

The Wickedness of the Crucifixion, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 27:27-37

Code: 2395

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, scholar Frederic Farrar wrote The Life of Christ (N.Y.: A.L. Burt, 1874). In it he said this:

A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly--dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, shame, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds--all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.

The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries--especially of the head and stomach--became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of burning and raging thirst, and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself--of death, the awful unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most--bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release (p. 499).

One thing is clear: first century executions were not like modern ones. The authorities did not seek a quick, painless death to preserve a small measure of dignity for the criminal. On the contrary, they sought an agonizing torture to completely humiliate him. Such was the torture that our Lord Jesus Christ endured for us.

The crucifixion of Christ is the climax of redemptive history. God's plan of salvation culminates in the cross, as the Lord bears the sins of the world and provides salvation for all who believe in Him.

A. The Viewpoint of John

The cross demonstrates the grace, mercy, goodness, kindness, and love of God like no other event in history ever can. We could go to Scripture and focus entirely on God's self-revelation of love and grace in the cross. That is, for the most part, the intention of the gospel of John. He looked at the cross from the viewpoint of God. He revealed that it is the fulfillment of prophecy--that God's plan is on schedule. As you read John's record of the crucifixion, you cannot help but be in awe at the wonder of God's glory, grace, and love in the death of Jesus Christ.

B. The Viewpoint of Matthew

Matthew approaches the cross from the opposite perspective. He showed how the death of Jesus Christ demonstrated the wickedness of the human heart.

When Peter preached his sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:22-23, he said that God had ordained Christ's death, but that the wicked hands of the people brought it to pass. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." If ever there was a place where we could see that verse proven, it is at the crucifixion of Christ.

1. The triumph of wickedness

It is not as if wickedness had not appeared previously in the life of Christ. It tried to kill Him at birth. It tried to discredit His teaching and stop His miracles. Wickedness secured His condemnation by violating every standard of justice in the Jewish and Gentile world. It betrayed Him by the kiss of a

hypocrite. It had Him arrested. It framed Him, slapped His face, punched Him, spit on Him, scourged Him, and mocked Him. Yet before it is through, wickedness will kill Him.

2. The torment of wickedness

However, even death itself wasn't enough to satiate its evil desire--it had to torment Him as well. It had to mock, scorn, and reproach Him until He breathed His last. Christ's enemies were so filled with wickedness that His death seemed to be a disappointment to them. They would have wished to prolong it so they could continue spewing their venom on Him. The heartless intensity of the words and deeds of all who surrounded the cross beg language to describe them.

Matthew described four groups of wicked people at the cross: the ignorant wicked, the knowing wicked, the fickle wicked, and the religious wicked.

I. THE IGNORANT WICKED--The Callous Soldiers (vv. 27-37)

A. The Mockery of Jesus (vv. 27-30)

1. The guilt of Pilate (v. 27)

"Then the soldiers of the governor [Pilate] took Jesus into the common hall [praetorium], and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers."

a) The sin of Pilate Pilate had already violated justice, conscience, conviction, truth, integrity, and character. He sold his soul for popularity and security. When he was cornered by the Jewish population, the security of his position was in jeopardy. He was fearful that another insurrection from the Jews would result in the loss of his job and reputation. He felt forced into doing things to Jesus he knew weren't just. Instead of releasing Jesus, whom he pronounced repeatedly as innocent, he tried to satiate the mob's thirst for blood by scourging and mocking Him. He then tried to present Christ as a pathetic individual who couldn't possibly be a threat to Rome or Israel. He hoped this strategy would cause the crowd to stop short of forcing him to execute an innocent man. b) The soldiers of Pilate As we begin our study, Jesus had already endured the scourging (Matt. 27:26; see pp. xx-xx). Following the scourging but before the crucifixion, the scene in verse 27 took place. Jesus was taken to the common hall, and the whole band was gathered around Him. The Greek word translated "whole band" is speira, and refers to six hundred soldiers. (1) Their identification These soldiers were Roman legionnaires who, for the most part, were not Italian. Acts 10:1 says Cornelius was in the Italian band, but that was not the norm. Rome generally conscripted soldiers out of the countries it occupied. The Romans frequently used Syrian soldiers in Israel because they could speak Aramaic, which was the common language of Israel. The majority of Rome's soldiers were not necessarily Roman, but they reflected Roman military power and presence. The Jews were exempt from service in the Roman military, and they wouldn't have served even if they could. (2) Their ignorance This particular band that surrounded Christ was under Pilate, whose headquarters were at Caesarea on the seacoast, about 60 miles west of Jerusalem. They were probably not familiar with Jerusalem and its religion. They certainly didn't understand much about Jesus, if they even understood anything at all. So what they did was out of ignorance. He was just a prisoner to them, and a very curious one at that. It wasn't often that they got to meet prisoners who claimed to be King. The soldiers would have seen Jesus as a strange and pathetic figure. His face had been slapped and punched until it was swollen and bruised. He had been spit on. His body had been lacerated, and He was bleeding profusely from the shoulders down. They knew He claimed to be a King from what the people screamed about Him. They also knew the people wanted Him dead. So they saw Him as a fake and a fraud, perhaps even mentally deranged, worthy of their mockery. Yet throughout His encounter with them, Jesus never said a thing. The soldiers treated Him like a clown as they would with a poor idiot boy in the street. They were cold, indifferent, and ignorant. c) The supervision of Pilate Under the tutelage of Pilate, the soldiers mocked Jesus' claim to be a king. I do not believe the soldiers did this independent of Pilate; I think they did it under his watchful eye. John 19:4 tells us that when Jesus was brought out to the crowd after the scourging, Pilate "went forth

again." So he must have been in the praetorium, aware of what was happening. I'm sure he looked on it with favor because he wanted Jesus to appear as a mock king. Then he could confront the Jews about their claim that He was a threat to Rome or Israel.

2. The game of the soldiers (vv. 28-30)

Already bleeding and in agony from the scourging, Jesus became the object of ridicule as the soldiers began their game. They didn't do it reluctantly. They hated the Jews. They would thoroughly enjoy any opportunity they might have to mock them. Jesus had never done anything to them. Yet they had no interest in alleviating His agony. They showed no concern for His suffering and no interest in healing His wounds. They were bent on aggravating His agony. They have been trained to torture and kill, so they were thirsty for blood. They reflected the heart of their father, the devil, who is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

a) The stripping of the King (v. 28a) "And they stripped him" When Jesus was scourged, He was naked. After the scourging was complete, the soldiers put Jesus' inner robe back on Him. One can only imagine the pain that rough cloth would have caused when put over His open wounds. He had worn it for some time before He was brought back into the praetorium. As the soldiers began their game, they heartlessly ripped that robe off Him once more, again exposing His wounds. b) The symbols of the King (vv. 28b-29)(1) The robe (v. 28b) "And put on him a scarlet robe." The soldiers found a discarded scarlet robe--a robe that one of the soldier's would have worn as an outer garment--and put it on Jesus. Matthew said it was scarlet in color; John said it was purple (John 19:2). There must be a reason for that. (a) Purple John may have seen it as purple because that color represents majesty. That would give greater emphasis to the soldiers' treatment of Jesus as a mock king. (b) Scarlet Isaiah 1:18 says, "Though your sins be as scarlet." Matthew may have seen the robe as the symbol of our sins. Jesus bore our sins. He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). (2) The crown (v. 29a) "When they had plaited a crown [Gk., stephanos] of thorns [Gk., akantha], they put it upon his head" We don't know what plant the thorns came from. The soldiers intended for the crown to be a cheap and painful imitation of the wreath worn by Tiberius Caesar. Verse 29 says the soldiers put it (Gk., epithitemi) around His head, no doubt crushing it down around His head. The thorns pierced His brow and little streams of blood would have run down his face. I am reminded of Genesis 3:18, when after the sin of Adam and Eve, God cursed the earth and said, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth." I see the crown as a symbol of His bearing the curse of the world. Jesus not only took away sin on the cross, but removed the curse of the whole earth as well. Romans 8:19 says the whole creation waits "for the manifestation of the sons of God." It too shall be liberated from the curse. (3) The sceptre (v. 29b) "[They put] a reed in his right hand" The right hand is the symbol of authority. The reed symbolized a king's sceptre. It was made out of a common stalk. The soldiers put it in His hand to mock Christ's authority. On Roman coins, the image of Tiberius was shown holding a scepter. c) The suffering of the King (vv. 29c-30)(1) Mocking His royalty (vv. 29c-30a) "They bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spat upon him" There was no sincerity in that proclamation, only sarcasm and ridicule. In Matthew 26:68 the Jewish leaders mocked His claim to be a prophet. The ultimate human indignity is to be spit upon. The Jewish leaders had spit on Him (Matt. 26:67), and now the Roman soldiers were doing so. It seems as if the whole world gathered to spit on the Son of God. If they only knew whom they were mocking. If they only had known on whom they placed a crown of thorns and a scarlet robe! Can you imagine what hell must be like today for those who spit on Jesus that day? What must be their thoughts as they remember when it all seemed like so much fun in the judgment hall of Pilate? (2) Mocking His authority (v. 30c) "And took the reed, and smote him on the head." The soldiers hit His head repeatedly with the reed. Why? To make a joke of His authority. What kind of a King could He possibly be if they could rip His scepter out of His hand and beat Him on the head with it? Christ's sovereignty was a joke to them. They thought if they could spit on Him and hit Him in the head with his own scepter, and have nothing happen in retaliation, then He couldn't be a King. The

mockery of Jesus was a display of unbelievable human evil. The soldiers didn't have anything against Christ; they were reveling in the depravity of their hearts in their brutal amusement. Yet through it all Jesus endured. He said nothing, offering no resistance. He was willing to suffer for sinners--not only the death on the cross, but everything that came with it as well. Hebrews 12:3 says He "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." He endured it because He knew it was going to happen. Earlier told His disciples, "We go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him. And the third day he shall rise again" (Matt. 20:18- 19). Jesus was right on schedule. He had been to the Jews; now He was with the Gentiles. And He remained silent despite the humiliation and agony.

B. The Crucifixion of Jesus (vv. 31-37)

Matthew skips over what happened immediately after the mockery, but John 19:4-16 tells us (see pp. xx-xx).

1. The plan (v. 31)

"After they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."

Commentator William Barclay tells us that crucifixion "originated in Persia; and its origin came from the fact that the earth was considered to be sacred to Ormuzd, the god, and the criminal was lifted up from it that he might not defile the earth, which was God's property. From Persia, crucifixion passed to Carthage in North Africa; and it was from Carthage that Rome learned it" (The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 2 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 365). The Romans used crucifixion extensively. At the time of Christ and during the era of Roman occupation in Israel, the Romans crucified at least 30,000 Jews. It was carried out along the highways to warn people of what happens to someone who violates Roman law. Crucifixion was a vivid illustration of the consequences of going against Rome.

2. The pilgrimage (v. 32-33)

a) Inside the city (v. 32a) "As they came out" The soldiers were going to lead a victim to crucifixion, so they followed the normal procedure. Matthew skips over some things that happened before they left the city. Executions had to take place out of the city because the Jews didn't want it to be defiled (e.g. Lev. 4:12). Hebrews 13:12 says that Jesus "suffered outside the gate." We do need to understand what happened to Jesus after He was lead from the praetorium but before He left the city. (1) The definition of the cross John 19:16-17 says, "Then delivered he him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he, bearing his cross, went forth." We know that Jesus began the procession by carrying His cross. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that Jesus carried only a part of the cross. Some think He carried just the crosspiece and some think He carried the centerpiece. I believe He carried the whole thing. The cross would have weighed in excess of two hundred pounds. That was an incredible weight for someone in His condition to carry. (2) The display of the criminal The procession would have gone like this: the prisoner would be surrounded by a quaternion of four Roman soldiers, one at each corner, moving Him through the city with other soldiers before and behind. Jerusalem was swelling with pilgrims who had come to worship and celebrate the Passover. And since this was the day of the Passover, the city would have been crawling with people. The soldiers would parade the prisoner down the main streets. Either hanging from the prisoner's neck, or being held by someone walking in front, was a placard explaining why the prisoner was to be executed. In that way, the people would know the price of the crime.

Jesus' Last Public Sermon

During His procession through the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus gave His last public sermon, and it was a brief one.

1. The lesson

Luke 23:27-29 says, "There followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed." That is something no Jewish mother could ever imagine being said. Yet there was a day coming when they would wish they had no children. Jesus also said, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (v. 30). There was coming such terrifying judgment that they would wish they didn't have children because they were going to have to see them slaughtered.

2. The proverb

Jesus continued with the following proverb: "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (v. 31). Now what did He mean by that? Jesus was the green tree, and the populace of Jerusalem was the dry one. If the Romans would crucify Him, an innocent man, what would they do to the Jewish nation, which was guilty? Because Jesus was a green tree, He should not have been considered as fuel for burning. But since the nation was dry, it should have been burned. You burn dry wood, not green wood. If the Romans would kill an innocent man, what would they do to the guilty, who continued to initiate insurrections against the Romans? Of course Jesus was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was precipitated by their hostilities against Rome.

Jesus' last message to the people was of coming judgment. And it came very fast, within the lifetime of many of the people. The land of Israel has yet to recover.

In Matthew 27:32 the procession came out of the city through the northern gate along the main highway. Executions occurred along main highways so the people passing by would have agonizing testimony to the consequences of committing crimes against Rome.(3) The dissipation of ChristAs the procession came out of the city, it was apparent that Jesus' strength was giving out. I believe He was the strongest man who ever lived because He was without sin. There was no defilement in His body; therefore it would have been all that God intended an undefiled body to be. Yet even given that, Jesus' strength ran out. His blood was draining away. The agony He endured is beyond belief. Up to now He had no sleep since the night before. He had been betrayed by Judas and witnessed the defection of His disciples. He had undergone the injustice of His trials, and endured the humiliations that followed. The scourgings and beatings had taxed His strength. There were no angels to strengthen Him as they had after the forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).b) Outside the city (v. 32b)"They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross."(1) The provision of Simon(a) His residenceCyrene was a Greek settlement located west of Alexandria and directly south of Greece on the north African coast, about ten miles inland. Today it would be located in Libya. Many Jews lived there because it was a center of trade. Simon no doubt was in Jerusalem because of the Passover. We do know that there was a Jewish synagogue for Cyrenians in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9). We believe he was Jewish because Simon is a Jewish name.(b) His conscriptionMark 15:21 says, "They compel one Simon, of Cyrene, who passed by, coming out of the country." As Jesus came out of the city, Simon was coming out of the country. We don't know why he was walking in the country. He may have been visiting someone, or perhaps he was securing some things in preparation of the Passover. Some have suggested that he shouldn't have been out walking on a holy day. But the sabbath law didn't necessarily apply on a feast day, only on a sabbath day. So it was fine for him to be out walking. As he walked by the procession, he was conscripted by the Roman soldiers to carry the cross of Jesus. No Roman would carry a criminal's cross, and certainly not that of a Jewish criminal.(c) His familyMark 15:21 says that Simon was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." Alexander and Rufus are Greek names. So Simon, a Jewish man, gave his sons Greek names. That was not an unusual practice; it was quite common,

especially for someone living in a region other than Israel. Why did Mark identify Alexander and Rufus? Because Mark probably wrote his gospel from Rome, and his first readers may well have belonged to the Roman church. It is likely that they knew Alexander and Rufus. The apostle Paul said, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine" (Rom. 16:13). Who would the mother of Rufus be? The wife of Simon. (d) His salvation It's not difficult to imagine that Simon, although inadvertently passing by and being made to carry the cross of Jesus Christ, came to Christ through that experience and raised two sons who became pillars in the church at Rome. Evidently his wife became like a mother to the apostle Paul. So what began as an enforced act may well have been the means of a family's conversion. I like to think that when we get to heaven we're going to meet Simon of Cyrene, along with his wife and children. (2) The place of the skull (v. 33) "When they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull" Golgotha is an Aramaic term transliterated into Greek and then into English. It means "skull place." Luke used the Greek word kranion, from which we get "cranium" (Luke 23:33). The Latin Vulgate translated that "Calvary," which is the Latin word for "cranium." Some have suggested it was a place where skulls were laying on the ground. But that would mean it should have been called the place of the skulls. Furthermore, you can be sure that the Jews wouldn't allow bones to be lying around. It was called the place of a skull because it was shaped like that. I have visited a place in Jerusalem that is believed to be that very spot. It still looks like a skull. It is located right outside the north part of Jerusalem along the main highway.

3. The preparation (v. 34)

a) The sedative offered (v. 34a) "They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall" (1) Its purpose The Greek text indicates that they gave Him wine (Gk., oinos) to drink. Gall is a general term referring to something bitter (cf. Ps. 69:21). Mark 15:23 says that myrrh was mixed with the wine. Myrrh is a bitter gum resin that was put into the wine as a way of calming a person (cf. Psalm 69:21). In the first century A.D. it was thought to have narcotic properties (Dioscorides Pedanius, Materia Medica, I. lxi.3). The soldiers didn't look on the drugging of the victim as an act of mercy; they didn't care if the victim suffered or not. The drugging accommodated them because it might have been very difficult to hammer four nails through someone's limbs if he weren't drugged to some degree. Consequently, it was helpful for them to have some way to drug their victim. (2) Its provision According to tradition an association of wealthy women in Jerusalem provided gall to ease the pain of the victim (cf. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 43a). They did that to fulfill Proverbs 31:6: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts." b) The sedative refused (v. 34b) "When he had tasted it, he would not drink." Jesus wouldn't drink the mixture of wine and myrrh. Why? Because He said earlier, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). He was not going to allow any of His senses to be dulled. He was committed to enduring the full pain of the cross.

4. The profits (v. 35)

"They crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots."

Matthew uses no dramatic adjectives to describe the pain. He simply says, "They crucified him." The Preoccupation of Scripture As I looked at Matthew 27:35, I thought perhaps the English translation missed something. So I examined the Greek text and discovered that it was even less significant than the English text. The Greek text literally says, "The having crucified Him ones parted His garments." The crucifixion was referred to offhandedly only as a way to describe the ones who parted Christ's garments. Why did Matthew not go into more detail? Because his point is the wickedness of the men. The Bible is not preoccupied with the physical agony of Jesus on the cross; it is preoccupied with the wickedness of men. It doesn't describe the agony of Jesus; it only describes what men did to Him. Outside of what Christ endured in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44), we know nothing of His agony. Even His words while on the cross do not express His physical agony, only His separation from God.

A Scribal Addition

Matthew 27:35 in the King James Version adds the following prophecy: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." That is a quote from Psalm 22:18. But that prophecy doesn't belong in Matthew 27:35. It was most likely borrowed from John 19:24. It is not in the oldest manuscripts of Matthew. What probably happened was that a scribe copying Matthew remembered the prophecy from John 19:24, and added it in the margin of Matthew, just like the verses you find in the margins of an annotated Bible. Later, another scribe copying the same section might have thought the prophecy should be included in the text, removed it from the margin and entered it into the text. You can see why it is important to search out the oldest manuscripts.

All that doesn't make the prophecy any less true. Matthew 27:35 is a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18. The apostle John made a point of recording fulfilled prophecy because he was looking at the cross from God's viewpoint. However, Matthew left such references out because he was concerned about showing the wickedness of men.

Matthew said that Jesus' crucifiers parted His garments--they divided them up. A Jewish man usually wore five pieces of clothing: shoes, an inner garment, a headpiece, belt, and outer cloak. The soldiers each took one piece and according to John 19:23, the inner garment remained. It was a seamless garment that had holes for the arms and head. Since there were four soldiers, they decided to gamble for the inner garment by casting lots. That was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, only Matthew didn't comment on it. He wanted us to see how indifferent the soldiers were.

5. The protectors (v. 36)

"Sitting down they watched him there."

Why did they sit and watch Jesus? It was their job. They were on guard in case someone tried to be unduly savage to Christ or in case someone tried to rescue Him. With cruel mockery they stayed on their guard to make sure nothing happened beyond what had already happened.

6. The pronouncement (v. 37)

"And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Comparing Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John gives us the complete statement: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The Jewish leaders didn't like that. In John 19:21 they told Pilate to change the wording. But Pilate said, "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:22). Pilate was mocking the leaders. He wanted the people to look at that claim and laugh at both Jesus and the Jewish nation. He even had it written in three languages: Greek, the universal language; Aramaic, the language of the area; and Latin, the language of the Romans. Pilate remained sarcastic to the very end.

The world is full of people who are like the soldiers. There are many people who laugh at even the thought of Jesus, seeing Him as a joke. The world is full of ignorant people who are callous toward Jesus Christ. They don't know who it is they are rejecting. Unless they awaken to Him, they'll spend an eternity with the same kind of remorse these soldiers are experiencing now.

However, there is a beautiful ending to this scene. Matthew 27:54 says, "When the centurion [a commander of a hundred soldiers], and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God." Luke 23:47 says, "When the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." Out of that group of soldiers at least one came to true faith in Christ. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, put there by ignorant, wicked men, He made the salvation He was procuring for all men available to His crucifiers. Is He not the friend of sinners?

Focusing on the Facts

1. What viewpoint did John emphasize in his record of the crucifixion? What viewpoint did Matthew

emphasize?

2. What effect did wickedness have on Christ throughout His life?
3. How many soldiers gathered around Christ in the common hall? Who were they (Matt. 27:27)?
4. Why can we assume this group of soldiers was ignorant of Jesus?
5. What is one possible reason that Matthew and John used different colors to describe the robe the soldiers put on Jesus (Matt. 27:28)?
6. What did the crown of thorns symbolize (Matt. 27:29)?
7. What did the reed symbolize (Matt. 27:29)?
8. What characteristics of Jesus did the soldiers mock (Matt. 27:29-30)?
9. Why did Jesus endure such severe treatment in silence?
10. Why did the Romans crucify their victims alongside the highways?
11. Why did executions have to take place outside the city?
12. Describe the procession that led Jesus to the cross?
13. What did Jesus teach the people about as He was being led to the cross? What did the proverb describe (Luke 23:27-31)?
14. Who was Simon? Why was it ultimately significant that he was chosen to carry the cross of Christ (Matt. 27:32)?
15. Describe the location where Christ was crucified. What does Calvary mean (Matt. 27:33)?
16. What was the purpose for giving Christ a mixture of wine and myrrh to drink? Who provided this mixture for the soldiers?
17. Why did Jesus refuse to drink the wine mixture?
18. Why didn't Matthew go into more detail in describing the crucifixion of Christ?
19. Why did the soldiers sit down and watch Jesus while He hung on the cross?

Pondering the Principles

1. We have seen that the crucifixion of Christ was one great example of Jeremiah 17:9, which says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." What is on the inside of man--not the outside--is what is most important to God. Look up the following verses: 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 44:20-21, 139:1-4; and Hebrews 4:12. What is God able to see when He looks at any man? What would God see if He were to look inside of you? If there are things He can see in your life that you wish He couldn't, take this time to confess them before God. Pour out all the evil you have been holding in your heart. Ask Him to reveal to you any evil that you might store in your heart in the future. Now thank God that He loves you so much that He is willing to relieve you of the burden and guilt of sin.
2. Review the section on the mocking of Jesus (see pp. xx-xx). How do you think you would respond if put in similar circumstances? What have you learned from Christ's attitude toward those who mocked Him? How can you apply the things you have learned to situations you face today?
3. There are many people who fall into the category of the ignorant wicked. You may even know some of them. Has your perception of those people changed as a result of this study? How might you approach them about the claims of Christ? Remember, although you are not of this world, you are still in it. That means you cannot avoid associating with the ungodly to some degree. Just be sure that when you do, you present the claims of Christ to them. Let them be ignorant no longer.

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