
The Mockery Of Jesus

"And they knelt down before Him and mocked Him . . ."
(Matthew 27:29c).

In the four crucifixion narratives, we see the unthinkable! We see man, the creation, laughing in sinister derision at his Creator, the Son of God! We ask, "Who in his right mind could do such a thing as this?"

The text is plain: Man not only crucified Jesus, but he also castigated Him with venomous mockery! He made sport of the hands that would soon be nailed-pierced to save him from eternal punishment for sin. He spat upon and slapped the face of Jesus, the face that reflected the highest love for him.

Jesus was beaten with fists, blindfolded and taunted, and hit with a reed, a crude imitation of a scepter. Heartless scorn was poured upon the Savior in a steady stream! As preparations were made to brutalize His body, those in charge of Him sought to terrorize His spirit. His personality, position, character, and purpose were derided. Those He would die to save belittled His divine intentions, His holy sacrifice, and His altruistic love.

They mocked His kingship, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" In the midst of the Roman trial, Pilate offered Barabbas and Jesus to the crowd and asked them to choose one to be released. With a frenzied cry, they chanted, "Release for us Barabbas!" (Luke 23:18). Their choice declared Jesus to be worse than a criminal, worse than an insurrectionist and murderer.

The scene that took place after the trial, after Pilate had announced his verdict, must have caused heaven to weep and the earth to tremble. Matthew described its heart-rending details:

And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head (Matthew 27:29, 30).

At the cross, the chief priests, elders, and scribes joined in the mockery. They said, "He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him" (Matthew 27:42b).

They mocked His power, saying, "Let Him save Himself." During His earthly ministry, Jesus had publicly demonstrated His miraculous power. The people had seen it, acknowledged it, and understood the implications of it. Even Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, said, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). His miracles were obvious, credible, and unmistakable. Even His enemies acknowledged their authenticity.

Sweeping aside this demonstrated truth of His ministry, the sightseers at the foot of the cross wagged their heads and said, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40). The rulers of the Jews added to this scorn and said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One" (Luke 23:35). The soldiers raised their voices in mockery to the suffering Christ. Coming near to Him, they offered Him vinegar to drink, and said, "If You are the King of the

Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:37).

Of the people in Jerusalem, perhaps His apostles, disciples, and a few others were the only ones who would understand why Jesus was allowing Himself to be crucified. The rulers, in their ignorance, cried for Him to come down from the cross. Their jabbing challenge for Him to save Himself was the favorite jeer at the foot of the cross. Matthew said, "In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself'" (Matthew 27:41, 42a). They did not understand that if Jesus saved Himself there would be no salvation for the human race.

They mocked His deity, saying, "For He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Caiaphas commanded Jesus, ". . . You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63b). Jesus answered, "You have said it yourself" (Matthew 26:64). He not only claimed to be God's Son, but He had fully demonstrated it throughout His ministry. How did Caiaphas react to this affirmation? Read his response and blush with shame that human beings could treat the Son of God in such a fashion:

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?" (Matthew 26:65-68).

The religious rulers and the scribes had charged Jesus with blasphemy because of His testimony to His deity. Our hearts break as we realize that religious people, the people who had publicly avowed that they were looking for the Messiah, the Son of God, had Jesus crucified! He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).

They mocked His morality, saying, "He trusts in God." At the cross, these religious leaders taunted Him. Some shouted, "He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:43).

Many of those at the cross declared that Jesus had been rejected not only by man but also by

God. They argued that His sin had found Him out. "This Man," they said, "is supposed to be One who walks with God. Why doesn't God bring Him down from the cross? Can't we all see that even His God has forsaken Him?"

Yes, Jesus was mocked! His kingship, power, deity, and morality were derided! Let us ponder this fact. However, we must not leave the mockery of Christ without personalizing it. With hearts bowed down with sorrow, let us ask, "What do we learn from the mockery of Jesus?"

First we see that mockery is cruel and cutting. These people wanted to hurt Jesus, and they did. Jesus handled it superbly; but it hurt Him, even as He was hurt by the nails that were driven through His hands and feet. To mock others is to hurt them deliberately.

Second, we see that mockery is an evil instrument. The mockery that was heaped upon Jesus served a vicious and vile purpose. It was intended to make the true Christ into a false Christ. The Jews did not want the Christ that God had sent. He did not fit the mold they had envisioned. The true Christ did not conform to their plans. It was necessary, therefore, for them to change Him, at least in their minds, in order to crucify Him and still live with their consciences. Crucifixion was for criminals and the worst of men, but Jesus was neither. He was the perfect Son of God. What could they do with Him? They maligned His character and reduced Him to a despicable personage. They could not allow the crucifixion of Jesus to stand as the horrible deed that it was. They tried to lend it respect and turn it into a service to society by claiming that they were removing a wicked person from the earth.

Third, we see that mockery can grow out of envy. We are told that it was "because of envy they had handed Him over" (Matthew 27:18). Envy has been depicted as a green-eyed monster that feeds upon its prey. It has been said that envy does more damage to the vessel in which it is stored than to the object on which it is poured. Instead of lifting up good and holy character, jealousy and envy diminish such traits. They do not defend it; they destroy it.

Next, we see how to handle mockery. Jesus committed it to God. Peter wrote, "And while being reviled, He did not revile in return;

while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). Those who mocked Jesus could not destroy Him. Instead, as a diamond seems to shine more brightly against a dark background, Jesus' character was more visibly seen. As we observe the railings and acid words being cast at Jesus, we see deity and perfect holiness against the background of the blackest and most corrupt thinking that human hearts can do.

Fifth, we should see that ignoring what He has done for us can hurt Jesus as much as the mockery that He faced during His crucifixion.

When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged
Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and
feet, and made a Calvary;
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns,
red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and
human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to [Searcy]¹ we simply passed
Him by,
We never hurt a hair of Him, we only let Him
die;

¹To apply this lesson, insert the name of your own community.

For men had grown more tender, and they
would not give Him pain,
We only just passed down the street, and left
Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know
not what they do,"
And still it rained the wintry rain that drenched
Him through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets
without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried
for Calvary.²

Jesus, the Son of God, came. Not only did His
own reject Him, but they also mocked Him and
crucified Him.

Eddie Cloer



*We would never think of mocking Jesus; but let us
make sure also that we do not ignore Him. What
do we do with Jesus? The Christian cries out for
all the earth to hear, "Magnify Him, for He is the
Son of God!"*

²Adapted from Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy,
"Indifference," *The Unutterable Beauty: The Collected Poetry
of G. A. Studdert Kennedy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton,
1927), 24.