

## 8

# Crucifixion

Matthew 27:31–54; Mark 15:20–39;  
Luke 23:26–47; John 19:17–30

*“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).*

No two words in the English language are more meaningful than “the cross”! We should approach the study of the cross with trembling hearts. It must be a lifelong study for all those who have been saved by it.

*Crucifixion!* How brutal, barbaric, cruel, and inhumane! Probably, it was invented by Persians and was later perfected by the Romans.

In time, Rome became infamous for its crucifixions. This method of execution was the ultimate form of humiliation. Rome did not crucify Romans. The Jews despised crucifixion (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13); it was never their practice. Animals today are not treated as cruelly as Jesus was.

Modern civilization refuses crucifixion, yet most of the world practices capital punishment. Where capital punishment is practiced today, it is generally done as quickly, painlessly, and humanely as possible.

*The scourging!* Flogging was a legal preliminary in Roman execution. Jesus prophesied that He would be scourged in connection with His sufferings (Matthew 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34), and He was!

Scourging was brutal. It produced great welts, deep stripes, and a swollen body. Often, eyes and teeth were knocked out. Some men died from it. Scourging, however, was not for execution. The whip was for punishment; the nails were for death. Hardened, experienced Roman soldiers knew when to stop. This whipping heightened the pain of crucifixion.

Pilate had Jesus scourged (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1), hoping to gain the sympathetic support of the crowd when they saw the lacerated, bleeding Jesus. He said, “Behold, the Man!” (John 19:5). Pilate’s ruse did not work. Neither Jesus nor Pilate got any sympathy.

*The dying!* Crucifixion stripped people of their human dignity. Basically, crucifixion was used to kill a man and yet keep him alive as long as possible. In public view, a man was left naked (for all practical purposes), helpless, and open to abuse. Even with all this pain, men could live for days. Most lived two or three days. What horror! Oddly, there was not a great blood loss. No major arteries were affected. However, it was difficult to breathe. It was harder to exhale than to inhale. A man would push up with his legs to breathe, which increased the pain from the nails. Death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and asphyxia exhaustion. When the legs were broken, victims would die within minutes.

The word “excruciating” literally means “out of the cross.” Movement on the cross increased one’s misery. There was no comfortable position on a cross. The pain was immense. Headaches, burning thirst, spasms of

muscles and nerves—the body suffered a million constant shocks.

*The wounds!* There are five ways a person can be wounded. Jesus absorbed all five. (1) The contused wound involved bruises from fists and blunt instruments (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63). (2) The lacerated wound came with scourging. (3) The penetrating wound came from the sharp points of the crown of thorns the soldiers crammed upon His head (Matthew 27:29). (4) The perforated wound came when “. . . they pierced [His] hands and [His] feet” (Psalm 22:16). The hands could not bear the weight of the body. The nails went through His wrists, which are part of the hands. (5) The incised wound confirmed that Jesus was dead when a soldier pierced His side with a spear (John 19:34).

The Roman soldiers would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death. The Bible clearly declares that Jesus died on the cross.

Very little emphasis is placed upon the pain and suffering that Jesus experienced. The Scriptures avoid the gruesome details as much as possible. Sinners are saved by Jesus’ death, not by His pain. Still, the sufferings were clearly present. The cross was a silent death; victims did not have the strength or the breath to scream. Scourging was called the “little death”; crucifixion was called the “big death.”

Study carefully Isaiah 53. Do not allow your heart to become insensitive to the pain of the cross. Never allow yourself to get over the shock of its horror!

*The cross . . .  
there is no other way!*