

Scourging As was common with the Romans, Jesus was publicly scourged, or beaten, with a leather-thonged whip before His crucifixion. This was not a surprise to Jesus. During His ministry, He foretold of this happening. Going up to Jerusalem Jesus said unto the twelve, ***(Matt20:18) Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, (19) And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.***

Scourging was a Roman method designed to quickly inflict pain as it literally ripped the flesh from the body of a victim. The Roman scourge, also called the "flagrum" or "flagellum" was a short whip made of two or more leather thongs, or ropes, connected to a handle. Sometimes it was called "a cat of nine tails." The leather thongs were knotted with a number of small pieces of metal, usually zinc and iron, attached at various intervals. Scourging would quickly remove the skin.

Sometimes the Roman scourge contained a hook at the end and was given the terrifying name "scorpion." The criminal was made to stoop which would make deeper lashes from the shoulders to the waist. According to Jewish law, the number of stripes inflicted by another Jew was forty less one (Deut. 25:3). Nevertheless, scourging among the Romans was a more severe form of punishment as there was no legal limit to the number of blows, as with the Jews. Deep lacerations, torn flesh, exposed muscles, and excessive bleeding would leave the criminal "half-dead." Death was often the result of this cruel form of punishment though the intent was to keep the criminal alive to be brought to a public death on the cross. Jesus endured this for us, and in so doing, fulfilled the OT prophecy of Isaiah. ***But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned ever one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. – Isa. 53:5-6***

Ridicule After the scourging, no doubt in enormous pain and weakened, if for no other reason than the tremendous loss of blood, Jesus was brought back where the Roman soldiers now took their turn in mocking Jesus. Earlier it was Herod's men who

mocked Jesus and put a kingly robe on him, but now it is Pilate's men. *Matthew 27:26-31 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. (27) Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.*

Recall a "band" was between 600 and 1000 men. To these men, it was just another execution. No doubt they had picked up on the Jewish claims that Jesus was the King of the Jews, so they decided to have some fun with it. A king needed a robe. (28) *And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.* A king needs a crown and a scepter. (29) *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! (30) And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. (31) And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."* We learn from John's account that after public ridicule and before taking Jesus away, Pilate makes one last plea to have Jesus released.

John 19:2-17 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, (3) And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. (slide (4) Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that i find no fault in him. (5) Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" What a pitiful sight this must have been! "Behold the man." Look at him! Isn't this enough? Let him go!

(6) *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. (7) The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.* The Jews were making reference to the religious law of blasphemy. It was punishable by death according to Lev 24:16. (8) *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;* This time Pilate was not afraid of the Jews so much as he was Jesus. (9) *"And*

went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. (10) Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”

QUESTION: Pilate, if you have the power to release him and you found no fault in him, then why don't you release him? We know the answer, don't we? He was fearful of the people and what they would do if he released Jesus which would directly impact his political career. *(11) Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. (12) and from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*

This was the right button to push against Pilate. Politically he didn't need word to get back to Caesar that he wasn't his friend. He was in a tight spot. Should he do what he knew was right, which would be the end of his political career, or should he give in to the pressure of the Jews? *(John 19:13) When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. (14) And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! (15) But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. (16) Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.”* Envy won that day as Pilate collapsed to the public pressure of the Jews.

CRUCIFIXTION On the Trip to Golgotha, there is no Biblical support that Jesus collapsed under the cross. Notice what was written in each of the four gospels. *John 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:* Here we learn that Jesus was bearing his own cross as he went forth through the streets toward the hill of Golgotha. Golgotha is a

Hebrew word that means “the skull” and got its name because it resembles a head coming forth from the shoulders. The Greek equivalent is *calvaria* from which we get our English word Calvary. The cross mentioned was usually just the cross beam and not the entire cross. Somewhere along the way, Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus.

As was the custom, the convicted was to march through the streets on his way to the execution site, and as he did, a soldier marched in front of him displaying a sign stating his crime. The reason for this was twofold. **One**, someone who might be a legitimate witness could come forth with new information to present to the court that might result in a stay of execution. The court members were supposed to remain in the council chambers reviewing the evidence and awaiting any new information. In the case of Jesus, they were leading the procession and instigating the crowd to “crucify Jesus.” Highly irregular and illegal.

The **second** reason for the sign was to serve as a deterrent to any who would be potential trouble- makers. *Matt 27:32 – “And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.” Luke 23:32 and there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.* Jesus was not the only one in the street that day to be crucified. There were two other malefactors.

Nailing to the cross: He was led to Golgotha where He would be crucified. Crucifixion was a terrible means of dying that was invented by the Assyrians seven hundred years before Christ. The one being crucified was either nailed or tied to the cross. A piece of wood attached to the upright served as sort of a seat (*sedecula*). The seat was not for the victim’s relief so much as it was to prolong the suffering. It was a slow, painful death. The victim died from exposure, shock, or starvation, and ultimately suffocation. It was usually done in a visible, public place to serve as a deterrent to any coming into the city. As was the custom, before they nailed the victim to the cross, a mixture of vinegar, gall, and myrrh was offered. *Matthew 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.* Mark

15:23 says they offered him wine mingled with myrrh. Gall or myrrh was a narcotic painkiller. This drink was said to alleviate some of the suffering, but Jesus refused it.

Then stake-like nails were driven through his hands and ankles, fastening him to the cross where He was crucified between two convicted criminals. *Mark 15:25 – “And it was the third hour, (9:00 a.m.) and they crucified him.”* Luke 23:27 tells us that a great multitude of people followed Jesus, and women bewailed and lamented him. No doubt many of these would have testified on Jesus’ behalf if they had been given the opportunity. *Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

Try to imagine the pain associated with the crucifixion and the nails being driven through the flesh. Then there was the thud as the cross was lifted up and dropped into the hole. As he hung in the heat of the sun and the now drying blood causing the skin to tighten. Perhaps flies or other insects buzzed his head. No way to scratch any itch. Jesus had made the ground where the hole was dug. He made the trees from which the cross was made. He made the ore from which the nails were made.

From the cross and in intense throbbing pain with the pulse of every heartbeat, Jesus asked the Father to forgive them! *Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* This forgiveness took place in Acts 2:38.

The Sign: *(John 19:19-22) And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. {20} This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. {21} Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. {22} Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

When Pilate gave Jesus over to be crucified, many of the Jewish leaders must have been delighted. Finally, they were going to be rid of this Jesus and get Him out of the way. His claims of being king would be silenced, and their position among the

people would be preserved. So, as they were headed out of the city to the place of execution and looked up and saw that sign, they were enraged at what they saw. It said, *“Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.”* They likely thought that Pilate should have known better. After all, they had just said, *“We have no king but Caesar.”*

So, they got a delegation together and went to Pilate and urged him to change the wording of the sign. They asked Pilate not to leave the sign that implied that Jesus was really the king, but asked him to change it to read, *“He says he is the king of the Jews.”* And when they came, Pilate was probably delighted because that was exactly the reaction he had wanted from them because they had humiliated him publicly. They had backed him into a corner and forced him to condemn an innocent man. So, he put that signboard up there to irritate and insult them.

They came urging him to change the wording, but Pilate said, *“What I have written, I have written.”* In essence, he said, *“I wrote it; it stands written; and it’s not going to be changed.”* Now when you think about it, that is an amazing statement. Here was a man who caved in to the demands of the Jews when the life of the Lord was at stake. His convictions were so weak and his political ambitions so strong that he just crumbled, and yet now, with something as insignificant as a signboard, he refused to yield. He took his stand at the wrong place, but isn’t that what we so often do? We take our stand on things in life that really don’t matter that much, and yet we are often weak and vacillating when it comes to things that are of supreme importance. Here was a man who took his stand too late and for too little.

We see this because the title was written in Hebrew, the language of religion; the title was written in Greek, the language of culture; and it was written in Latin, the language of Rome which was the language of law and government. So, this sign was open to all for reading. The cross was universal.

Jesus endured the cross for you and for me. Heb 12:2 says he endured the cross and despised the shame joyfully because it would offer salvation to us. Do you need the cleansing blood of Jesus?

Invitation