

VICTORY OF THE CROSS

Matthew 27: 11-50

EASTER is defined as: A feast or festival of the Christian church that commemorates the resurrection of Christ. It is observed and celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or after March 21-or one week later if the full moon falls on Sunday. In other words, Easter falls between March 22 and April 25.

Easter was originally a pagan festival honoring Eostre, a Teutonic (Germanic) goddess of light and spring. At the time of the vernal equinox (the day in the spring when the sun crosses the equator and day and night are of equal length), sacrifices were offered in her honor. As early as the eighth century, the name was used to designate the annual Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

Victory of the Cross

It is always an appropriate time to teach about the Cross of Jesus and by that expression His passion; but especially during Easter.

The most important thing about the Cross is who it was that hung on that cruel cross. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, was put on trial in both Jewish and Roman courts and declared guilty of blasphemy and of treason against Rome. Because of false witnesses; Jesus was scourged and then crucified.

Jesus voluntarily gave up His life;
He actually died and was buried in a borrowed tomb.
But according Scriptures [OT] He arose from the dead on the third day, just as He said He would and He now lives forever; someday to return in the same body in which He ascended into heaven.

The gospel is that Christ died for sinners. The proof of the acceptance of His sacrifice before God the Father of that death is that He came out of that tomb live!

We do not worship a dead Christ on a crucifix; nor do we perform endless repetitions of His death in a so-called Mass.

Do you know that the theme of every sermon in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is the resurrection of Jesus? The resurrection of Christ is the heartbeat and lifeblood of the Christian faith. If Christ be not risen you are still in your sins. There is no hope. But Jesus had complete Victory on that cruel cross.

Let's be reminded of what happened by reading the account in Matthew:

Matthew 27:11-50

¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." ¹² But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. ¹³ Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" ¹⁴ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. ¹⁹ Besides, while he was sitting on^t the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." ²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³ And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." ²⁵ And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

³⁰ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

³² As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴ they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶ Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷ And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴² "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

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After reading Matthew 27:11-50; let's also read a few other passages for background. These are some of the underlying Scriptures that support the events that the Matthew passage relates.

The offspring [seed] of woman whose heel [humanity] would be bruised.

Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

Deuteronomy 18:18 A prophet who would be raised up from among his brethren.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

Psalms 22:20 God's Darling who for a time would be in the power of the Dog.

Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!

Isaiah A man of sorrows....

A lamb brought dumb (uncomplaining) to the slaughter.

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

These OT passages refer to a Man who will suffer and die. Where is victory in the death of Christ? Where is there glory (the root of glory means opinion; the higher your opinion, the more glory you will see) in the death of Jesus on a Roman instrument of capital punishment?

You say He arose from the dead: Yes He did!
You say He is coming back: Yes He is!

But where do you see glory in death, humiliation, shame, and unmatched cruelty, in this awful bloody spectacle?

Let me say something to startle the unbeliever. If you don't see glory in the death of Jesus of Nazareth; not pity for a man being tormented, but glory, may I suggest that perhaps you are still depending on your own personal goodness for acceptance with God. You have not seen, by faith, that this passion was an innocent Man dying for guilty sinners!

If Jesus had not come into the world for this purpose, there would be no salvation for guilty sinners.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian church: "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Gal 6:14-15

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Pilate, the Roman governor, could find no fault in Him, but being the cowardly politician that he was, turned Jesus over to the mob to be executed.

vs. 26 Barabbas (son of his father), is released: that's you and me. He was guilty of murder and sedition but he set free because Jesus was there as a Substitute.

There is a powerful image of Barabbas who could hear the mob but could not see Pilate. Pilate: “Who shall I release? Barabbas only heard: **Barabbas!**

“What shall I do with him?” Barabbas only heard: **Crucify him!**

Jesus was scourged: scourging was incredibly cruel, and painful. Jewish scourges (whips) were limited to 39 stripes. The Romans had no such limit. The Roman scourges were leather thongs imbedded with fragments of bone, lead, and brass, so that the flesh is torn away. The very entrails are exposed, the pain is excruciating.

Remember Isaiah said that he was so marred that he did not even look like a man.

Jesus was delivered to be crucified, which is the cruelest form of capital punishment ever devised by wicked men. The Romans would not use it on a Roman citizen, no matter what he had done. The Phoenicians are responsible for inventing crucifixion. The Jews were much nicer, they used strangulation, beheading, burning, and stoning. Then they would hang the victim for humiliation and indignity.

Most pictures and movies don't even come close to representing the crucifixion scene. [Aside from all the extra-biblical content of Mel Gibson's movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” it does an excellent job of portraying the actual scourging and crucifixion.]

The usual procedure was for four Roman soldiers led by their Centurion and followed by the victim. One of the soldiers carried a sign with the accusation written on it. The victim carried the post, which was tied to his neck. They proceeded along crowded streets to attract attention. The starus (stake or upright pale) only raised the victim a few feet off of the ground. Jesus talked to Mary and to John, though very weak. Some pictures of the cross look like telephone poles; ever try to carry one of those? The victim was tied or nailed to the stake. Crucifixion was so cruel that if any mercy was to be shown; the victim was strangled and then hung on the stake.

vs. 27 our Lord suffered every kind of shame, the entire cohort mocked Him.

vs. 28 stripped Him; the shame of Adam's nakedness; scarlet robe to mock His royalty.

- vs. 29 crown of thorns; mocked Him as King; a reed for a scepter, the symbol of majesty; bowed the knee, mocking the King of the Jews.
- vs. 30 they spit on Him, they smote (continually strike) Him with the reed, driving in the thorns. No matter what happens to you, it will never be as bad as what was done to God's Darling in the power of the dog.
- vs. 31 took off the robe by now sticking to the open wounds; led Him as a lamb dumb [silent] before her shearers.
- vs. 32 Why was Simon enlisted? Sorry for Jesus?
Not likely, by now Jesus was about to collapse.
- vs. 33 Golgotha (place of the skull-terror and death)
- vs. 34 the drink, usually vinegar with myrrh; here instead it is vinegar with gall.
- vs. 35 stripped Him again and fulfilled Psalm 22:18;
Did the soldiers have a Bible study to be sure they fulfilled the Scripture? Of course not; yet every Scripture was fulfilled!
- vs. 36 sat down to watch, thereby becoming witnesses; "surely this Man was the son of God"
- vs. 37 the accusation; three languages, Greek, Hebrew, Latin; the Jews wanted the sign changed to "he said ..."
- vs. 38 numbered among the transgressors.
- vs. 39 blasphemed Him, wagging their heads (yaa, yaa, yaa as a child would do)

Everything was done to intensify the pain and the shame. Here is sinful man and the devil doing their worst.

Do you see the glory in what is going on here?

If that were you, or me it would be right?

But here is a sinless Man, the Son of God; do you see it?

SUBSTITUTION, do you see it? Christ dying for guilty sinners!

Now the men who called for His crucifixion were religious, dedicated, and sincere. So much for: religion without Christ; dedication to error; sincere, but lost.

vs. 40, 41 Jesus was referring to Himself, but this physical temple would be destroyed. Remember where Satan took Jesus for the third temptation? To the pinnacle of the temple: "If you are the Son of God..."

But Jesus had a more excellent way to prove that He is the Son of God. By dying and coming back to life!

vs. 42 The All-Sufficient One; What if He had "saved Himself"? If Jesus had come down no one would ever be saved!

vs. 43 The fulfillment and perfecting of the King of Israel.

John 19:30 "It is finished" WHAT is finished?

1. The malice and persecution of His enemies.
2. The Father's will.
3. The O.T. prophecies that pointed to His suffering for sin.
4. The sacrificial and ceremonial system of the Jews-the veil was torn in two....
5. Sin is finished; the Lamb of God has been slain.
6. His suffering and humiliation; God's Darling is no longer in the power of the dog.
7. If you can trust Him; your sin is finished.

Satan's head has been bruised; Satan is bound!
Only Christ's heel (humanity) is bruised.

Where is the VICTORY on the cross?

Victory over hatred; He would not revile them, He prayed for them.

Victory over physical suffering.

Victory over ridicule.

Victory over unbelief; in the midst of utter unbelief, one of the thieves was saved
when He was to an unbelieving world most unlike a Savior.

Victory over captivity, He led captivity captive.

Victory over death. The grave could not hold Him, neither did His body see
corruption.

My fellow sinners do you see glory in the death of Christ on the cross?

His sinless life offered for the guilty sinner.

God sees the guilty sinner who puts all of their trust in Jesus through that precious
blood that was shed on Calvary's cruel cross.

By the grace of God are you able to TRUST JESUS, THE CHRIST!

Amen!

Jim Gunn

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