

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Golgotha

Some important prelude events need to be mentioned before beginning this study. (This is not in the Student's Guide) The Leader has the option of presenting the events in bold, or maybe read a few verses of each.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and is arrested. (Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53, and John 18:2-12)

Jesus faces the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57-67, Mark 14:53-65, Luke 22:54-71, and John 18:13-24)

Peter denies Jesus (Matthew 26:68-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:56-62 and John 18:25-27)

Jesus was delivered to Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea (Matthew 27:1-14, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 23:1-5, John 18:28-38)

Jesus takes the place of Barabbas, and Pilate has Jesus scourged (whipped and flogged) (Matthew 27:15-23, Mark 15:6-14, Luke 23:17-23, and John 18:39-40)

The Roman soldiers then mocked Jesus, and embedded a crown of thorns on his head (Matthew 27:27-30, Mark 15:16-19, and John 19:2-3)

- 1) The Road to Golgotha. (Read the verses outlined in red: Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26, and John 19:17) **Why did Simon of Cyrene carry Jesus' cross when John states in John 19:17, "He, bearing His cross,"?** First, it states in Matthew "as they came out" and in Luke "as they led Him away," Jesus would have to have come out of the governor's palace and led through the city gates. Second, it was customary for the one being crucified to bear their own cross or at least the patibulum (crossbeam) of the cross to the place of execution. At first, Jesus carried his own cross (John 19:17). As Jesus went forth, exhausted from suffering the scourging and flogging, he most likely fell to the ground. They, the Romans, had Simon of Cyrene bear the cross to the place of execution. It does not state why they chose Simon, but the Roman soldiers compelled or forced Simon to finish the journey of carrying the cross for Jesus. Why did Simon have to carry the cross? Because Jesus was exhausted and could not complete the journey under his own physical strength. Some facts to mention. Cyrene was a city in Libya. Many Jews lived in Cyrene and traveled back and forth to Jerusalem. It was a Roman soldier's right to demand labor from a person. Only Mark adds that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.
- 2) Jesus speaks to the women along the way. (Read the verses outlined in green: Luke 23:27-31) Only Luke informs us of Jesus speaking to the women along the way. **Who is Jesus referring to, and what did he mean in verse 31 stating, "For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be**

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done in the dry?" Jesus is referring to the Romans. Jesus is stating if the Romans do this to Me, who is innocent and blameless, then what will they not do to the guilty person? Jesus is comparing himself to the "green wood." Green wood that is not easily burned. He is referring to the guilty as the "dry wood." Dry wood burns easily and rapidly.

- 3) Golgotha, Place of a Skull. (Read the verses outlined in orange: Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, and John 19:17) **Why did the Hebrews call Golgotha "the Place of a Skull?"** No one knows for certain. However, there are a couple of acceptances. The most common choice has been this is the place of many executions. The law of the Jews and the Romans capital punishments had to be executed outside the city walls. It was most likely on the northwest side of Jerusalem. Golgotha is a Hebrew word meaning place of a skull. Luke calls it Calvary, which in Latin means skull or place of skulls. Another alternative has been the hill resembles the shape of a skull.
- 4) Jesus is offered sour wine or vinegar with myrrh to drink on three separate occasions. (Read the verses outlined in gray: Matthew 27:34, and Mark 15:22) **Why was Jesus offered sour wine to drink? Can you identify all three separate occasions?** Hint: #3 is in the "Death of Jesus" lesson.
 - a) Why? Roman soldiers commonly drank a very low-grade light white wine. If rendered or fermented incorrectly, it would yield a bitter or acidic taste with a low 2.5 PH balance close to vinegar. Sometimes they would add myrrh or some other bitter wood. The effect is said to dull the senses. For the crucified, it would render them insensible to pains of death.
 - b) #1 Matthew 27:34, Mark 15:23. When they came to Golgotha, they gave Him some sour wine mingled with gall/myrrh, but He did not drink it.
 - c) #2 Luke 23:36. When the soldiers were mocking Him, they offered Him sour wine.
 - d) #3 John 19:28-29. Jesus said He was thirsty. They gave Him some wine vinegar soaked on a sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant. When Jesus received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."
- 5) The crucifixion. (Read the verses outlined in blue: Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:33-34, and John 19:23-24). The bible does not go into great detail about how Jesus was crucified. Just that they crucified Him. **Matthew and John both mention a prophecy is fulfilled when the soldiers divided Jesus' garments and cast lots for their clothing. Where is this scripture written?** Psalms 22:18. Leader's option: The Leader at this point has the option to discuss or provide a visual description of the crucifixion. Warning: This is a little graphic:
 - a) What is crucifixion? The Romans borrowed the idea of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment from the Greeks and Phoenicians. The Jews

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believed crucifixion was the most disgusting form of death. The Romans reserved crucifixion for slaves, enemies, and the worst criminals. The Romans citizens who committed capital crimes were beheaded instead of crucified.

- b) Prior to the crucifixion, the criminal was usually stripped naked and bound to a stake. This was not done for humiliation but to effectively administer the scourging.
- c) The scourging was customary for the Romans to whip the subject before the crucifixion. The Jews recognized the law of Deuteronomy 25:3, a maximum of 39 lashes. Nowhere does it mention the Romans followed or acknowledged the Jewish law. The whip used by the Romans was called a flagrum—A whip with leather thongs and pieces of bone or metal attached to the end. The pieces of bone or metal would penetrate the person's skin, and as it was pulled back to prepare for another whipping, it would rip chunks of flesh, causing severe intense pain and bleeding. The flogging would also leave the skin in long ribbons on the skin.
- d) The victim would then have to carry the patibulum (crossbeam) of the cross to the place of execution. He would do this while wounded and dust from the ground would penetrate the wounds while carrying or dragging a beam weighing 75 to 125 pounds.
- e) A hole was dug or drilled in preparation for the cross. Most of the time, they would reuse the same hole from previous crucifixions. The two beams would lay on the ground, be bound together, and form a cross. The criminal was fastened to the cross with both arms stretched out. The nails or spikes (usually seven to nine inches long) would be driven through each hand in the center of the palm, deep into the patibulum beam. Next, both feet would be positioned together so that the knees were bent at around 45 degrees, and a spike or nail would be driven through both feet into the vertical beam. Occasionally the legs were broken to speed up the process of death. See exactly why in (h).
- f) The cross was then elevated up with the immovable victim attached to it. The cross would then drop into the hole violently giving the victim a convulsive shock to further increase his suffering, especially to the hands and the feet where nails attached the body to the cross.
- g) Pain gradually increases to an excruciating level over time, as the victim continues to bleed internally and externally.
- h) Here is something that is not commonly discussed. When we breathe air in, the diaphragm moves downward. To exhale, we force the diaphragm to compress the air in the lungs and force the air out. Most of the time, this is done naturally, and we do not even know we are doing it. Hanging on a

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cross, the weight of the body pulls down the diaphragm. The victim would have to push on the feet nailed to the cross to exhaust carbon dioxide or speak. As it becomes more difficult to breathe, this leads to a slow form of suffocation. Carbon dioxide builds up in the blood, causing an increase in carbonic acid. Blood pressure increases as the heart beats faster. Watery fluid begins to leak into the tissues, fluid around the heart and lungs increases. If left in this state, the victim would die from suffocation or cardiac arrest. This is more visually noticeable in John 19:34 when Jesus is pierced in his side and out-poured blood and water. Breaking the legs would speed up the process of suffocation.

- i) Depending on the person's strength, he could last three to seven days. But eventually, exhaustion, thirst, suffocation, pain, and hunger would end the person's life.
- 6) Casting lots. (Matthew 27:35, Mark:15:24, Luke, 23:34, and John 19:23-24) The four Roman soldiers divided Jesus' garments. **What does it mean the Roman soldiers cast lots?** The Roman soldiers divided up Jesus' clothing. Each receiving $\frac{1}{4}$ of Jesus' clothing. There is no place in the bible describing how the action of the casting of lots took place. Casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the old testament and 7 times in the new testament. The tunic was probably the most valuable article of clothing. It is stated in John they did not want to tear it as it was woven without a seam, meaning it was one complete piece. They gambled on the tunic and Jesus' clothing. This was probably similar to flipping a coin.
- 7) Jesus asks to forgive them. (Luke 23:34) **Why does Jesus ask the Lord to forgive them?** This is a fulfillment of another prophecy, Isaiah 53:12. There are two parts to this scripture. (1) Jesus is praying to God, the Father, to forgive them. It is not certain if He is praying for the Roman soldiers or the Jews. The Roman soldiers were ignorant and were following orders. The Jews knew who Jesus was as far as someone who was professing to be the Messiah. They were either unable or unwilling to believe Jesus was the Messiah. (2) Jesus is providing the reason behind it. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 2:8 what the Jews did was done through ignorance. But even though they may be ignorant, He demonstrates His compassion by asking God to pardon them and ask for their forgiveness.
- 8) Jesus King of the Jews. (Read the verses outlined in black: Matthew 27:36-37, Mark 15:25-26, Luke 23:38, and John 19:19-22). We are including John 19:21-22; the chief priests did not want to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the King of the Jews. **Why did Pilate give instructions to write in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews?"** It was customary for the Romans to put a sign on each cross. This sign labeled the

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person being crucified with the crime for which they had been charged. Hebrew represented the Hebrew religion, Greek represented the common collective language of the land, and Latin represented the official language of the Roman Empire. Pilate asked Jesus this very question. Luke 23:3 Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus replies, "thou sayest it." Pilate also offers the same question to the crowd in John 18:39, asking them if they want me to release the King of the Jews to you? The Jews did not accept his offer. They instead cried out to crucify Him. That was the crime Pilate put on Jesus' inscription.

- 9) Bonus Question: **Do you know of the hidden Remez on the cross?** A Remez is a Hebrew word, and it means "hint." The Remez is found in understanding the inscription written in Hebrew. Remember, the Hebrew language is written from right to left. Here is what Pilate wrote:

Hebrew:	HaYehudium	vMelech	HaNazarei	Yeshua
English:	The Jews	The King	The Nazarene	Jesus

An acrostic is a form of writing in which only the first letter of each word, line, or paragraph is linked together. The first letter of each Hebrew word was used, spelling it right to the left. **The answer:** YHVH. Which is Yahweh or Jehovah. It is the unpronounceable name of God. We have no way of knowing if Pilate wrote these words intentionally. If they were written in a different sequence or something else, we would have a different message. Coincidence?

- 10) The two thieves were crucified. (Read the verses outlined in yellow: Matthew 27:38 & 44, Mark 15:27-28 & 32, Luke 23:39-43, and John 19:18). All these verses refer to the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus, one on each side of him. It shows their interaction with Him. **In Mark 15:28, what is the scripture that was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors?"** Isaiah 53:12.
- 11) Jesus Derided on the Cross. (Read the verses outlined in purple: Matthew 27:39-43, Mark 15:28-31, and Luke 23:35-37). **Why were the thieves, priests, elders, scribes mock Jesus while on the cross?** They said this to insult Him.
- 12) Only Luke 23:39-43 mentions Jesus talking with one of the robbers. **Why does one of the robbers in Luke 23:42 tell Jesus to remember him, and how does Jesus respond?** The one robber is asking for consideration in His kingdom. The robber knew he was guilty of his crime. He also knew and said Jesus was innocent. The robber demonstrates a leap of faith of being a believer by asking Jesus to remember him when he arrives in His kingdom.

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Jesus tells the robber today he will be with Him in paradise. Even as Jesus is coming to the end of his life, you can still see his grace and forgiveness to a sinner.