

The Crucifixion

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "24 Hours That Changed History"

A. Early Good Friday morning, the Sanhedrin (high council) took Jesus to the Roman governor in order to have Him executed.

"Very early in the morning the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law—the entire high council—met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus replied, 'You have said it.' Then the leading priests kept accusing him of many crimes, and Pilate asked him, 'Aren't you going to answer them? What about all these charges they are bringing against you?' But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise. Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual. 'Would you like me to release to you this "King of the Jews"?' Pilate asked. **(For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.)** But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them, 'Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' 'Why?' Pilate demanded. 'What crime has he committed?' But the mob roared even louder, 'Crucify him!' So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified." Mark 15:1-15 (NLT)

1. The Sanhedrin hated Jesus because He exposed their corruption and religious hypocrisy and because they were insanely jealous of Him. They took Jesus to Pilate for execution so they could keep up appearances of propriety and distance themselves from Jesus' execution. "Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, 'What is your charge against this man?' 'We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!' they retorted. 'Then take him away and judge him by your own law,' Pilate told them. **'Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone,'** the Jewish leaders replied. (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.)" John 18:28-32 (NLT)
2. Jesus willingly allowed himself to be crucified in Barabbas' place. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, **the righteous for the unrighteous**, to bring you to God." 1 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

B. Jesus was executed by the horrifying means of crucifixion over a period of six hours.

"**The soldiers** took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. They dressed him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head. **Then they saluted him and taunted, 'Hail! King of the Jews!'** And they struck him on the head with a reed stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified... And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means 'Place of the Skull'). They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it. Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, 'The King of the Jews.' Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. **The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery.** 'Ha! Look at you now!' they yelled at him. 'You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!' **The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus.** 'He saved others,' they scoffed, 'but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!' **Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.** At noon, **darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.** Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*' which means **'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'** Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. 'Wait!' he said. 'Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!' Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And **the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.**"

Mark 15:16-41 (NLT)

1. Good Friday was a day of great physical and spiritual darkness. Jesus died alone on the cross, betrayed, deserted, and denied by his disciples, and rejected by the people He came to save. At the cross we see what sin (deliberate, determined, independence from God) really looks like. Jesus was mocked by nearly everyone, savagely beaten, spit upon, and killed in perhaps the most excruciating way ever devised. God didn't stop it because this was the only way to save filthy, rotten sinners like us. This was God's plan all along. "He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But **he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins**. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet **the Lord laid on him the sins of us all... But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief.**"

Isaiah 53:3b-6 & 10a (NLT)

2. The curtain in the Jerusalem Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. "But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance... Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, **Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people**, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them... And so, dear brothers and sisters, **we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus**. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place."

Hebrews 9:7 & 13-15a, 10:19-20 (NLT)

3. People responded to Jesus' crucifixion in different ways.

Simon, a man from Tripoli, Libya, who was forced to carry Jesus' cross, very likely became a follower of Christ that day. "A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.)" Mark 15:21 (NLT) "**Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord**, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too." Romans 16:13 (NIV)

One of the criminals crucified beside Jesus eventually asked Jesus to save his soul while the other mocked Jesus to the end. "One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, 'So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!' But the other criminal protested, 'Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong.' Then he said, '**Jesus, remember me** when you come into your Kingdom.' And Jesus replied, 'I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.'" Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

A Roman officer recognized Jesus' divinity while the Chief priests and the teachers of the OT Law mocked Him. "When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, '**This man truly was the Son of God!**'" Mark 15:39 (NLT)

Judas hung himself. "When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So, he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he declared, 'for I have betrayed an innocent man.' 'What do we care?' they retorted. 'That's your problem.' Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself." Matthew 27:3-5 (NLT) (See also Acts 1:18)

Two of the Sanhedrin stopped being secret followers of Jesus. "As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (**Joseph was an honored member of the high council**, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.) Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance." Mark 15:42b-46 (NLT) "**With him came Nicodemus**, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes." John 19:39 (NLT)

Life Application: Each of us must determine how we will respond to Jesus' crucifixion. "For, there is one God and **one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus**. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone." 1 Timothy 2:5-6a (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read Mark 15:1-15 & John 18:28-32. How did it help the Sanhedrin (spiritual leaders of Israel) to have the Romans execute Jesus?
2. Why did Judas return the money he was paid to betray Jesus? Why didn't the Pharisees put the money back into the temple treasury? (Matthew 27:1-10)
3. Why was Jesus willing to be crucified in Barabbas' place? (1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5:6-11)
4. Read Mark 15:16-41. What does spiritual darkness look like? Is it significant that the sky grew physically dark for three hours while Jesus was dying on the cross?
5. How important is it that the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom? (Hebrews 9:7- &13-15, 10:19-20)
6. Discuss how differently people reacted to Jesus' crucifixion.
 - The criminals crucified next to Jesus (Luke 23:39-43)
 - The Roman officer and the Chief priests (Mark 15:31-32 & 39)
 - Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus (Mark 15:42-46, John 19:39-40)
7. How does it make you feel to know that Simon of Cyrene very likely became a follower of Christ? (Mark 15:21, Romans 16:13) How does it make you feel to know that many of the people who mocked Jesus while He was on the cross became believers seven weeks later? (Acts 2:36-41)