

The Mind of Christ

The Crucifixion of Jesus

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In his book entitled “THE MIND OF JESUS,” William Barclay writes, “When we come to think about the Cross, we must indeed put the shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.”
 - A. There are few scenes that bring to mind the brutal horror of the death of Jesus more clearly than the scenes at Calvary.
 1. And yet, the scriptures speak of this terrible event with such simplicity and lack of fanfare that it seems odd to the average reader.
 - a. Luke simply says, “*When they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him.*” **(Luke 23:33)**
 2. There is no attempt to pile horror upon horror, and agony upon agony.
 - a. In the NEW TESTAMENT account of “The Passion of the Christ” there is no attempt to set out all the grim and ghastly details of the Savior’s suffering.
 - b. There is only a simple statement of fact.

- c. But for those living in that day, these words were enough – those people lived every day of their lives with the horror of witnessing crucifixions on a regular basis.
- B. But for us, it's different.
- 1. I certainly don't intend to "sensationalize," or "be overly dramatic" when talking about the crucifixion of Jesus.
 - 2. We need to focus on the SIGNIFICANCE of the cross – namely that Jesus went there to pay the price for our sins – rather than focus on the HORROR of the crucifixion.
 - a. We need to keep in mind that it was OUR sins that caused Him to endure this – YOUR SINS and MINE.
 - b. And we need to keep in mind that, while the cross DISPLAYS the horror of a painfully agonizing death, it ALSO portrays the great LOVE and MERCY of God toward YOU and ME.

BODY:

- I. Although Jesus had committed no crime, and was never found guilty of violating ANY of Jewish or Roman law, He was sentenced to die by Pilate the Roman Governor of Judea.

- A. Immediately, Jesus was taken and scourged – because scourging was ALWAYS the prelude to crucifixion. (**Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:16; John 19:1**)
1. This was something Jesus had always known would happen. A week earlier, when Jesus was making His last journey to Jerusalem, He told His disciples all this would happen.
 - a. **Matthew 20:17-19a** – *Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify..."*
 2. There were few things that were more terrible than a Roman scourging.
 - a. The victim was stripped, and was usually tied to a pillar in a bent position with his back fully exposed, and secured tightly so he could not move.
 - b. The scourge was made with thin leather straps with sharp pieces of metal or bone protruding from them.
 - (1). It was designed to literally rip a man's back to pieces.

(2). Many lost consciousness while being scourged, and others were said to have emerged from a scourging having gone completely mad.

(3). Very few ever came through the ordeal with their spirit Unbroken – Jesus was one of the few exceptions.

B. After enduring the horrific experience of being scourged, Jesus was then handed over to the soldiers so they could mock Him. (**Matthew 27:27-29; Mark 15:16-20; John 19:2ff**)

1. They made Him a crown of thorns and gave Him a reed for a scepter, adorned Him with a purple cloak for a robe, and mocked Him as a king and a prophet.
 - a. These soldiers had no particular animosity against Jesus – they were only mocking some pathetic Galilean who claimed to be king of the Jews, and who was now being sentenced to die on the cross.
 - b. To them, this was just another misguided Jew with some delusions of grandeur.

C. Next came the procession to Calvary. It always followed the same pattern.

1. First, all prisoners like Jesus were compelled to carry at least part of their own cross to the place of crucifixion.

- a. The Roman cross consisted of an upright beam and a cross-beam.
 - (1). If there was a regular place of crucifixion, the upright beams were usually already in place.
 - (2). Therefore, only the cross-beam would be carried by the condemned man.
 - (3). In the case of Jesus, many scholars believe He carried only the top cross-beam portion of the cross – although no one knows for sure.
2. Prisoners like Jesus were placed in the center of a squad that customarily consisted of four Roman soldiers.
3. In front of them would have walked a herald carrying a board with the crime each criminal had committed, painted in black letters on the white background.
 - a. In the case of Jesus, it read, *“This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”* **(Matthew 27:37)**
 - b. The wording is slightly different in the other gospel accounts, but all affirm Jesus’ claim as King. **(Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19)**
 - c. These words were written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek so all could read it.

- d. Later, this sign would be nailed to the cross.
4. The procession made its way through the streets of Jerusalem.
 - a. These processions usually took the longest way possible through the busiest and most crowded streets.
 - b. The reason was obvious – the Romans wanted to send a warning to everyone who might be contemplating some crime against Rome.
 5. Along the way, Jesus would have been subjected to lashes from a guard who walked nearby, to keep the condemned man moving.
 6. The exhausting experiences of a long night of trials, and the terrible scourging, had left Jesus so weak that He staggered and fell under the weight of the cross.
 - a. A man known as Simon of Cyrene, who was probably a Jewish pilgrim from the northern African region, and who was probably in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, was pulled from the crowd and compelled to carry the cross for Jesus.
 7. On the way to Calvary, Jesus was followed by those who were weeping for Him.
 - a. Luke says He warned them of still worse things to come upon them.

- b. **Luke 23:27-31** – *And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"*
 - c. This was a clear reference to the crushing destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under the command of Titus – less than 40 years away.
8. But in all this, there is a subtle use of words in Mark's account that tells us something about the physical condition of Jesus at this point.
- a. **Mark 15:22** – *And they **brought** Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.*
 - b. The root word for "brought" means, "to bear, to carry, or to carry some burden" (Thayer), and is the same word used in

Luke's account (**Luke 23:26**) when speaking of Simon of Cyrene being compelled to "*bear*" the cross of Jesus.

- c. Therefore, Mark's account indicates that Jesus was so physically exhausted that He had to be partially carried or supported to make it to the hill of Calvary.
- D. When the place of crucifixion was reached, the cross was laid flat upon the ground and Jesus was stripped of His clothing (except for a loin cloth which was customarily left on for decency's sake), and then Jesus was laid out on top of the cross.
1. When most criminals were stretched out upon their cross, and the iron spikes were driven through their hands, they would often curse and swear at their executioners in loud shrieks of agonizing pain – but not Jesus.
 - a. It was at this moment that Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" (**Luke 23:34**)
 2. Then in a moment of unparalleled agony, the cross was lifted up and set in its socket, with the victim hanging from it.
 3. Iron spikes were then driven through the feet of Jesus, leaving Him suspended between heaven and earth.
 4. The victim's clothing, if it had any value at all, was given to the soldiers carrying out the crucifixion.

- a. Usually, a Jewish man wore several common articles of clothing which were, more or less, of equal value: His tunic, the belt he wrapped around the tunic, his sandals, and his head covering or shawl.
- b. But the main article of clothing was a man's robe, which served as a cloak by day and a blanket by night.
 - (1). The Law of Moses said that even if the robe was taken as security for some debt, it had to be returned to the owner at night so that he might be able to sleep in it.

(Exodus 22:26ff)

- c. The robe Jesus wore was especially finely handcrafted – it was woven without a seam. **(Luke 19:23-24)**

- (1). Therefore, the robe was set aside, and as soon as the soldiers had finished their work of crucifying their victims, they cast lots for the robe of Jesus while He looked on from the cross. **(Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24;**

Luke 23:34; John 19:23ff)

- E. At this point, it was customary to give the victim a drink of medicated wine, which was mercifully prepared by a group of women in Jerusalem.

1. The medicated wine was laced with opium to dull some of the pain of the crucifixion.
 - a. The practice of giving this medicated wine was in keeping with **Proverbs 31:6** – *Give strong drink to him who is perishing...*
 3. But when Jesus tasted it, He refused to accept it. Perhaps He wanted to meet death with all His senses fully in tact.
- II. From the cross, Jesus could see everything that was going on around Him.
- A. The cross was not high – perhaps 7 to 9 feet at the highest – but Jesus could easily see and hear everything going on.
 1. As Jesus looked out on those who were gathering there to witness His death, He saw two people dearly loved – His mother, Mary, and John, the disciple whom He loved.
 2. Thirty-three years earlier, prophecies had been made to Mary concerning her son.
 - a. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to Jerusalem to dedicate Him to the Lord as Mary's firstborn child, they encountered a man named Simeon.
 - b. **Luke 2:25-35** – *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout,*

waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

- c. Now, as Mary stood at the foot of the cross, her heart was deeply pierced through with sorrow as she saw Jesus dying before her very eyes.

3. Jesus knew the loneliness Mary would feel, even though by now she had other children – the brother's and sisters of Jesus. **(cf. Matthew 13:55-56)**
 4. Therefore, Jesus wanted her to know she would be well taken care of.
 5. So, in a moment of great tenderness, Jesus looked at Mary and said, "*Woman, behold your son!*" **(John 19:26)**
 - a. Although some feel Jesus was drawing attention to Himself when He told Mary "*Woman, behold your son!*", most feel Jesus was telling Mary to look to John as a "son" who would care for her.
 - b. The reason for believing this, is simply because Jesus then looked John, His close friend and disciple, and said, "*Behold your mother!*" **(John 19:27a)**
 - c. The gospel of John adds this comment regarding this event:
John 19:27 – *And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.*
- B. But there were others who gathered around to watch Jesus die – His enemies.
1. They felt compelled to continue taunting Him, even while He was dying on the cross.

- a. All they saw in Jesus was a phony, a fake, a blasphemous liar and deceiver.
 - b. Therefore, they taunted Him with words like, *"You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."*, and words like, *"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"* **(Matthew 27:40, 42-43)**
2. These men came to gloat over this man whom they thought they were eliminating forever.
- C. On this particular day, Jesus was not the only one being crucified – two thieves were being crucified along with Him. **(Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32; John 19:18)**
1. Matthew says these two men also joined in mocking Jesus. **(Matthew 27:44)**
 2. But Luke says, during the next 3 hours, one of them changed his view of Jesus and began to rebuke his fellow thief – reminding him that they deserved their fate, but said Jesus was unworthy of death.

- a. At that moment, this thief made one of the most amazing statements in all history.
 - b. He turned to this seemingly broken Galilean Who was hanging on the middle cross, and who was being mocked by His own countrymen – One who was a complete failure in men's eyes.
 - c. And, with a change of heart, he said, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."* And Jesus said to him, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."* **(Luke 23:42-43)**
3. It's hard to imagine what changed this man's mind, or understand what he suddenly saw in Jesus that he had not seen earlier.
- a. Maybe it was the way Jesus prayed for God to forgive His executioners.
 - b. Perhaps it was the way Jesus was mocked by His accusers and yet said nothing back in reply.
 - (1). Peter would later write, *"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."* **(1 Peter 2:23)**

- c. Maybe it was the way Jesus willingly submitted to being crucified – not fighting or resisting.
 - (1). The apostle Paul would later write, *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8)*
 - d. Whatever it was, this man came to realize Jesus was no ordinary man.
 - e. He may have come to the conclusion that the words of the sign hanging over Jesus were true – Jesus WAS the King of the Jews.
 - f. While others saw Jesus as only a broken, defeated Galilean, THIS MAN saw Jesus as the Messiah.
- D. The crucifixion began at the third hour of the day (9 o'clock in the morning).
- 1. At the sixth hour of the day (12 noon), while the sun was at its highest point in the sky, a darkness suddenly moved across the entire land.
 - a. For the next three hours Jerusalem was in darkness.
(Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44f)

- E. At the ninth hour (3 o'clock in the afternoon), after Jesus had been on the cross for 6 hours, He cried out.
1. His words were, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" **(Matthew 27:46)**
 - a. The word "*sabachthani*" is the cry of distress of someone who has been abandoned, left on their own, deserted.
 2. At that moment, the one thing Jesus dreaded most happened.
 - a. In the garden of Gethsamane Jesus prayed, "*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*" **(Luke 22:42)**
 - b. At that moment, the humanity of Jesus comes pouring out. He knew he was only hours away from the worst form of execution imaginable (crucifixion). The suffering would be intense, and no one would want to experience that kind of suffering if there were some way to escape it.
 - c. But there was one other burden Jesus was about to bear. The sins of the world. In a matter of only a few hours, Jesus would be nailed to the cross and become SIN FOR US.
 - (1). The apostle Paul said God, "*...made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" **(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

(2). John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as, “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” **(John 1:29)**

(3). The apostle Peter spoke of what Jesus did on the cross in these words: “*who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.*”
(1 Peter 2:24)

d. We will never completely understand HOW Jesus was momentarily forsaken and abandoned by God as He hung on the cross. But it seems that at the moment Jesus was bearing the sins of the world in His body, God momentarily forsook and abandoned Jesus.

e. Jesus suddenly experienced the shear horror of what it will mean for us to die in our sins, separated from the God of heaven.

(1). Jesus was abandoned in some way for a brief period of time.

(2). But if we die in our sins, we will be forsaken and abandoned for all eternity.

F. The end was now very near for Jesus.

1. His mouth and throat were dry from the painful ordeal He was enduring.
 - a. He said, *“I thirst.”* (**John 19:28**)
 - b. Soldiers were allowed to drink only sour wine while on duty – wine mixed with vinegar. In an act of mercy, the soldiers nearby gave Jesus a drink.
 - c. **John 19:29** – *Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.*
2. Once again Jesus uttered a loud cry.
 - a. It wasn't a cry of pain or of despair – it was a cry of triumph.
 - b. Jesus simply said, *“It is finished!”* (**John 19:30; cf. Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46**)
 - c. Jesus had finished the work He had come to this earth to accomplish.
 - (1). He finished the work of bearing the sins of the world on the cross.
 - (2). He completed the work of becoming the Lamb of God.
3. It was at this moment that Jesus said His final words.
 - a. He ended His life in prayer – communing once again with His Father in heaven.

- b. It's a simple prayer. However, there is something very significant about these words.
 - (1). Every Jewish mother taught her child to pray a very simple prayer before going to sleep.
 - (2). No doubt, Mary had taught the child Jesus this same prayer, and may have knelt beside Him each night as He prayed it.
 - (3). It's a prayer much like the one many of us learned as a small child: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."
- c. The words of that prayer are, "*Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'"* **(Luke 23:46)**
- 4. And so, with the words of a child's prayer on His lips, Jesus bowed His head and died. **(John 19:30)**
 - a. The word "*bowed*" is used to describe some who peacefully lets his head sink back, as one might place his head on a pillow to sleep.
 - b. And so, after the long battle – peace. After a lifetime of toil – rest. And after the ordeal of the crucifixion – peaceful tranquility,

- c. Jesus was now on His way home.

CONCLUSION:

- I. It was now late in the afternoon, and the beginning of the Sabbath was approaching. Jewish law forbade anyone to be executed on the Sabbath. Therefore, the death of all crucifixion victims had to be hastened.
 - A. But Jesus had already died. And so, as soon as the Roman soldiers could confirm that Jesus was dead – this was done by piercing His side with a spear – the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and prepared for burial.
 - 1. As we try to imagine that scene, there are some things we need to remember.
 - a. We could accuse the Jews of masterminding a plot to falsely accuse and condemn Jesus to die on the cross.
 - b. Or, we can accuse the Roman governor Pilate for being more concerned about his own political career than he was about crucifying an innocent man.
 - 2. But in reality, we can accuse either one.
 - a. The Jews didn't put Jesus on the cross anymore than Pilate did.

- b. Jesus died on the cross because WE put Him there. He died for OUR sins.
 3. And so, as we grieve the terrible injustice and the horrific suffering Jesus endured before He died, we need to remember that He did all this for YOU and ME.
- B. It may seem ironic that the STAINS of OUR SINS can be washed away by the BLOOD-STAINED CROSS OF CHRIST, but that's the way God intended it.
 1. Jesus sacrificed Himself for YOU. Will you now GIVE YOURSELF for Him?