

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

John 19:17-27

John 19:17-27 - "And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, ¹⁸ where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.

¹⁹ Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁰ Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

²¹ Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews.'""

²² Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."

Background Notes

Verse 17 says that Jesus, "*bearing His cross, went out to a place called The Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.*" Most likely the Lord was carrying the heavy crossbeam of His cross. We know from Mark's gospel that the Lord fell, and Simon of Cyrene was asked to carry that crossbeam the rest of the way to the place of execution.

They went out of the city to "The Place of the Skull," or *Golgotha*. ("Calvary" is the Latin translation of *Golgotha*.) We're not sure what "the place of the skull" means. Was it called "the place of the skull" because it was a place of execution, or was it because the hill was shaped like - or resembled - a skull?

Although we assume from many songs and pictures, the Bible does *not* indicate that Jesus was crucified on top of a hill. That idea comes to us from two traditional sites of Calvary, where there are small hills. (In fact, Jerusalem is built on and surrounded by hills.) Most likely Jesus was crucified right next to a highway, where the horror of crucifixion would strike fear into the hearts of passersby, and help to prevent rebellion against Rome.

One site for the crucifixion is located within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the old city of Jerusalem. The other site, known as "Gordon's Calvary," is just outside the Damascus Gate of the Old City. It's interesting that "Gordon's Calvary" is

located next to a small hillside, and the cliff face of the hillside has features that resemble a skull. However, we can't be sure which is the actual site. Both sites have tombs nearby.

But remember - the actual site of Christ's death doesn't really matter – what really matters is the fact that He willingly died there for our sins!

Verse 18 tells us that two other men were crucified with Him, with Jesus in the center. This was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53:12 - "...*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.*"

If Barabbas had not been released, he would have been crucified on that central cross - but the Lord Jesus took Barabbas' place on that central cross. What a great picture of substitution! The Lord died instead of the transgressor who should have died.

The inscription on Jesus Christ's cross was written in three languages: Hebrew (the native language of the Jewish people), Latin (the official language of Rome), and Greek (the common language of written communication at that time.) As you know, the New Testament books were written in Greek.

The inscription on a Roman cross was indicated the crime for which the person was being crucified. That's why the Jewish leaders objected, and said to Pilate, "*Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, 'I am the King of the Jews'*" (v21). In other words, they wanted Pilate to write that Jesus had **claimed** to be King of the Jews. They didn't want it written as a **fact**! But Pilate said, "*What I have written, I have written*" – and he probably spoke with sarcasm and in mockery of the Jewish leaders.

Pilate should have shown that kind of firm stance earlier. Now it was too late. Pilate will be judged by the truth of what he wrote. Jesus of Nazareth was – and is - indeed the King! Pilate will have to admit that truth when that King is his Judge in a coming day.

Four women were standing near the cross (v25). Mary, the mother of Jesus was there, and Salome, who may have been Mary's sister (we see this when we harmonize John's account with Mark's account). Salome was Zebedee's wife, and the mother of James and John – and that would make James and John cousins of the Lord Jesus. The third woman at the cross was Mary the wife of Clopas, and the fourth was Mary Magdalene. We read of Mary Magdalene in Luke 8 – a woman the Lord had healed of demonic possession.

Doctrinal/Teaching Points

1. It is significant that the gruesome details of the crucifixion are not mentioned.

Verses 17-18: "*And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.*"

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John did not describe the gruesome details of the crucifixion. He didn't describe how the Roman soldiers pounded the nails into the Lord's hands and feet. He didn't describe how they hoisted and dropped the cross into place, which must have caused excruciating pain for the Lord. John didn't describe any of the physical pain associated with dying by crucifixion.

Why didn't John mention these gruesome details? Because the focus of the Gospel is not on the physical pain of the crucifixion, but on **the purpose of the crucifixion!**

The crucifixion was the means by which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for the sins of the world. Your sins and my sins! It was during the crucifixion that the Lord Jesus experienced the wrath of God against sin, and then died in our place to pay the penalty of the sin of the world. It was not the physical pain of Roman crucifixion that brought us salvation. We have salvation because our Lord Jesus suffered the **judgment of God against sin** while He was on that cross. He died as our Substitute.

So it is significant that the gruesome details of the crucifixion were not mentioned.

2. It is significant that the Roman soldiers fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22.

Verses 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."*

Verse 24 is a quote from Psalm 22:18. The soldiers mentioned here were Roman soldiers. The clothing of the victim was considered the "spoils" of the Roman soldiers who were in charge of the execution. When the soldiers divided up the Lord's clothing and gambled for His seamless robe, they certainly didn't realize that they were fulfilling a prophecy written by King David about **1000 years** before this time!

Skeptics of the Bible have a hard time with the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies like Psalm 22:18, because they prove the supernatural character of the Bible. Skeptics will often try to dismiss the prophecies by saying they were actually written up **after the event** that is supposedly prophesied. But the skeptic **can't** say that Psalm 22 was written up after the event of the crucifixion, because copies of Psalm 22 were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls – scrolls that were written **at least 100 years before Jesus Christ!**

Skeptics will also try to get around some of the Messianic prophecies by saying they were fulfilled "artificially" - like the prediction that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). The skeptic of the Bible will say that Jesus and His disciples knew this prophecy, so they obtained a young donkey and the Lord Jesus rode into the city on the donkey. Thus Jesus and the disciples manipulated a fulfillment - or "artificially fulfilled" - the messianic prophecy in Zechariah 9.

But the skeptic has a hard time getting around the prophecy quoted in John 20:23-24. It was Roman soldiers who gambled for our Lord's clothes, so it would have been impossible for Jesus and the disciples to "artificially arrange" this fulfillment - even if they had wanted to! In addition, it would have been impossible for the early Christians to fabricate and

write up this story as a fulfillment of prophecy, and get everyone to believe it that it was true - if indeed it did not happen.

It is significant that Roman soldiers fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22.

3. It is significant that Jesus did not address Mary as "mother."

Verses 26-27: *“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”*

We might think that the Lord would have said, **“Mother**, behold your Son” to Mary – especially as He said, “Behold your mother!” to John. His words were not disrespectful, but it is significant that Jesus didn’t address Mary as “Mother.” Certainly if Mary was meant to be exalted to the place that some people have given her, calling her “Mother of God,” the Lord would have addressed her here as “Mother.”

While Mary was given the honor of being the human mother of our Lord Jesus, she was only a human, and she needed salvation just like the rest of us. The Bible nowhere teaches or indicates that Mary is to be exalted or worshiped. In fact, Mary is not even mentioned in the New Testament epistles, which are the books of doctrine for the Church.

So it is significant that Jesus didn’t address Mary as “mother.”

Practical Application

We have a responsibility to care for our aging parents.

The Bible says that we are to honor our fathers and our mothers. That's one of the Ten Commandments. Caring for our aging parents is certainly a part of honoring our parents. As Mary’s first-born son, the Lord Jesus was responsible for the care of His mother, and He made sure that John would care for his mother.

Why did the Lord entrust Mary to John’s care? It seems that by this time Joseph had already died. And remember that Mary’s other sons were not believers at this point - they became believers later.

If Mary and Salome were indeed sisters, John was Mary’s nephew, so a close relative. And John was a believer. The Lord knew that John would care for Mary as if she were his own mother. And as a close relative, John would realize that he had a responsibility to care for his widowed aunt.

Verse 27 says that *“from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”* And tradition tells us that John cared for Mary in his own home until her death.

As the Lord cared for His mother, so we have a responsibility to care for our aging parents. Unfortunately, many people - even some Christians - think of their aging parents only on Mother’s Day or Father’s Day. They don’t take much responsibility for the well being of their parents the rest of the year. And that's wrong! The Ten Commandments are not the “Ten Suggestions.” They’re commands!

Sometimes it’s very difficult to care for elderly parents, and people can come up with all kinds of excuses for why they can’t do it. But remember - **in the midst of His great suffering**, the Lord was concerned for the care of His mother!

Remember - we have a responsibility to care for our aging parents.