

## 6. THE CROSS

### Purpose

To understand God's love and sacrifice for us

### THE EMOTIONAL SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST

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Matthew 26:36-46 Jesus' friends failed him when he needed them.

Matthew 26:47-56 Jesus was betrayed by his close friend Judas.

Matthew 26:57-68 Jesus was falsely accused by his enemies.

Matthew 26:69-75 Jesus was denied by his close friend Peter.

### THE PHYSICAL SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST

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#### Matthew 27:26-44

- » Jesus was flogged, mocked, and crucified.

### THE SPIRITUAL SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST

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#### Matthew 27:45-50

- » Jesus cried out to God, "Why have you forsaken me?"
- » Jesus felt separated from God.

### WHY DID JESUS DO ALL OF THIS FOR US?

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#### Isaiah 53:4-6 | TO BEAR OUR SINS

- » Surely he took up our pain - Jesus suffered in our place.
- » He was pierced for our transgressions - Jesus died on the cross for our sin.
- » By his wounds we are healed - His death provides healing for our wounds.

#### Romans 8:31-35 | TO CONVINCING US OF GOD'S LOVE

- » God gave him up for us all - God's sacrifice is for everyone.
- » Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us - still today!
- » Who shall separate us from the love of Christ - God's love is powerful.

Q: How do you feel about what Jesus went through?

#### 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 | TO COMPEL US TO LOVE OTHERS

- » Christ's love compels us - When we understand all that God has done for us, it should compel us to be different!
- » Those who live should no longer live for themselves - Our lives should not be lived to serve others.

## **HOMEWORK**

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**READ:** Medical Account of Jesus' Suffering. See **Appendix B**

## **FURTHER STUDY (CAN BE GIVEN AS HOMEWORK)**

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<u>John 1:1-2, 14</u>	Jesus was fully human. He experienced what we do.
<u>1 Corinthians 1:18-31</u>	The cross demonstrates God's power through us.
<u>1 Corinthians 15:1-6</u>	The cross is of first importance to our faith.
<u>Galatians 6:14-15</u>	Through the cross the world has been crucified to us.
<u>Hebrews 2:9-11</u>	Jesus suffered death to bring us into God's glory.
<u>Hebrews 12:1-3</u>	Jesus endured the cross for the joy of being with God.
<u>1 Peter 2:21-25</u>	Jesus was faultless even while suffering on the cross.

# APPENDIX B: MEDICAL ACCOUNT

## THE MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CROSS

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### MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

*C. Truman Davis, M.D. M.S.*

In this article, I shall discuss some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane, through His trial, His scourging, His path along the Via Dolorosa, to His last dying hours on the cross...This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself~ that is, the torture and execution of a person by fixation to a cross.

Many painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixes today show the nails through the palms. Roman historical accounts and experimental work have shown that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when they support the weight of a human body.

The physical passion of the Christ begins in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of his initial suffering, I shall only discuss the one of physiological interest; the body sweat. It is interesting that the physician of the group St. Luke, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" ([Luke 22:44](#))

Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this phrase, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn't happen. A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hemadrosis or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the morning, Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate

the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful whether the Romans made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter of scourging. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. (In case of a miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law.) The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead or bone attached near the ends of each.

The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead or bones first produce large, deep bruises, which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back hangs in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognisable mass of torn bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there are copious bleeding (the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body). After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain...Almost as though He were again being whipped - and the wounds again begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail of the Roman soldiers, headed by a centurion, begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden cross together with the shock produced by copious blood loss is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion,

anxious to get on with the crucifixion, elects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. Jesus follows; still bleeding and sweating the cold clammy sweat of shock. The 650-yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. The prisoner is again stripped of His clothes - except for a loin cloth, which is allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion begins, Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh; a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the cross on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the, wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wound. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexibility and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the title is reading "This is Jesus, The King of the Jews" ([Matthew 27:37](#)), is nailed in place.

The left foot is pressed against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the ankles of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralysed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences, which are recorded: The first looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" ([Luke 23:34](#)) The second, to the penitent thief, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" ([Luke 23:43](#)) The third, looking down at the terrified, grief stricken adolescent John (the beloved Apostle), He said, "There is your mother," and looking to Mary his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son" ([John 19:26-27](#)) The fourth cry is from the the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#))

Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down the rough timber: Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

Let us remember again the 22nd Psalm, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me" ([Ps 22:14](#)). It is now almost over - the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level - the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick sluggish blood into the tissues - the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to grasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their fluid of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I am thirsty" ([John 19:28](#))

Let us remember another verse of the prophetic 22nd Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death" ([Psalm 22:15](#))

A sponge soaked in Posca, the cheap, sour wine that is the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips. He apparently does not take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus is now in extremes, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. The realisation brings out the sixth words, "It is finished" ([John 19:30](#)). His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and final cry, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit" ([Luke 23:46](#)).

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crucifracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevents the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when they came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently to make double sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs upward through the pericardium and into the heart. [John 19:34](#) records "...one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing forth a sudden flow of blood and water." Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and blood from the interior of the heart. We, therefore, have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Our Lord died, not to the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil which man can exhibit toward man - and toward God. This is not a pretty sight and is apt to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: A glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man - the miracle of the atonement and the expectation of Easter morning.