

## **Bi123 The Gospels 2**

### ***Lesson Bi123-22 The Crucifixion***

Of all the events in human history, no other event has so influenced history as the death of Jesus. Even though not all the world understands, what people do with his death will determine their final destiny. The life of Jesus revealed a God who had a plan and who will complete that plan. The purpose of God is to bring people back into relationship with himself.

Pilate set Barabbas free, but had Jesus flogged before they crucified him. The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the palace and the whole company of the Roman guard gathered around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his clothes on him (Matt 27:27-31).

Roman floggings were so brutal that sometimes the victims died before crucifixion from loss of blood. To beat him they used a whip made of strips of leather to which were attached sharp pieces of lead and bone. This was intended to tear the flesh of the victim's back. The soldiers mocked Jesus by dressing him like a king, with a red robe, a crown of thorns, and a scepter of wood. They beat his head with the thorns on it, driving them into his scalp. Then they pretended to worship him, because kings of that day demanded worship as a god. And they slapped him in the face.

The apostle John, who was a witness, tells us that Pilate brought Jesus out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe and said to the crowd, "Here is the man!"

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" Though Pilate had found no basis for a charge against Jesus, the Jewish leaders insisted that according to their law, he had to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.

Pilate was afraid and asked Jesus, "Where do you come from?" Jesus gave no answer. Pilate said, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." Jesus seems to be referring to the high priest, Caiaphas.

The Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

Then Pilate sat down on the judge's seat, saying to the Jews, "Here is your king."

But they shouted, "Take him away! Crucify him!"

Pilate asked, “Shall I crucify your king?” But the chief priests insisted that they had no king but Caesar. Finally Pilate handed him over to be crucified (John 19:5-16).

Jesus was staggering under the weight of the horizontal part of the cross he was forced to carry. Such a beam often weighed 14 to 18 kilos (30 to 40 pounds). The pain and weight on his wounded back were too much. As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, a city in north Africa. He was on his way in from the country. They forced him to carry the beam behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” Jesus was foretelling the terrible suffering that would befall Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Romans would besiege the city. People would seek death rather than endure the suffering.

They came to a place called Golgotha (which in Aramaic means “the place of the skull”). Many executions had taken place there. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. They crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:26-34).

Even as Jesus hung on the cross, he forgave his enemies. They did not understand God’s plan, so they did what their leader Satan wanted them to do. At Golgotha the soldiers hammered a heavy iron nail through each wrist and into the wood. Then with his body attached, they lifted the horizontal part of the cross and attached it to the vertical section. Finally one long nail was driven through both ankles to the vertical section. To breathe, the victim had to push up to grab each breath. Death usually came from suffocation, when the person lost strength in his legs.

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment” (Psa 22:18). This is what the soldiers did (John 19:23-25).

Matthew tells us that those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others, but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from

the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt 27:39-43).

The gospel writers wanted to make clear just a few truths. These included that Jesus really died. His death was not an accident, it was planned by God. His death fulfilled many detailed and amazing prophecies. They include that his clothes, his only possessions, would be divided by casting lots. Yet in the process they would not be torn.

The people who watched Jesus dying all understood the charge against him. The soldiers, the religious leaders, the Roman officials, and even believers who fled, had no doubt. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of God. No one doubted that this was what he had said.

This story is **important** because it reveals the detailed events of the crucifixion of Jesus. It reminds us of the many witnesses who knew he claimed to be the Messiah.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus was crucified because he told the truth about himself. He was rejected because he was the Messiah, but he came to die for human sin, not to reign as they had expected.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did the soldiers do to Jesus after they put a crown of thorns and a red robe on him?  
A. [Pause] If you answered that they knelt in front of him and mocked him saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” you answered correctly.
2. What did Jesus say to the Father as he was being nailed to the cross?  
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” you are right.
3. What did the soldiers say about the under garment of Jesus that fulfilled prophecy?  
A. [Pause] If you answered that the soldiers said, “Let’s not tear it. Let’s decide by lot who will get it,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn this story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to someone, ask them this question, “Why did Jesus surrender his life to the Romans to be killed by crucifixion?” He was moved by a love for all people and a desire to be obedient to all the Father’s plans for him.