

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #58
"The Battle of the Cross" (Part Twelve)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Mark 15:21-32:

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors." And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

INTRODUCTION: In our last lesson, we dealt with the subject of "Death by Crucifixion." In so doing, we addressed the question of "Why did God choose crucifixion as the method of His Son's death? We now move to the subject of "The Order of Events at the Crucifixion." All of the events which occurred at the cross were carried out with precision by the predetermined plan and purpose of God. What happened where, when, and how, was all ordered by the Trinity in the eternal Covenant of Redemption before the world began. Due to time considerations, we must be brief in covering each of these events. I find this to be most challenging as each of these could easily require a one hour lesson in itself. We now proceed to give what is believed to be the chronological order involving the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. THE ARRIVAL AT GOLGOTHA - Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17.

1. The place where Jesus was crucified was called in the Hebrew, "Golgothas" which means a Skull. In Latin, it is called Calvary. It was located somewhere outside the walls of Jerusalem toward the northwest. Hebrews 13:12 tells us that Jesus *"suffered outside the gate"* of the city.

2. The time of the crucifixion was at 9:00 in the morning according to Jewish time. Mark calls this the "third hour" in Mark 15:25, *"Now it was the third hour, and they*

crucified Him." The Jewish recording of time began with the "first hour" which was 6:00 in the morning. The "third Hour" was at 9:00 in the morning. The "sixth hour" was at 12:00 noon. The "ninth hour" was at 3:00 in the afternoon. The Roman system of time did not correspond to the Jewish system of time. This needs to be taken into account when John says in John 19:14 that Pilate turned Jesus over to the Jewish leaders at the "sixth hour" which was 6:00 in the morning. There is no contradiction, just two differing ways of recording time: One Jewish, and the other, Roman.

Jesus was on the cross for six hours, beginning at the third hour (9:00 a.m.), through the sixth hour (12:00 noon), until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) in the afternoon. This is stated in Mark 15:33,34 - **"Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'"**

These six hours were divided into two periods of three hours each. One period was that of Light, and the other of Darkness. The period of Light occurring between 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon (the third hour until the sixth hour). This was followed by a period of supernatural Darkness occurring from 12:00 noon through 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon (the sixth hour through the ninth hour). This is found in Luke 23:44-45 - **"Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two."**

During His time on the cross, Jesus uttered His famous "Seven Sayings." The first three sayings were uttered in daylight, and the last four sayings were uttered in darkness.

3. Just prior to Him being nailed to the cross, Jesus was offered a drink mixture composed of wine and gall. We read in Matthew 27:34, **"They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink."** This would serve as a narcotic to deaden the pain. While most of the commentators see this as an act of compassion, I cannot bring myself to believe that the soldiers showed any compassion toward their victims. Instead, I believe this was designed to produce a calming of the victim's sensitivity while they drove the nails into his body. This would reduce the struggling of the victim long enough to allow the soldiers to drive the nails into the body in such a manner that they would not tear loose during his initial struggles to free himself.

It is stated that Jesus refused the drink, probably in order to maintain His full faculties so as to clearly carry out His obedience to drink fully the cup of suffering which His Father had given Him to drink. Remember that He had to be fully conscious to carry on the

conversation with the dying thief or robber.

4. The crucifixion of Jesus is merely described by the Gospel writers as, **"There they crucified Him."** The gruesome details are avoided. NOTE: Preachers would be well to follow this pattern and explain the theology of the cross to their hearers rather than playing on their hearers' emotions to draw out sympathy for Jesus. Many false converts are produced by playing on peoples' emotions alone while bypassing the understanding of the mind.

5. Jesus is crucified between two robbers. He did not die alone. In Luke 23:32, 33 we are told, **"Here were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 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."** These had been found guilty of insurrection against Rome. They were probably affiliated with Barabbas, who had been released in place of Jesus. In His darkest hour, Jesus' companions consisted of the worst outcasts of society. Mark tells us the reason for this. In Mark 15:27 we read, **"With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left."** This is a prophecy of Christ found in Isaiah 53:12 which describes Jehovah's Suffering Servant. **"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."** Jesus died where He did and with whom He did because it had been preordained by God for Him to do so. Nearly all of the events occurring at Calvary, are fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies. Jesus, the Savior of sinful men, died in the presence of sinful men. He was not ashamed to be identified with sinners, for He came not **"to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."** (Luke 5:32).

B. JESUS ON THE CROSS - Matthew 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:32-49; John 19:17-37.

1. Jesus utters His first cry from the cross, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."** (Luke 23:34). This prayer for His executioners occurs at the beginning of His time on the cross. While they are mocking and torturing Him, Jesus is praying for them! Jesus is now secured to the cross and enduring undescrivable pain. His lips begin to move. Will He cry out for pity to be shown to Him by His enemies? Will He pronounce a curse of damnation upon them? No, He is praying for His enemies! He is in a composure of prayer. There are many things which could be said regarding Christ's prayer for His enemies to be forgiven. Time will only permit me to address one. It involves the question as to whether forgiveness is conditioned upon the offender's repentance and asking

to be forgiven, or if forgiveness is to be bestowed upon the offender even though he or she never repents or asks for forgiveness. This prayer of Jesus has been used by those who teach unconditional forgiveness. To state it another way, "Does God or can God forgive the sin of a person who refuses to repent and seek forgiveness? The Bible says, "no." Modern psychology says "yes." Here are four texts which clearly establish that repentance and confession precede the act of forgiveness and not vice-versa. They are:

Psalm 86:5 - ***"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."***

Proverbs 28:13 - ***"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."***

I John 1:9 - ***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***

Luke 17:3 - ***"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."***

The revelation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth the truth that forgiveness by God rests upon clear unmistakable conditions. In the preaching of the Gospel, the Apostles did not merely announce that God had forgiven men, who should then merely acknowledge and rejoice in the fact. Instead, they were sent forth to call upon men to repent in order to be forgiven. The Gospel is addressed to unforgiven unreconciled men who are lost and under the wrath of God. It is not addressed to men who are already forgiven, but just not aware of it. Unconditional forgiveness destroys the necessity of preaching the Gospel to lost sinners. It also removes human responsibility and duty.

The texts just referred to show that while God has a spirit about Him that is ready at all times to forgive sinners, He does not grant the act of forgiveness until the attitude of the offending sinner is changed, and he seeks forgiveness from God. It is at that time that God grants the act of forgiveness. Did Jesus receive an answer to His prayer? Yes, but not apart from the use of Gospel means. The dying robber or thief was forgiven when he asked for forgiveness, not while he was reviling and mocking Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost, some three thousand Jews were forgiven through their response to the Gospel message. If unconditional forgiveness is correct, why did Jesus not merely tell the thief that he had already been forgiven and that his partner in crime was also forgiven? Why did Peter not merely do the same with those at Pentecost instead of calling upon them to repent and be baptized? Thus the distinction between possessing the spirit of forgiveness and granting the

act of forgiveness clarifies the many questions which have led to several false teachings about Christ's prayer on the cross for His enemies.

2. The soldiers divide His garments - John 19:23, 24 - **"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,' that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: 'They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things."** Prior to the victim's attachment to the cross, he would be stripped of his clothing. His garments would be given to the soldiers who executed him. The only clothing which was left on Christ's body was a loincloth to cover His private parts. The Romans had long before consented to the Jewish sense of modesty by allowing loincloths for the victims of crucifixion. The removal of bodies from the crosses before the Sabbath was also granted the Jews.

The Jewish man's garments consisted of four basic parts. They were his head covering, a belt, sandals, and an outer robe. These four parts were divided among the soldiers, letting us know there were four soldiers assigned to execute Jesus. Mark 15:24 tells us they divided up the items by casting lots. Lots were usually metal or bone pieces corresponding to what we know as dice. Mark says, **"And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take."** John's account describes a tunic or inner garment which was of one piece without a seam. This could not be divided without destroying the garment, so the soldiers cast lots to see who could claim ownership. John states this was to fulfill the prophecy found in Psalm 22:18 which states, **"They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."** John emphasizes that the actions of the soldiers were necessary to fulfill the Scriptures. While they were acting from purely selfish motives, their actions furthered the sovereign plan of God and validated biblical accuracy by fulfilling prophecy.

Some teachers maintain that all of this was based on God's foreknowledge of what He saw that the free wills of men would originate and perform. Are we really left to believe that all the events surrounding the death of Christ were something which God merely foresaw? No, Leon Morris is correct when he says in his *Commentary on John*:

Once again we see his (John's) master thought that God was over all that was done, so directing things that His will was accomplished, and not that of puny man. It was because of this that the soldiers acted as they did.

God is in the details of life. He ordains the small insignificant things as well as the large significant things of life. If one small detail is left out of God's control, it would

prevent the large overall purpose or design from being achieved. In the old watches, there existed many gears of differing sizes, which moved in different directions. They were synchronized so as to move the hands on the surface or face of the watch. If one little gear gets out of control, the whole purpose of the watch fails. Thus it is with God's sovereign purpose in pre-ordaining all things which come to pass.

3. The Jews mock Jesus - Matthew 27:39-43 - ***"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God.'"***

After describing the actions of the soldiers, we are then informed of the mocking of Jesus by three differing categories of the unbelieving Jews. We will call them: **First**, the ignorant sinners - verses 39-40. **Second**, the religious sinners - verses 41-43. **Third**, the condemned sinners - verse 44.

Before examining each of these groups, let us note that they all joined together in their mockery to fulfill the prophecy recorded in Psalm 22:6-9 which says, ***"But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!'"*** Everything occurring on the cross is but that which had been predicted by David a thousand years prior, and which had been preordained in the eternal covenant of redemption before the world began. Jesus was truly ***"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*** (Revelation 13:8).

The first group, which we are calling the "ignorant sinners" is made up of the fickle, unthinking crowd, who probably were the group that a few days before were acclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, and now are condemning Him as a blasphemer. They had heard Him preach and seen Him perform miracles. They had seen Him cleanse the temple and expose the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. They had expected Him to overthrow Rome and establish Israel as sovereign over the Gentile world. But when He had allowed Himself to be arrested, beaten, scourged and tried before Pilate with no effort to defend Himself, they quickly concluded that He was not Israel's Messiah. This group could change their minds very quickly about a matter, and it is said they ***"wagged their heads,"*** which was an

expression of insult and mockery (cf. Isaiah 37:22; Lamentations 2:15). They accused Him of claiming power to rebuild the Temple in three days. They were saying that "if you could really do that, surely you could now save yourself from death. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." This statement reminds us of Satan's words to Jesus when he tempted Him at the start of His ministry. We may be assured of Satan's presence in this crowd, supplying the energy to urge them on in their blasphemy of the Lord. Be assured that the entire hostility to Christ on the cross was being orchestrated by Satan as He wages his part of the "battle of the cross."

John MacArthur makes a pointed application of these to the modern church when he says:

Many people today are like them. They may have been raised in the church, heard the truths of the gospel many times, and know that Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. They may have been baptized, made a profession of faith, and attended church regularly for a while. But because Jesus does not fulfill their worldly, selfish expectations they lose interest in the things of God. They may be quite willing to have the church attack evils in society but are quite unwilling to be confronted with their own sin and need for repentance and forgiveness. In effect, they mock and sneer at Jesus as they turn their backs on His truth, His righteousness, and His lordship. The world is full of passers-by who once praised Jesus but now ridicule Him. (MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary on Matthew*, pp. 259-260).

The second group is what we are calling the "religious sinners." This group is comprised of the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. They are all members of the Sanhedrin. They represented the entire religious leadership of Israel. They had devoted their lives to the study of God's Word along with the rabbinical tradition. If any group of people should have known God's truth so as to recognize the Messiah, it was these men. But they had been the critics from the outset of His ministry, and were responsible for His death. They are gloating in what they are watching. At last they have destroyed the one who they believed was destroying the system of religion which they were upholding. Why were they so opposed to Jesus? Because He was destroying their livelihood, prestige and power. He had dared to charge them with changing His Father's House into a den of thieves and replacing God's Word with their religious traditions.

They ridiculed His ministry. "He saved others, but He cannot even save Himself." They ridiculed His helplessness. "If He is a sovereign King, let Him come down off the cross and we will believe Him." But they would not have done so. Sinners are not convinced by miracles, but by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They ridiculed His faith in God. "If He has a special relationship with God, then God would surely save Him." To their unbelieving minds, the fact that Jesus either could not or would not save Himself was proof that He was not the Messiah and God's Son.

These men had much to do with religious forms, but nothing to do with God. They did not know God! There are many religious spokesmen today who are afraid of speaking the truth for fear of losing their jobs, their authority and prestige. They may have a form of godliness, but are strangers to the power of the Gospel. They may profess Christianity, but are ashamed of the Gospel and the truths contained in the Bible. They are enemies of the cross, even though they may wear a cross around their necks or on their clothes. The higher they become in the eyes of men, the lower they become in the eyes of God.

The third group is comprised of what we are calling "condemned *sinner*." ***This is expressed in Matthew 27:44, "Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing."*** The sins of these men had finally caught up with them and judgment had come. They listen to the taunts of the crowd and join in with the mockery. They had either heard of Jesus and His ministry or had read the caption on His cross which said, ***"THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS"*** (verse 37). Although they were suffering, they still could mock a man who was claiming to be a king, yet helpless to defend Himself. Not only must our Savior suffer physical pain, He must suffer mental and emotional pain as He listens to the ongoing taunts. It is as if all men have forsaken Him. But while it was physically possible for Jesus to have come down from the cross, it was morally and spiritually impossible for Him to do so. His obedience kept Him on the cross. Had He saved Himself, He would not have been able to save others! Satan's arrows are being driven deep into the Being of Christ, but He stands steadfast in His submission to His mission.