

The Glory of Jesus' Suffering, Death, and Resurrection

Lesson Six Jesus on the Cross

*He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.
(Isaiah 53:12)*

1. Jesus walks the way of sorrows
2. Jesus endures the most important six hours of the world's history
3. Jesus is buried and guarded

Worship

Read responsively hymn 121, stanza 5, from *Christian Worship*.

A: O my God, my Rock and Tower,

B: Grant that in your death I trust,

A: Knowing death has lost his power

B: Since you crushed him in the dust.

A: Savior, let your agony

B: Ever help and comfort me;

A: When I die be my protection,

B: Light and life and resurrection. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for taking our sins on yourself. Today, as we contemplate the cross, help us remember that when you died there, we died too. Our sins accompanied you to the cross, and when you overcame them in your own body, you overcame them in us. Thank you for all you have done for us. Amen.

Introduction

Scripture references:

Matthew 27:32-66

Mark 15:21-47

Luke 23:26-56

John 19:17-42

Imagine someone who was alive when crucifixion was first devised suddenly coming back to life in our day. The cross was one of the worst forms of torture ever devised. Wouldn't he or she be stunned to see crosses adorning our churches? Wouldn't he or she be puzzled by seeing people wearing crosses as jewelry?

Indeed, it is strange that a symbol of deadly torture and agony has become for us a symbol of joyous peace and life. For the Son of God, that cross meant immeasurable agony, but for all who believe in his name, the cross means uncountable glories.

Background

Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment the Romans had learned from their mortal enemies the Carthaginians. Its origins can be traced back at least to the Persians, who used it already in the sixth century B.C. Death on a cross was meant to be slow and agonizing. A crucified man finally died because he was unable to breathe. It was impossible for the person to exhale without pulling himself up on the cross—which he had to do again and again. Agonizing pain and fatigue finally led to asphyxiation. At times, if the condemned was hanging on too long, his captors would break his leg bones. This would make it impossible for the condemned man to maneuver his body so that he could breathe. Death would follow quickly.

Jesus walks the way of sorrows

Considering all the suffering Jesus went through and the suffering he still had to endure, the path he walked to Golgotha truly can be called the way of sorrows.

Read Luke 23:26-32 and John 19:16b-22.

1. It was a custom of the Romans to force a condemned man to carry the crossbeam of his cross out to the place of crucifixion, where the upright post was waiting from previous executions. What shows us how weak Jesus was at this time?
2. In compassion Jesus warns the women about something that would happen to Jerusalem in the not too distant future. Do you know what Jesus was referring to?
3. It was standard policy for the charge against the condemned man to be nailed to the cross with him. What do you think was Pilate's intent with the words he placed over Jesus' head?
4. How does the sight of our Lord laboring to the place of the cross instill in us both sorrow over sin and hope in God's grace?

On the path of sorrow, whose depths none of us can imagine, goes Jesus, willingly carrying what none of us can carry. While Simon could help with the weight of the wood, the weight of the world's sins was a burden no other could bear!

Jesus endures the most important six hours of the world's history

Crucifixions must have been common at The Place of the Skull. But none had ever been like this one, and nothing made that point more forcefully than the words that came from the mouth of this condemned man. It is interesting to note that what are often called the Seven Words of Christ from the Cross are not found in such a grouping in any one of the four

gospels. The most (three) are found in John and Luke. Jesus may have said much more than what the Spirit saw fit to record for us. But what is recorded takes us to the heart and core of our salvation!

Read Luke 23:33-38.

1. For whom was Jesus praying when he said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”?

Read Luke 23:39-43.

1. Using the beautiful words of one of the criminals, define what true repentance is.
2. How does Jesus’ answer to the criminal comfort us in the face of death?

Read John 19:25-27.

1. How do these words of Jesus show him to be our Savior?

Read Matthew 27:45,46.

1. Why was Jesus utterly forsaken by God the Father? (Read Psalm 22:1-21 for a complete version of Jesus’ words.)
2. What is the importance of the word *my* in Jesus’ cry?
3. In the familiar benediction we hear Sunday after Sunday, these words of blessing are placed upon us: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). Explain how these words were made possible by the events of Good Friday.

Read John 19:28-30.

1. One of the results of the agonies and struggles of crucifixion was a deep thirst. What does Jesus’ request in these verses indicate about his life at this moment?
2. The Greek word translated “it is finished” is the same word ancient shopkeepers would write across a patron’s bill when the bill had been paid. What insight does this give us into Jesus’ words?

Read Luke 23:44-49 and Matthew 27:51-53.

1. As Jesus just announced, the agonies of hell were past. How does this become even clearer in the words Jesus speaks next?
2. What do these words mean for us when we die?
3. Several miracles occurred at the moment of Jesus' death. The most significant is the ripping of the temple curtain that hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. By Old Testament law, only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place and only on the Day of Atonement and only if he was carrying the blood of a sacrifice for the sins of the people. What was the point, then, of this miracle that took place when Jesus died?

In the brief but powerful words Jesus speaks from the cross, we have a summary of our whole salvation. Since God's judgment on sin has been completely poured out on his own Son, we who trust in him will receive nothing from heaven but grace and peace!

Jesus is buried and guarded

Isaiah chapter 53 describes the sufferings and death of the Savior. There must have been many parts of Isaiah chapter 53 that puzzled Old Testament believers. However, no verse would have been more puzzling than verse 9: "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Now the puzzle is solved.

Read John 19:38-42 and Matthew 27:62-66.

1. What is so amazing about Joseph's and Nicodemus' confessions of faith in Jesus?
2. Why can we be thankful that the Jewish leaders requested a guard at Jesus' tomb?

During the week

Read through the references about the suffering, death, and burial of your Savior. Ponder each word carefully.

Good Friday, for all its agony for our Lord, was a day of tremendous triumph. It didn't look that way at first. But Easter Sunday soon would declare the victory that Jesus had won. In the next lesson, we will begin to look at Jesus' resurrection and the appearances he made to his first disciples. Read ahead to prepare for our discussion: Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; and John 20:1-18.