

# ***“Though HE Was Crucified”***

By Tom Stephens

Unlike any other religion, Christianity centers on the cross and the empty tomb. They enable every Christian to say, "He took my place so that I might have life". Not only did Christ die ... but He was resurrected three days later, and because He did, you can too! What did Christ actually endure in order to atone for our sins?

**Crucified! No death was so thorough, no shame so complete!**

## **"The Scourging"**

The scourging post the Roman soldiers used was two feet tall. An Iron ring, placed close to the top projected from two sides. The prisoner was stripped naked, The Roman "lictors" were professional. They could beat their victim till only the barest spark of life remained.

The wrists were firmly shackled to the iron rings. Then the victim was stretched, facedown, with the feet pointing away from the post. The Roman scourge was a "Flagra", a short-handled whip consisting of several thin, iron chains which ended in small weights or iron or bone chips. Scourging was called the "little" death. It preceded the big death - crucifixion.

**"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him." John 19:1**

"(Jesus) for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". Hebrews 12:2

The tension of waiting was cruel. The body was rigid, with muscles knotted in tormenting cramps. The lips were drawn tight against the teeth. The chains cut "V" shapes across His body. The weights suspended from the "flagra" crashed into the ribs and bit into His chest, Sweat burst from the brow and stung His eyes. Each stroke caused His body to jerk like a beheaded chicken. Jesus was able to hold back the high pitched wail of agony, though the flagra could flay a man alive.

Two executioners, working alternately, lash in cadence at His back, shoulders, loins, thighs, and calves, leaving livid furrows in the already sore muscular frame (from many small hemorrhages, affected by the sweating of blood). The weights begin tearing at the flesh and muscle tissue. Blood begins to pour out onto the ground. The skin is shredded as deep gashes are cut into His body. His strength begins to fail Him.

Under Hebrew law, lashes were limited to thirty-nine. The Roman punishment was not limited. There was only one rule for the lictor. The victim must not die! A spark of life must be sustained for the cross. Men have bitten their tongues into under such beatings. Only blessed unconsciousness could bring relief. The limp body was then cut from the scourging post, the wounds washed.

A purple legionnaire's cape denoting royalty is thrown over His shoulders and a crown of thorn is plaited over His head. Nothing bleeds more than a scalp wound, pouring blood into His tangled hair. The comedy of adoration begins. There are mock bows, more blows to the face and head, shouts of "Hail to the Jews!" But Jesus answers nothing. Exasperated, His mockers spit in His face. Back to Pilate they go; scourging has not satisfied them. "Crucify Him," they cry. Jesus is condemned to die. Then He was prepared for the long slow parade along public street to. . .

## **“The Cross”**

“And they led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:31).

“And He bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of the skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha” (John 19:17).

“And there followed him a great company of people” (Luke 23:27).

“He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

The cloak, already sticking to the wounds, is torn from Jesus’ back. The blood starts to flow once more.

Then the cross is placed upon His shoulders.

Barefoot and bound, with soldiers pulling His cords and wondering if He’ll die before they get there, Jesus falls several times during the 650-yard journey. The cross slips and scrapes His back, again opening His wounds. Simon of Cyrene is finally pressed into carrying the cross.

At Calvary He is stripped and His coat is roughly yanked off. Excruciating pain, like millions of hot needles, shock the nervous system.

Wounds on the back, legs, and thighs are caked with dust and fine gravel as He is laid on His back at the foot of the cross. His shoulders on the cross piece, one executioner drove large square five-inch spikes into the center of His palm. Five, sometimes six strokes drove the spike solidly into the wood, then another turned the spike so that the hand could not slip free. A small projection resembling a rhinoceros horn, or a sedile, fitted through the crotch, taking much of the weight off the hands. After that, each foot was nailed solidly to the cross.

Jesus’ knees are bent and the bottom of the foot is placed flat against the wood. With several blows, a spike is driven between the second and third metatarsal bones. The right foot is placed underneath the left and the spike is driven through both feet and into the wood.

Jesus is still and silent. His face is grossly contorted. The median nerve has been touched by not severed. His thumb is striking the palm of His hand. Inexpressive pain darts like lightning through His entire body. Man's most unbearable pain is caused by wounding the great nerve centers. Each movement of the body revives this horrible pain. Hand wounds sent fire down through the arms. Pain and darkness became excruciatingly real. The back, arms, hands, feet, and crotch were throbbing. Pain continued to build and multiply.

“When he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously.” 1 Peter 2:23

An anesthetic - gall and wine - is offered but Jesus refuses it. His arm muscles are grossly contracted and the fingers are cramped and forced sharply inward. Huge ridges of muscle stand out on the thighs and calves. Tetanus sets in. Stomach and neck muscles tighten, then the respiratory muscles.

*"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. Part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Psalms 22:14-18*

### **"The Agony"**

Short breaths enter in a whistling sound but don't come out. He thirsts for air like one suffering an acute asthmatic attack. His pale face turns purple, then blue. He is asphyxiating. His lungs, loaded with air, are unable to empty. Extreme thirst. Lips dry, mouth parched, blood hot, skin fevered. The greatest "need of a drop of cool water", was denied.

### **"After this, Jesus ... saith, I thirst." John 19:28**

The sun shone directly into the eyes of the dying man. Even with eyes closed, a red glare penetrated. The tongue thickened. Saliva changed to uncombed wool. Swelling in the hands and feet increased. The sedile dug deeply into the genitals. It was impossible to turn, or change positions. The muscles twitched. The back muscles and the muscles of the abdominal area knotted up, causing cramps.

After two hours, every muscle was knotted up beyond endurance. Men screamed themselves into insanity at this point. Lockjaw, tetanus both flooded the body. Death by crucifixion prolonged the horrible agony of tetanus to an eternal death.

Flies, insects, and dogs, with a smell of blood in their nostrils, swarmed and cowered closely. Birds of prey, and scavengers of the skies circled lower and lower. Prayers seemed to mock a man, but he prayed ... or else he cursed.

Tiny blood vessels began to close shut as muscles tensed, and a paralyzing numbness followed for lack of circulation. Mucous membranes dried up. The thin slippery tissue which lines and lubricates much of the human body, dried to the consistency of fine gravel. It scraped tender tissues of the anus. It tore at the tortured throat, and lay like stones in the sinuses. It ripped layers of tissue from the eyes every time the pupil was moved or eyes blinked.

**“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit”** Luke 23:46.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the last which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water” John 19:32-34.

The next hours pass in full darkness. His agony is greatest when God withdraws from Him. His pain, thirst, cramps, and asphyxiation have not drawn one complaint from Him; but separation is unbearable. Three hours later, the sun returns...and He cries, **“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** Matthew 27:46.

In His sixth hour on the cross, Jesus cries “Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” With a final sigh the head drops slowly forward, the chin above the breastbone. He is dead.

Roman law required that any body claimed by family or friends (Joseph Arimathea had asked for the body) must first be pierced to make death certain. This ruled out the possibility of a victim fainting, being claimed, and revived. A spear is thrust into Jesus’ body just under the breastbone, piercing the pericardial sack of the heart, and the heart’s right auricle which is always filled with blood. Water and blood gushed out.

Jesus said, *“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in My heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* Matthew 12:28.

And Apostle Paul said, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Will this be your day of salvation? Think about it, my friend.