen Christ our Prophet, warning the daughters of Jerusalem to flee from the wrath to come. Now here is our great High Priest, Jesus, offering up not the blood of Goats and Bulls, which could never take away sins, but his own precious blood as an atonement to cover the sins of His Sheep.

As a Priest he intercedes for sinners with a prayer directed to the Father: "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.***" And if you are like me then the first time you read those words and you marveled. How could he pray that way for people, who had just mistried him and mocked him and beaten him, and now where in the process of Crucifying Him! ***What kind of love is this?*** How on earth could it be said that they "***did not know what they were doing?***" Ok perhaps these soldiers thought they were just executing another criminal, but what of the Sanhedrin and all their conniving? Ah but friends, their physical eyes may have been opened, but Spiritually they were blind. Jesus himself had called the Pharisees "blind guides" and truly, they could not even see enough to recognize their own long awaited Messiah when he had come to dwell amongst them.

To the end the leaders are obsessed with the evidence for Christ's claims – guilty conscience, they even admit "he saved others" healing the sick, casting out demons, even raising people from the dead, but they rush on "look he didn't meet the criteria, no true Messiah could be so shamefully treated", they were so spiritually blinded they not only couldn't see that the OT had said that this must happen to the Messiah, they could never even begin to comprehend that what is going on as a victory and not a defeat.

Pilate is mocking the Jews, he will not change the inscription for he knows that Christ is innocent, but oddly what he wrote is true. Jesus is the true King.

**Application:** So Why did the Messiah the King of the Jews, have to die there? Why didn't He save Himself? Because to have come down, would have been the defeat, it would have meant that you and I would have had no hope of salvation, that we would have remained in our sins.

**Application:** One of the saddest details in this entire text is the fact that the most the majority of onlookers got from Jesus was a handful of ragged clothing. Here you have soldiers but a few feet from the most important event in history, witnesses to the great salvation of a mighty God, and they could have come away with an incorruptible inheritance, they could have had eternal life, and all they can think to do is throw dice in the dust to divide up a few scraps. Instead of treasure, they got trinkets. But sadly countless people come to Calvary again and again and come away each time with even less than the soldiers. If you come away from Calvary with only a few details, then you have nothing more than the soldiers got (and perhaps even less for one of them was converted) the outward trappings. If you go to the foot of the cross, do not be satisfied to come away with anything less than SALVATION! Friends, do not merely go and look and see another man dying at the hands of cruel oppressors, look with the eyes of faith and see the Savior dying to set you from Sin – KNOW that *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

**Application:** Ah, but perhaps you are saying, my sins are too great, then see Christ's infinite love to sinners, "Father Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" are you really so proud that you think your sins are greater than the greatest sin that was ever committed? No friends, none are too wicked to be saved. No Sin is too Great that the Grace of an Almighty God is not Greater Still, but know this as well no sin is so small that anything other than that Great Grace can atone for it.