

Lesson 8

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Part 1

Simon Of Cyrene

1. The Synoptic writers all mention a man named Simon of Cyrene. (Matt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26).

MAT 27:32 And as they were coming out [of Jerusalem], they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

MAR 15:21 And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

LUK 23:26 And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

- a. Jesus was led out of Jerusalem through one of the gates of the walled city.
- b. Executions took place outside the city. (Num. 15:25; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12).
- c. Cyrene was located in North Africa, and many Jews resided in Cyrene. (Acts 2:5, 10).
 - 1) The word “katoikeo” [kah toi **keh** oh] means “to inhabit, dwell, reside, to indwell.”
 - 2) This word is rendered “living” in the NASB, and the NIV has “staying.”
- d. He may have been a resident of Jerusalem since many Cyrenians dwelt there (Acts 2:10), or he may have come to Jerusalem for the Passover. There is no way of knowing for sure.
- e. Simon was a common Hebrew name.

2. Mark mentions he was “the father of Alexander and Rufus.” (Mk. 15:21).

MAR 15:21 And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

- a. This may suggest these men were known by believers.
- b. A “Rufus,” perhaps Simon’s son, is mentioned in Romans 16:13.
- c. Rufus is called “a choice man in the Lord.”
 - 1) “Choice” is from “eklektos” [eh lehk **tahs**] meaning “chosen, select, choice, excellent, elect.”
 - 2) It is meant to denote that “Rufus” was an outstanding man of God.
- d. Paul also added “also his mother and mine” speaking of the mother of Rufus.

- 1) The NIV translates “and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.”
- 2) The NIV is an interpretation of the Greek text, but it may be expressing the meaning of Paul’s unclear words.
3. It seems he was forced “to bear His cross.” (Matt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26).
 - a. It is not certain the exact meaning of these words.
 - b. It could denote: (1) the crossbeam, crosspiece (2) upright beam or (3) perhaps the whole cross.
4. Both Mark and Luke state that he was “coming from the country.” (Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:36).

MAR 15:21 And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

LUK 23:26 And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

- a. Simon was forced to bear Jesus’ cross.
- b. This may have led to his conversion if one assumes the Rufus of Mark 15:21 and Romans 16:13 refer to the same Rufus.
 - 1) This assumes that this forced experience had a positive impact on Simon and led to his conversion and the conversion of his son.
 - 2) There is no way of knowing for sure that they were the same person though it is possible.
- c. Jesus was exhausted and weakened by lack of sleep and the scourging and beatings, etc.
- d. It is no wonder He broke down under the weight of cross!

Stigma Of Cross Bearing

5. Luke adds “and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.” (Lk. 23:26).

LUK 23:26 And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

- a. It seems they may have compelled Simon back into the city to bear the cross of Jesus. (Mk. 15:21).
- b. The words “bear it after Jesus” may denote he was forced to bear one end of the cross.
- c. No Jew would willingly touch a cross because it was regarded as accursed.
- d. No Roman soldier would disgrace himself by carrying a cross for a criminal.
- e. Simon was forced to do what others did not want to do.
- f. We must be willing to bear our cross, and glory in the cross of Jesus. (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 6:14).
 - 1) Our cross is not a literal cross, but it is cross of total commitment and sacrifice.

2) We are to glory in the cross, that is, in the One who gave His life for us on the cross.

“A Great Multitude”

1. Luke makes it clear that the action of Pilate, Herod, the Sanhedrin and the mob did not agree with everyone.
2. He speaks of “a great multitude of people” who followed Jesus. (Lk. 23:27).

LUK 23:27 And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

- a. Jesus was dearly loved by many.
 - b. His death temporarily turned some or most away from Him, but not all!
 - c. There were still those who loved Jesus and were broken-hearted that He was going to be crucified.
3. Luke also records the response of Jesus to this weeping. (Lk. 23:28-31).

LUK 23:28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

LUK 23:29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'

LUK 23:30 "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'

LUK 23:31 "For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?"

- a. Jesus appears to be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70.
- b. Jesus had described the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Two Criminals Led Away To Be Crucified

LUK 23:32 And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

1. Luke brings out that two criminals [robbers] were being led out to Golgotha to be crucified. (Matt. 27:38). See Mk. 15:27).
2. These men were going to be crucified because of their sins, but Jesus was going to be crucified though He was sinless to appease the Jewish leaders and the mob they had persuaded to demand the death of Jesus.
3. Jesus was likely crucified between two robbers to bring more shame on Jesus.
4. It was designed to give every appearance that the One on the middle cross was a great sinner.
5. One can be assured Jesus was not placed on the middle cross to honor Him.

Arrival At Golgotha

MAT 27:33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull,

MAR 15:22 And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.

LUK 23:33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

JOH 19:16 So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.

JOH 19:17 They [Roman soldiers] took Jesus therefore, and He went out [of Jerusalem], bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

1. All four gospel writers identify the place of crucifixion as Golgotha.
2. “Golgotha” means “place of a skull.” It was the Hebrew [Aramaic] word meaning “skull.”
 - a. It may have been called the place of “a” or “the” skull because the bones of many who had been crucified were there.
 - 1) Some have challenged this on the basis that Jews would not permit such a place to exist near their holy city.
 - 2) It is further challenged that Jewish tombs would be near such a place. Note tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was near the cross.
 - b. Some think because the alleged hill was shaped like a skull.
 - 1) It is interesting that the word “hill” is never used in the New Testament to describe the place of “the” or “a” skull.
 - 2) This is a tradition that may or may not be true. Whether it was a hill or not is not significant.
 - c. The Latin name for this place was “Calvary.”
 - 1) “Calvary” is from the Latin “calvaria” and is the equivalent of the Greek “kranion” [krah **nee** ahn] meaning “skull.” (Matt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:17).
 - 2) The Greek is the interpretation of the Hebrew [Aramaic] “Golgotha.”
 - d. The exact location of Golgotha is not known nor can we be sure why it was called “place of a skull.”
 - 1) The shift of the city wall from time to time over the centuries makes it impossible to be sure about the exact exact location.
 - 2) In keeping with Roman custom it was probably a place near a public highway that were used for executions.
 - e. The traditional site of “Gordon’s Calvary” may or may not be the location.
3. This was the place of the execution of Jesus and the two criminals.

Cross

1. The Romans would tie or nail a person to a cross that they might die a slow, painful death.
2. Jesus was nailed [not tied] to the cross. (Lk. 24:39; Jn. 20:25; Col. 2:14).
3. The cross had three forms: (1) T (2) X (3) t.
4. Matthew 27:37 infers the cross of Jesus had a **t** shape - “above His head the charge.”
5. Crosses were not normally very high, but just high enough that the person was a short distance above the ground.

6. The cross was sometimes called “the tree” denoting it was made of wood - not that it was a literal tree. (Acts 5:30; 1 Pet. 2:24).
7. The Greek word “ksulon” [ksoo lahn] means: (1) wood (2) object made of wood (3) tree.

Christ Given Wine Mingled With Gall To Drink

MAT 27:34 they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. MAR 15:23 And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.

1. Matthew and Mark set forth that Jesus was given wine mingled “with gall” or “with myrrh.” (Matt. 27:34; Mk. 15:23).
 - a. This was a drink intended to dull senses, and was offered to Jesus before He was nailed to the cross. (Matt. 27:35).
 - b. The word “chole” [khah lay] translated “gall” or “bile” denotes something with a bitter taste.
 - c. The bitter substance mixed with the wine had a stupefying effect.
2. Both writers affirm Jesus did not drink it. (Matt. 27:34; Mk. 15:23).
3. Bible students and others have debated why the soldiers gave Jesus this drink.
 - a. Some believe it was intended as an act of mercy and argue this drugged drink was intended to ease the pain of Jesus.
 - b. This is possible, but it seems out of character for these heartless soldiers who normally made crucifixion as painful and humiliating as possible.
 - c. Some believe it was offered to make those being crucified more manageable.
 - d. Normally a fully conscious person would fight his executioners, but there is no evidence Jesus was fighting them. He was willingly laying down His life. (Jn. 10:18).
 - e. Assuming they were giving Jesus a drink to ease His pain, Jesus refused to drink of it.
 - f. Jesus had to suffer fully to make atonement for the sins of mankind. There could be no short-cuts.
 - g. Some hold the drink was bitter, and Jesus refused to drink on that basis.
 - h. We will never know for sure why Jesus did not drink, but the fact is that He refused the drink.
 - i. He suffered fully for the sins of mankind. (Isa. 53:4-6).

Christ Crucified And Garments Divided

MAT 27:35 And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots; MAR 15:24 And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

LUK 23:34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

JOH 19:23 The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.

JOH 19:24 They said therefore to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."

1. All four gospel writers state the soldiers cast lots for the garments of Jesus. (Matt. 27:35; Mk. 15:24; Lk. 23:34; Jn. 19:23, 24).
2. They cast lots for His outer garments. (Jn. 19:23).

JOH 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.

3. They did not tear His seamless tunic. (Jn. 19:24).
 - a. The word "chiton" [kee **tohn**] referred to the tunic, that is, the seamless under garment of Jesus.
 - b. The under garment was usually two pieces, and reached from the shoulders to the knees.
4. All of this John states was the fulfillment of the Scripture. (Jn. 19:24). See Psa. 22:18.

JOH 19:24 They said therefore to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."

5. The crucifixion detail was composed of 4 soldiers under the command of a centurion. (Matt. 27:54; Jn. 19:23).
6. Clothing consisted of these items: (1) Head gear (2) Sandals (3) Girdle (4) Outer garment (5) Inner garment.
7. Soldiers regarded the second hand clothes of those crucified as part of their pay.
8. Considering all that Jesus had experienced, His clothing could not have been in very good condition.
9. One wonders why they would want the clothing they were dividing.

Hour Of Crucifixion

MAR 15:25 And it was the third hour when they crucified Him.

1. Mark stated it was "the third hour" whereas John stated "it was about the sixth hour."
2. Here are some thoughts on the problem.
 - a. John gave the appropriate time of the crucifixion - "about the sixth hour." (Jn. 19:14).
 - b. It is possible there is a copyist error.
 - c. The Roman numerals for "third" and "sixth" were very similar.
 - d. It is possible we an error made by a scribe.

- e. It is certain that John who was a eye witness did not make a mistake about what he was reporting.
3. Mark appears to be giving the best appropriation of the actual time.
 4. Some say John used Roman reckoning that would make it about 6 o'clock in the morning.
 - a. The could have been well after 6:00 A.M. since John uses the words "about the sixth hour."
 - b. This interpretation does not take into account the people did not ordinarily use Roman time that began at midnight.
 - c. The interpretation does not seem to allow time for all the events that took place as soon as it was dawn - post-dawn trial before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin, first trial before Pilate, the trial before Herod, second trial before Pilate, the trip to Golgotha and the crucifixion.
 5. Some say the 3rd hour denotes the 3rd division of the day.
 - a. The day was divided into four parts: (1) 1st division - 6 A.M. to 9 A.M. (2) 2nd division - 9 A.M. to 12 noon (3) 3rd division - 12 P.M. to 3 P.M. (4) 4th division - 3 P.M. to 6 P.M.
 - b. This interpretation, if correct, suggests Mark's account had not been corrupted by some scribe.
 - c. It is also suggests that Mark's account agrees with the other writers and the crucifixion was late morning.
 6. Some scholars believe Mark and John were not concerned about giving the exact time, but were merely giving approximations to their readers. Remember there was not a clock giving the exact time, but time had to be approximated by the position of the sun.
 7. It is very difficult to be absolutely sure about the exact time of the actual crucifixion Friday morning, but Jesus was crucified some time before noon.
 8. Jesus had already been led to Golgotha and was on the cross "the sixth hour."
 - a. The Synoptic writers stated darkness was over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. (Matt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44).
 - b. It would seem Jesus had been on the cross for a time when the darkness covered the land.

Soldiers And Enemies Watch Over Him There

MAT 27:36 and [the soldiers] sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.

1. These heartless men had crucified Jesus, and were now observing the suffering of Jesus.
2. They were fulfilling their evil orders that had come from Pilate to the centurion in charge of the crucifixion. (Matt. 27:54; Jn. 19:23).
3. The guards also prevented any rescue attempts, and were there also to carry out any additional orders given them by the centurion and his superiors.
4. This cruelty included breaking the legs of the two thieves and the legs of Jesus if He had not already been dead. (Jn. 19:33).

JOH 19:33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

5. It also included the driving of a spear into the side of Jesus, and the humiliating remarks made by others and themselves.

Charge [Inscription] Put Above His Head
Matt. 27:37; Mk. 15:26; Lk. 23:38; Jn. 19:19-21

MAT 27:37 And they put up above His head the charge [indictment] against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

MAR 15:26 And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

LUK 23:38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

JOH 19:19 And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

JOH 19:20 Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek.

JOH 19:21 And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

JOH 19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

1. Each of the gospel writers mention this inscription, and give a paraphrase of it. (Matt. 27:37; Mk. 15:26; Lk. 23:38; Jn. 19:19).

Matthew -Matt. 27:37	"THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."
Mark - Mk. 15:26	"THE KING OF THE JEWS."
Luke - Lk. 23:38	"THIS IS...The KING OF THE JEWS'
John - John 19:19	"JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."
Total	THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS

2. John points out this inscription was written in three languages - Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.
 - a. These were common languages in Palestine and elsewhere.
 - b. This inscription was intended to mock Jesus and all could read it in their language or languages.
 - c. The wording of the inscription may or may not have been the same in all three languages.
 - d. Latin was the official language of the Roman empire and Greek was the common language of the empire.
 - e. Hebrew or Aramaic was the language spoken by the Jews.
3. John also mentions that Pilate wrote the inscription. (Jn. 19:19).

JOH 19:19 And Pilate wrote an inscription **also**, and put it on the cross. And it was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

4. The word “also” suggests there were 2 inscriptions and this likely accounts for some or all the differences in wording.
 - a. You have two inscriptions in three different languages.
 - b. This plus the possibility of paraphrasing easily explains minor differences in the wording of the writers.
5. Pilate wrote the inscription to spite the Jews who had pressured or forced him to crucify Jesus.
6. The Jewish leaders argued Pilate was not a friend of Caesar if he released Jesus. (Jn. 19:12).

JOH 19:12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out *to be* a king opposes Caesar."

Two Robbers Crucified With Him

MAT 27:38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

MAR 15:27 And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

JOH 19:18 There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

1. Matthew and Mark inform us the two men were “robbers.” (Matt. 27:38, 44; Mk. 15:27).
2. John affirms Jesus was on the middle cross. (Jn. 19:18).
 - a. The robbers to His left and right were both suffering for their own sins.
 - b. One was saved because of his faith and repentance and the other was lost.
 - c. Jesus, who was on the middle cross, had no sin, but He died for all who will obediently accept Him and His atonement.
3. It is by the One on the middle cross that man can be saved. (Jn. 14:6; Act 4:12; Jn. 3:36).
4. It is the One on the middle cross who is now exalted at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:32-36).

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
 © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
 Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

