

# JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

## STUDY FIFTEEN

### Delivered Up to Be Crucified

*Matthew 27:20–34; John 19:16–30*

*By spending time at the cross and forcing ourselves to look at scenes too harsh for eyes to see, we will leave all the more grateful that He paid the price for our sins with His body on the tree.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

To die on a cross was to die in shame. Even the Romans believed it to be “a most cruel and disgusting punishment.”<sup>1</sup> Few could witness crucifixion without turning away in horror. Even picturing it in our imaginations causes us to shudder.

Welling up in our souls is the question *why*? Why did Jesus have to die this way? Why the beating and scourging? Why the thorns and nails? Why the brutality and mocking? Was all that necessary?

Yes . . . to display sin’s true and ugly face.

The crucifixion of Christ was the crowning sin of our race. In his death we shall find all the sins of mankind uniting in foul conspiracy. Envy and pride and hate are there, with covetousness, falsehood, and blasphemy, eager to rush on to cruelty, revenge, and murder. As all the rivers run into the sea, and as all the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, so did all the crimes of man gather to the slaying of the Son of God.<sup>2</sup>

Look squarely at the cross and you’ll see sin as it really is—repulsive and deadly. And you will appreciate like never before the price Jesus paid to save us and the love that compelled Him when He died for the sins of the world.



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## **Delivered Up to Be Crucified**

*Matthew 27:20–34; John 19:16–30*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Follow Jesus' tortured steps to the cross by first bowing in prayer.

*Father, the injustice and brutality that Jesus endured overwhelms my senses. Through it all, what serenity and strength He displayed! I worship the One who was willing to suffer so much for my sake. In my Savior's name, amen.*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

The sentencing of Jesus took place when Pilate “sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*)” (John 19:13). Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but to satisfy the bloodthirsty mob and save his own position, he “turned Jesus over to them to be crucified” (19:16).



### **Observation: Following Jesus to the Cross**

Sentencing was the first step along Jesus' *Via Dolorosa* (way of suffering). Let's walk with Him through the phases of His ordeal.

#### **Scourging—Matthew 27:26**

Pre-crucifixion scourging was a common practice. It shortened the time it would take a condemned person to die but exponentially multiplied the pain. Matthew matter-of-factly stated that Pilate “ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip.” His readers knew what scourging meant, so he didn't go into detail, but we need an explanation.

A man called a *lictor* administered the scourging. Trained in torture, a Roman *lictor* was a master at inflicting the maximum degree of pain without killing the person. Jesus would have been stripped, tied to a post, and flogged to an inch of His life. The sharp bone and metal tied to the ends of the leather thongs would have ripped Jesus' skin and the tissue beneath into strips, causing excruciating pain and profuse bleeding.

Jesus would have been in critical condition. But, as if the physical trauma of scourging were not enough, He also endured the emotional pain of humiliation from the soldiers.



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### The Robe, Crown, and Scepter—Matthew 27:27–30

The soldiers gathered around Jesus like a pack of animals circling their prey. As a sadistic form of entertainment, they took Jesus into the courtyard of “their headquarters and called out the entire regiment” to watch a mock coronation of Jesus (Matthew 27:27).

Read [Matthew 27:28–30](#). Use your Bible-study resources to find out what the “robe,” the “crown,” and the “reed” might have been. A helpful online resource is The [IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#) at [biblegateway.com](#).

Put yourself in this scene not as a soldier but as a disciple. You weep as you see Jesus suffer, but what do you see in His manner as He absorbs the blows and ridicule?

### The Journey to the Cross—Matthew 27:31–34

Silently, patiently, and with the dignity of a true king, Jesus took every blow. The soldiers had never witnessed such an indomitable spirit. It wasn't long before the air went out of their sport.

*When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified. (Matthew 27:31)*



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The cross's horizontal crosspiece, called the *patibulum*, would have been placed on Jesus' shoulders to carry. And then, surrounded by four Roman soldiers and led by a centurion, Jesus was paraded through busy city streets to the site of the crucifixion just outside of town. How did Matthew describe the way to Golgotha in *Matthew 27:32–34*?

*The Romans believed that viewing capital punishment was a deterrent to crime; therefore, they made crucifixion as public as they could. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

What route did Jesus take? Read the article, "*Via Dolorosa*" in the online *Encyclopedia of the Bible*, and record what you discover regarding this traditional path to the site of Jesus' crucifixion.

### The Crucifixion—Matthew 27:35–37; John 19:16–30

Jesus refused the "wine mixed with bitter gall" numbing agent (Matthew 27:34). He was determined to accomplish the work of our salvation with a clear mind. The soldiers "nailed him to the cross" (27:35), lifted the wooden beam, and secured it in place. For six hours, Jesus hung suspended between heaven and earth. (To understand the details of Roman crucifixion, read the article, "*What Is the History of Crucifixion?*" at [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org).)



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Read John's account of what happened in those six agonizing hours in *John 19:16–30*.

What was significant about the sign that stated Jesus' "crime"?

What tender words did John record between Jesus and those who stayed by His side?

According to John, Jesus' last words were, "It is finished!" (19:30). What was finished? Let's take a closer look at the meaning of Jesus' statement.

*You and I deserved that cross. Jesus really took our cross and bore it in our place. How grateful we are that He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Interpretation: What Did Jesus Accomplish on the Cross?**

Certainly, Christ's ordeal was finished. The agonizing contortions of His pain-wracked body gasping for air were over as He settled into death's relief. But that was not His meaning.

Jesus' words were not the final exhale of a weary soul but an exclamation of victory. Through His death, Jesus broke "the power of the devil, who had the power of death" and He "set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying" (Hebrews 2:14–15). Jesus put an end to the curse that had plagued humanity since the Fall. *Death's reign was finished.* Jesus had accomplished the work of salvation that He came to do.



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Under each category below, put in your own words what each of the verses teach about the blessing we receive through Jesus' death.

**Reconciliation**—*Colossians 1:19–22; 1 Peter 3:18*

**Redemption**—*Galatians 3:13–14*

**Salvation**—*Romans 5:8–11*

Jesus was no victim. No one took His life, rather, Jesus “*gave up* his spirit” (John 19:30 emphasis added), just as God had predetermined in ages past.



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### Correlation: How Did Jesus' Death Fulfill Prophecy?

Everything happened as God said it would. What parts of Jesus' passion are reflected in *Isaiah 53:3–5, 7*?

What precise details of Jesus' crucifixion did the psalmist foretell in *Psalms 22:11–18*?

As Peter later testified, Jesus was “delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23 NASB). Christ's death made possible eternal life to all who believe. This is the victory Christ won at the cross.

*Our gratitude knows no bounds as our hearts are lifted up in thankfulness for Him who gave His last breath on our behalf and bore our sins in His body on the tree.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Application: In Christ's Death, We Live

It is true, the worst of humanity paraded its horrors at Christ's crucifixion. The sum of our sins was accounted for at the cross, and *Jesus bore them all*. There was no wrong that Jesus did not make right. There was no darkness that He did not scatter with His light.



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If you think you have committed an evil that Jesus cannot forgive, then you have not reckoned with His cross. Pour out your sins at His feet. He has seen your worst and accepted you a long time ago. Have you been holding on to your shame, feeling too unworthy for Jesus to forgive? Release it into His grace and let it go.

What thanks can you give in return? Perhaps the praise from John’s vision says it well. Sing with the angels . . .

*Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. And they sang in a mighty chorus:*

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—  
to receive power and riches  
and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and blessing.” (Revelation 5:11–13)*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, through Christ’s disgrace, You poured out Your grace on me. How can I praise You enough for Your marvelous ways? In Your predetermined plan from ages past, You had my salvation in mind. Why? Because of Your great love which showers upon me as a blessing from heaven. In return, what can I give? My life, my heart, my unending praise. In Jesus’ precious name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Cicero, as quoted by John R. W. Stott in *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 24.
2. C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon at His Best*, compiled by Tom Carter (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 47.

