

## "CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS"

The death of Jesus is the central theme of the entire Bible, thus, the central theme of human history. From the time man first sinned, God let him know of One who would come to save mankind. ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel"*** (Genesis 3:15). From that time on, the Bible points toward the perfect sacrifice which would be offered on Calvary for man's sins. After Christ's death the Bible always looks back to the cross. Paul said, ***"I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*** (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The death of Christ would not be an ordinary death; it would be by crucifixion. The act of putting someone to death by crucifixion is believed to have originated with the Persians, but the Romans modified it in such a way as to make it the most painful form of executing a human being. Under the Roman system only slaves, rebels, hardened criminals, and traitors could be executed in this fashion. A Roman citizen could not be crucified unless he was convicted of being a traitor.

After the sentence of crucifixion was announced, the person to be crucified was usually scourged. The Romans were experts at this, many times beating the one scourged to within an inch of his life. The scourging would leave the flesh of the victim shredded and weakened. The victim was then compelled to carry his own cross to the place of crucifixion where he was nailed to the cross. The cross would then be lifted up and allowed to fall into the hole prepared for it, thus jarring and tearing the body of the one nailed to it. The one crucified was left to hang in agony until he died from loss of blood, heart failure, suffocation, infection, or starvation. Crucifixion was not meant to be a quick execution, but was meant to cause the greatest amount of suffering possible. Often the one crucified would linger for many days with his body convulsing in pain unless something was done to speed his death (breaking the legs). It is little wonder Pilate was amazed when he was told Jesus was already dead, ***"Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time"*** (Mark 15:44).

Not only was crucifixion a terribly painful way to die, it was also a disgraceful way to die. God, in the Old Testament, pronounced that everyone who dies on the cross was ***"accursed of God"*** (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). It is little wonder then that Paul stated, ***"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree)"*** (Galatians 3:13). Crucifixion was such a disgraceful way to die that no Roman or Jew would carry another's cross, so when Jesus could not carry His cross to Golgotha, ***"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"*** (Mark 15:21). Paul says of Jesus, ***"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"*** (Philippians 2:8).

When we look at the circumstances surrounding Jesus' death on the cross we quickly see that everything done was meant to be a reproach. The scourging was a public humiliation. ***"When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"*** (Matthew 27:29).

Jesus was born of the seed of David. He was a king, but not one who would rule on a physical throne. Jesus is the king of a spiritual kingdom. Thus he told Pilate, ***"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would***

***fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here***" (John 18:36). Notice how the soldiers above mocked Jesus. They made a crown of thorns, a scepter from a reed, and bowed down as if to a monarch. They did this to ridicule Him, not to honor Him. When they were through making fun of Him they took the reed from His hand and used it to hit Him on the head.

Not only did the soldiers mock Jesus, ***"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!"*** (Mark 15:29-30). They spoke harshly with abusive language and wagged their heads which showed malicious contempt for Jesus. They did not realize that His refusal to save Himself was the only means by which they could be saved. The chief priests also joined in ridiculing Jesus (Mark 15:31-32). The record shows the civil authorities, and the common people all mocked the Son of GOD.

The humiliation continued when Jesus was crucified between two thieves, which signified Jesus was the worst of the criminals being crucified. Even these thieves reproached Jesus, ***"Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled him with the same thing"*** (Matthew 27:44).

Why did God allow His Son to be humiliated like this? Why did Jesus allow them to beat Him, mock Him, spit upon Him, and finally nail Him to the cross? He did it because He loved mankind and wanted to provide the only means by which sins could be washed away -- in His blood. Because He did this, like John, all should shout ***"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"*** (Revelation 1:5).