

## The Wickedness of the Crucifixion—Part 2

### I. Introduction

Jer. 17:9; Matt. 16:4, 22:18; Luke 11:39; Rom. 1:29. When given over to his own devices, man will perpetrate crimes beyond imagination.

#### A. The Expression of the World's Wickedness

The wickedness of man is no more clearly seen than in the execution of Jesus Christ. As we go through Matthew's record of the crucifixion, we see unrelenting evil.

#### B. The Extent of Christ's Sufferings

Wicked men were not content just to execute Jesus Christ; they had to torment Him in the process. Such is the cruelty of the human heart when fully exposed.

##### 1. How Did Christ Suffer?

- a. **He suffered from temptation:** Heb. 2:18, 4:15
- b. **He suffered from self-denial:** Phil. 2:6–8
- c. **He suffered from rejection:** All that reached a furious culmination in the events around His cross.
- d. **He suffered from sin:** 2 Cor. 5:21. He suffered from the weight of sin. And because of His omniscience, He no doubt suffered in anticipation of His suffering.
- e. **He suffered from Satan:** Gen. 3:15, Judas (Luke 22:3-6), the Desert (Matt. 4:1-11), the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:40-44)
- f. **He suffered from the wrath of God:** Isa. 53:3–4. In bearing sin and being separated from His Father for a time, Jesus suffered more than all men put together have ever suffered. When Jesus became sin on the cross, God poured out on Him all of heaven's fury against sin.

### II. Lesson

**Matthew 27:27-44** shows us Christ's suffering at the hands of wicked men. To help us see the wickedness of the scene, I want to draw your attention to four different groups: *the ignorant wicked*, *the knowing wicked*, *the fickle wicked*, and *the religious wicked*. Every person in the world who does not come to faith in Jesus Christ fits into one of those groups. They were all present at the cross, and they are still around today.

1. **THE IGNORANT WICKED: The Callous Soldiers** (vv. 27-37)
  - a. **The Mockery of Jesus** (vv. 27-30)
    - i. **The Return of the King:** As the Roman soldiers mocked Christ's sovereignty, little did they know He was a King who one day would wear a different blood-spattered robe. Ps. 2:4; Rev. 19: 12–15
  - b. **The Crucifixion of Jesus** (vv. 31-37)
    - i. **Examining a Crucifixion:** Matthew doesn't give us any of the details of the crucifixion, but it is helpful to have some understanding of what Christ endured on the cross—large nails through the arches of both feet, nails through His wrists. With His weight being held by the nails running through His wrists, excruciating pain shot up His arms. To try to relieve the pain, the victim pushed up on the two wounds in his feet. That caused even more pain. Hour after hour he endured a wrenching, twisting tradeoff as he tried to relieve the pain in his hands and then in his feet. After awhile, the pain made it impossible to move.
2. **THE KNOWING WICKED: The Crass Thieves** (vv. 38, 44)
  - a. **Their Character** (v. 38): The Greek word in Matthew 27:38 is *lestai*, which refers to a bandit or a plundering robber—a man who would kill if he had to. These men were the worst of criminals.
  - b. **Their Contempt** (v. 44): For these crass, materialistic bandits, life revolved around the loot they could steal. They had no thoughts about righteousness, truth, justice, honor, and godliness. They had no concern for morality and messiahs. There are people like that in our world today. They know about Jesus, but their lives revolve around material things. They live to indulge themselves, and pay a great price for it.
3. **THE FICKLE WICKED: The Careless Crowd** (vv. 39-40)
  - a. **Their Decreasing Enthusiasm** (v. 39a): The same crowd that cried “Crucify Him!” had hailed Him a few days earlier with their hosannas (Matt. 21:10). They hailed Him as their Messiah, the Savior, the one who would deliver them from Rome's oppression. But they were fickle. They had a place for Jesus: they wanted to see His miracles, signs, and wonders, but now He was a victim of the Romans, so they rejected Him.
  - b. **Their Increasing Rejection** (vv. 39b-40)

- i. **Physical taunting** (v. 39b): The Greek word translated *reviled* is in the imperfect tense, which indicates that they kept on reviling Him with continual defamation and blasphemy. They wagged their heads in taunting fashion. Ps. 22:7-8.
- ii. **Verbal taunting** (v. 40)
  - 1) **The claims:** Those were the two accusations that came out against Christ in the trial before Annas and Caiaphas.
    - a. **He would raise the Temple:** The leaders perverted one of Jesus' statements to use against Him, claiming He was intending to destroy their Temple.
    - b. **He claimed to be the Son of God:** He was condemned for clearly stating the truth.
  - 2) **The challenge:** The mindless, fickle crowd that was throwing palm branches at His feet and hailing Him as the Messiah on Monday was now mocking and blaspheming His name on Friday.
  - 3) **The conviction:** Jesus didn't fulfill the crowd's expectation. They thought He couldn't be their Messiah because He had become a victim. They assumed the Messiah would lead them in military triumph.

The fickle crowd is reminiscent of evil people today. Many have been to church: perhaps they were raised in the church and know the message of salvation. But that was all in the past and they are no longer interested. Since then they've gone on to other things. They're interested in Jesus only if He can bring immediate satisfaction—if He doesn't deliver what they want when they want it, they forget Him. The person who knows about the claims and power of Jesus has a great responsibility to respond to that knowledge. If he walks away, he will receive the severer punishment.

- 4. **THE RELIGIOUS WICKED:** The Cruel Leaders (vv. 41-43)
  - a. **The Hypocritical Authorities** (v. 41): They were the lowest level of blasphemers—religious hypocrites who paraded their supposed piety. They appeared to represent God, to know the truth, and to be pure, godly, and

virtuous—but they hated Christ. They despised Him so much that they wouldn't talk to Him, so they talked to each other about Him.

b. **The Hateful Attacks** (vv. 42-43)

i. **Against Christ's Power** (v. 42)

1) **His healing ministry** (v. 42a): The leaders were referring to Jesus' deliverance of people from demons. They attributed them to Satan's power (Matt. 12:24). When Jesus did not come down from the cross, they believed God was on their side, and that His greater power kept Christ on the cross.

2) **His sovereignty** (v. 42b): They wanted to see His power and sovereignty in action right then (e.g., Matt. 12:38-41). Yet even if He had come down from the cross, they wouldn't have believed Him. They were not sincere in their request; they were mocking and laughing at Him. They didn't understand the concept of a sacrificial death.

ii. **Against Christ's person** (v. 43): That verse is the fulfillment of Psalm 22:8. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God on many occasions—most recently in response to Caiaphas' question (Matt. 26:63). The religious wicked wanted nothing to do with one who claimed to be God.

### III. Conclusion

A. **The Guilty:** Every unbeliever, no matter when he lives, is as guilty as the unbelievers who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ.

1) **Zechariah 12:10**—The people who will be alive at the time to which Zechariah refers will be just as guilty as those who put Christ on the cross.

2) **Hebrews 6:6**—Those who reject Christ “crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” You either stand with the believers or the crucifiers.

B. **The Forgiven:** Luke 23:34. Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners, would not come down from the cross because He had to die for ones such as the ignorant soldiers, the knowing thieves, the fickle crowd, and those vile religious leaders who would repent. So great is the compassion of God that Christ died for all who would believe.

- 1) **A centurion:** Matt. 27:36, 54; Luke 23:47. I believe Scripture indicates the centurion came to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior that day. By the saving grace of God, he and perhaps some of his companions were plucked from the ignorant wicked to embrace the Savior they crucified.
- 2) **A thief:** Luke 23:39-43: Here are the knowing wicked—one self-indulgent thief heaping insults of blasphemy on Jesus Christ and the other crying out for mercy to the only one who could save him.
- 3) **A crowd:** Acts 2:14-40. God, in His sovereign grace, saved three thousand souls out of the crowd that rejected Christ, screamed for His crucifixion, and reviled Him on the cross. And more were added every day.
- 4) **A company of priests:** Acts 6:7. I'm confident that God saved some of the religious leaders who mocked and blasphemed the name of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is indeed the friend of sinners. He died on the cross to bear the sins of the very ones who crucified Him--and those of all ages who initially reject Him. He calls sinners to Himself out of each group. He is able and eager to forgive. Where are you? He longs to embrace you and give you the salvation He so freely provided. He stayed on the cross not because He couldn't come down, but because He wouldn't come down. The Savior shed tears for those who shed His blood. Such is the compassion of God and the gift of salvation for all who believe.