

LESSON EIGHT

CALVARY

Scriptural References: Matthew 27:32-61; Mark 15:21-47; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:16-42.

A. **THE SCOURGING:**

Scourging was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion. It was a punishment so truly horrible that the mind revolts at it. The sufferer was publicly stripped, tied by the hands in a bent position to a stake, and then, on the tense quivering nerves of the naked back, the blows were inflicted with a leathery thong, weighted with jagged edges of bone and lead. Each stroke cut into the quivering flesh, until the veins were laid bare. Often the scourge struck the face and knocked out the eyes and teeth. The victim generally fainted and often died.

When we study the awfulness of the Roman scourging, Peter's statement, "*by whose stripes ye were healed*" (I Peter 2:24) will have new meaning.

Instead of feeling pity for Jesus, the brutal soldiers dragged Him to the courtyard to make sport of Him. Their brutality was simply a savage delight in torturing. Over His lacerated body, they cast a purple robe, and pressed down on His head a plaited crown of thorns. In His right hand, they placed a reed for a scepter, and then made Him the subject of jesting, striking Him insultingly with rods on His thorn-crowned head. Bowing before Him they mockingly cried, "*Hail, King of the Jews.*"

Their actions were prophetic. He who wore the crown of thorns shall be King; He who held the reed shall exercise world dominion; one day every knee shall bow before Him whom they mocked.

B. **BEARING THE CROSS:**

Condemned persons were required to carry their own crosses to the place of execution. They placed the cross upon Jesus, but weak and exhausted He fell under it. The soldiers then forced a Jew of Cyrene, Simon, to carry the cross. Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Because of the place that these sons took in church history, it is thought that Simon came to the personal knowledge of a Savior.

On the way to the place of execution some women broke out into lamentations and bewailed His sad end. Jesus turned to them and told them not to weep for Him, but rather weep for themselves. He gave them warning of the destruction that would come within a generation in 70 AD.

When He reached Calvary He was offered a drink to ease His sufferings. Women who had compassion upon those being executed prepared this. This drink consisted of wine mixed with narcotics. Our Lord refused this drink for He would not suffer death for the world with a mind beclouded with drugs.

C. **CALVARY:**

The word "Calvary" is derived from the Latin and means a "skull." It corresponds to the Aramaic word "Golgotha." It was a place of execution and was located outside the gate of the city. It may have received its name because of its appearance; a bare, round, scalp like elevation.

D. CRUCIFIXION:

The cross was the most disgraceful and one of the cruelest instruments of death ever invented. The Jews never used it as a means of execution. The Romans would not allow Roman citizens to be crucified, but they reserved crucifixion for slaves and foreigners. It was the death of the most extreme anguish. The victim was first stripped naked. Then the victim was laid down with arms extended on the crossbar. A large iron nail was driven through the center of each open palm. Then the transom was raised to its position on the upright and nailed securely. Following this the feet were nailed either through the instep separately, or both together with a single iron peg. There the body was left to hang supported on four great wounds. The body was left to hang sometimes two or three days until death took place.

Death by crucifixion included all that pain and death can bring about cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, fever, tetanus, shame, torment. As time passes the torture and suffering grew more and more unbearable until the victims would plead to be put to death.

Constantine abolished death by crucifixion.

E. CHRIST ON THE CROSS:

Jesus was nailed to the cross at the third hour or nine o'clock in the morning. He died at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Among other prophecies that were fulfilled at Calvary were:

1. Psalm 22:16-18 - The soldiers cast lots for the Lord's garment because it was in one piece.
2. Isaiah 53:12 - "he was numbered with the transgressors" A thief was crucified on each side of Jesus.

At the foot of the cross stood a small band of faithful followers who showed courage and devotion. The party consisted of five: Mary, mother of Jesus, Salome, Mary, the wife of Clophas, Mary of Magdala and John.

Since the day was a feast day, the Jews asked that their legs would be broken in order to hasten death and that their bodies be taken from the cross. When the soldiers came to Jesus Christ they found that He was already dead. Therefore they did not break His legs, again fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

One of the soldiers to make certain that He was dead pierced His side with a spear and from His side came water and blood. It is claimed that blood and water coming from the body is evidence of a broken heart. Since Jesus died in six hours we may conclude that His death was due not to physical sufferings but to spiritual anguish.

F. THE MIRACLES OF THE CROSS:

1. DARKNESS:

It was noon and the brightest moment of the day. Suddenly darkness fell like a heavy curtain over the scene of tragedy. This darkness was not due to an eclipse because it was

the time of the full moon of the Passover. It was a supernatural act of God, a miracle. It seemed that the sun could not look upon the horrors of that scene.

2. RENDING OF THE VEIL IN THE TEMPLE:

This veil was the thickness of a pal breadth, sixty feet long and thirty broad, and woven of tough fabric. It separated the Holy and Most Holy Places in the Temple. This was a miracle for there can be no explanation how this could have happened. The veil was rent "from top to bottom" by God's hand, thus throwing open the Most Holy Place to all men.

3. EARTHQUAKE:

The earthquake that took place was supernatural. The rocks were rent and tombs were shaken open. After His resurrection three days later, some of the Old Testament saints were raised and appeared to the disciples.

The Centurion who had charge of the soldiers witnessed the earthquake and the darkness, cried out: *"Truly this was the Son of God."*

