

This lesson examines some of the abuse and ridicule that Jesus suffered, both before and while He was on the cross. We see the hatred and hardness of the hearts of the unbelieving men responsible for crucifying the Son of God. The Roman soldiers mocked and abused Him as a king who dared challenge Roman authority while the Jews rejected Him as their Messiah and wanted Him dead. Yet none of them understood that they were crucifying the Savior of the World that was dying for their sins.

Verses 1-25: After the farce of a trial in which they condemned Him to death, the Jewish leaders turn Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor, since they could not legally put Him to death. Judas' conscience causes him to feel guilty for betraying Jesus and he tries to return the 30 pieces of silver that he was paid to betray Jesus. When the chief priests and elders refuse to take the money, Judas is overcome with guilt and goes and hangs himself. Meanwhile, Jesus is being questioned by Pilate, who is amazed that Jesus refuses to defend Himself against the flimsy accusations of the chief priests and elders. When Pilate recognizes that they were not accusing Jesus because He was guilty of a crime but because of their jealousy, he has an idea of how to release Jesus. It was customary for him to release a prisoner of the Jews' choosing at the passover and so He gives them the choice of releasing either Barabbas (who was a thief and a murderer) or Jesus. Pilate didn't expect the Jews to prefer that a murderer be released instead of an innocent man and was surprised when the multitude chose to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus. As Pilate tried to defend Jesus the crowd began to shout even more that Jesus should be crucified. When Pilate saw that any further attempt to release Jesus would cause a riot, he called for water and washed his hands in front of them, proclaiming that he was "innocent of the blood of this just person." The crowd responded with a chilling and even prophetic statement that they would take the responsibility of Jesus' blood upon themselves and their children.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them" – Since they chose to release Barabbas instead of Jesus, Pilate yields to the people and releases Barabbas.

"and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified" – Scourging someone before crucifixion was standard practice for the Romans and was used to weaken prisoners before crucifixion. Mosaic Law limited scourging to 40 lashes but the Romans had no such restrictions. They typically used a leather whip with pieces of bone or metal embedded in the ends of each strand of leather. In the hands of a skilled person, this whip could literally rip the flesh off the back of the prisoner, lacerating muscles and at times even exposing internal organs. It was not unusual for prisoners to die during the scourging. After the scourging, Pilate handed over the responsibility of crucifying Jesus to the Roman soldiers under his authority. According to John's gospel, Pilate presents Jesus to the people after the scourging and said "Behold, the man!" (John 19:5). He may have been hoping that the sight of Jesus wounded by the scourging would be enough to satisfy the people so that Jesus could be released but the people still cried out for His crucifixion.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of *soldiers*. 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 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!

Now that Jesus was their responsibility, the soldiers decide to have some fun at our Lord's expense. The "whole band" of soldiers refers to a Roman cohort (a tenth of a legion) which was 600 men. Apparently soldiers not on duty elsewhere around the city gathered around Jesus to humiliate and ridicule Him as they stripped Him of His clothes and dressed Him as a mock imitation of a king. They gave Him a scarlet robe (a royal color) and fashioned a crown of thorns that was thrust upon His head, no doubt causing excruciating pain. They then give Him a reed as an imitation of a king's scepter as they mock and ridicule Him by bowing their knees before Him and giving mock honor to the king of the Jews. While the Jewish leaders had ridiculed and abused Jesus in their rejection of Him as their Messiah, these Roman soldiers are likely mocking the idea that a king of the Jews could challenge the mighty power of Caesar and the Roman government.

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*.

The Roman soldiers continue showing their contempt for Jesus by spitting on Him and striking Him on the head with the reed, which drove the thorns further into His head. When they had had their fill of mocking and abusing Jesus, they replace the robe with His own clothes and take Him away to be crucified.

Verses 32-38: Prisoners on their way to be crucified were usually compelled to carry their cross to the crucifixion site but apparently Jesus had been so weakened by the scourging and the subsequent beatings that He is physically unable to carry His cross. The soldiers compel a man watching from the crowd (a man named Simon from Cyrene) to carry the cross instead. When they arrive at Golgotha, the soldiers offer Jesus a narcotic drink that would have deadened the pain but He refused it once He realized what it was. He needed to have His full mental faculties in order to fulfill His Father's will on the cross. The soldiers crucify Him between two thieves and then unknowingly fulfill prophecy by casting lots for the garments that they had stripped off Him (Psalms 22:18).

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

The Romans crucified people publicly as an example to others and this crucifixion site was near a road. Travelers on the road to and from Jerusalem apparently stopped and "reviled" ("to speak evil of") Him. Interestingly, they use the same false accusation used by the only two witnesses found to agree during Jesus' trial (Matt. 26:60-61). Of course, this accusation was a distortion of what Jesus had actually said since He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:19-21). They also taunt Jesus by daring Him to prove that He is the Son of God by using His divine power to remove Himself from the cross. However, because Jesus was determined to obey His Father's will, He resisted the temptation to prove Himself to the people.

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

“Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders” – Unsurprisingly the chief priests, scribes and elders do not miss their opportunity to mock Jesus and relish what is happening. They have hated Him since He started preaching some three years prior and their desires for Jesus have finally been fulfilled.

“said, He saved [to deliver; to protect; to rescue from danger] others; himself he cannot save” – By “save” they are referring to the healing ability that characterized Jesus’ ministry. They are laughing at what they see as the irony that He could heal others and rescue them from an early death but now (in their eyes) He could not prevent His own death. They did not understand that Jesus could have stopped the crucifixion at any time but instead chose to die on the cross for our redemption (**Matt. 26:53** “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*”).

“If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him” – They use a taunt similar to the one used by those who passed by (v. 40). They say if Jesus really was the “King of Israel” (the Messiah) then He could prove it by removing Himself from the cross. Despite claiming that if Jesus could do this then they would believe His claims of being the Messiah, in actuality they would not have believed even if Jesus came down from the cross because of the hardness of their hearts (Luke 16:31). After His resurrection they will still refuse to believe and will attempt to cover up it.

“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God” – They acknowledge that Jesus had professed to trust in God and they say that if God truly approved of Jesus and all that He did then He would rescue Jesus from the cross. Surely God would not let His own Son die like this, would He? Again, they did not understand what God was doing.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Matthew and Mark both record that the thieves also verbally abused Jesus (Mark 15:32). Luke, however, give us the added detail that one of the thieves eventually recognized Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 23:39-43). It is generally accepted that this thief initially mocked Jesus and later repented. Satan was using everyone he could to tempt Jesus to disobey His Father and abort His mission of being the Savior.

Verse 45: There was a three hour period of darkness from the 6th hour (noon) until the 9th hour (3:00 pm) as Jesus took upon Himself the guilt of our sins and “became sin” for us (**2 Cor. 5:21** “*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*”). God poured out His concentrated judgment for the sins of humanity upon His Own Son. Darkness is associated with hell and the absence of the presence of God (Matt. 8:12; John 3:19, 8:12). God had to withdraw His presence from His Son while His wrath was being poured out on our sin.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice” – At the end of the three hours of darkness (likely just before it ended) Jesus cries out with a loud voice. Being dehydrated due to hanging in the hot sun, blood loss and unreplenished sweat, it would normally have been difficult if not impossible to cry out as Jesus did. Not only that, He had been scourged and had been hanging on the cross for six hours. Other men would be in a such a weakened state that they would have been unable to cry out with a loud voice.

“saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” – “Eli, Eli” is Hebrew and the rest is Aramaic. Mark 15:34 gives us what Jesus said in Aramaic: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”

“that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” – Matthew (as does Mark) gives us the translation, which fulfills Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 predicts many aspects of Christ’s crucifixion. The Father, with Whom Jesus had always had perfect fellowship, had withdraw His presence from His Son as He poured on Jesus the wrath for the sins of the world. Jesus cries out “My God, my God,” not “My Father, my Father” because the fellowship with His Father has been disrupted and temporarily replaced with wrath and judgment.

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias. 48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

“Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias” – It is unclear who the “them” is referring to or whether or not they sincerely misunderstood what Jesus said. It seems to be more consistent with v. 49 that they say “This man calleth for Elias [Elijah]” in a spirit of mockery. There was a Jewish superstition at the time that one could call for Elijah to rescue them in a time of imminent peril.

“And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink” – On the surface this might seem to be an act of compassion, but this vinegar was the watered down sour wine that the Roman soldiers themselves drank to refresh themselves in the hot sun. The point may have been to refresh Jesus and extend His time of suffering.

“The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him” – If the onlookers truly believed that Jesus was calling for Elijah to rescue Him then it may be that they sincerely wanted to see if it would happen. On the other hand, it may be that they said this in jest, ridiculing the idea that Elijah would want to rescue Jesus.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

John 19:30 tells us that Jesus cried “It is finished!” When He did, He yielded up [to send away; to dismiss; to let go of] the ghost [spirit]. Jesus chose the moment of His death, waiting until He had completed everything His Father wanted Him to do. **John 10:17-18** “*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*” He was in control the whole time.