

The Death of Jesus

Matthew 27:27-56

June 9th, 2019

Big idea: Jesus was mocked, beaten, and crucified by men and he was temporarily separated from His Father to save us.

Intro

In 1914 Ernest Shackleton set out with a group of men to be the first to cross the continent of Antarctica. Others had already beaten him to the south pole so he needed a new goal. The plan was to take his stout ship, the *Endurance*, specially designed for an icy voyage with a hull up to 12" thick, to the coast of Antarctica, disembark with a small group of men to cross the continent, while the rest of the crew remained on the boat and met them on the other side. It never happened. What did happen was one of the most amazing stories of human endurance. But if you read about the journey, at every stage you think, "This can't get any worse." And then it does.

On the journey was a brilliant and committed photographer from New Zealand whose job was to capture pictures that could be sold in a book after the journey to recoup the costs of the trip.

They left the South Georgia island in December (the arctic summer) but before they reached the continent their boat was frozen fast in an immovable ice-flow by the end of January. Realizing that they would need to spend the winter, they made the best of it and settled in to a routine of life on a boat frozen in ice in the arctic winter.

In September Shackleton realized the ship was going to be crushed by the ice rather than released. He order the men off the ship and onto the ice flow. They transferred what they could and set up camp on the ice just before the ship was crushed and eventually sank. For two months they camped on the ice, even as it shifted underneath them. During one night a crack opened up directly underneath a sleeping sailor and he had to be pulled out of the water. But they survived.

However, the ice was breaking apart. They were forced to abandon the iceflow and pile into 3 lifeboats for an exhausting 5 day journey to Elephant Island. It was the first time they had been on solid ground in 497 days. But it wasn't much of a relief. It was uninhabited except for penguins. It was rocky and desolate. There tattered tents were now on solid ground, but it was solid ground of rock and penguin droppings. They were out of the shipping lanes with no hope of being discovered.

Shackleton took 5 other men, loaded into the strongest of their 20' life boats and set off on a journey to South Georgia Island, the closest inhabited land, 720 miles away. They were in the worst ocean in the world with massive waves, freezing temperatures, and brutal blizzards. They traveled for 15 days, alternating between turns on watch, and turns sleeping below a makeshift canvas cover on piles of rock that were put in the boat for ballast. The weather was so bad the navigator could only take measurements a handful of times. And yet they found the island and landed in a rocky cove. The problem was, it was the wrong side of the island.

Leaving 3 men with the boat, he took two others and crossed 32 miles in 36 hours to reach the whaling station on the north side of the island. The island's interior was made of mountains and glaciers. And yet they did it, found help, rescued the 3 men on the other side of the island and then eventually all the other men left behind on Elephant Island. Not a single life was lost in the journey, largely owing to Shackleton's brilliant leadership and tenacity.

Likewise, as we follow Jesus' life was one of ever increasing difficulty. The incarnation itself was a great self-humbling as He experienced hunger, thirst, weariness, and physical growth. In His life he experienced opposition. But it was at the end that the suffering peaked. With each scene we ask, "Can it possibly get worse?" And then it does.

1. The **mocking** of Jesus (27:27-34)

- a. The soldiers took Jesus into the praetorium (v. 27)
 - i. He has been handed over from the religious leaders to the Romans who will carry out the execution.
 - ii. The praetorium is the palace/military outpost for the Roman representative, Pilate, and the soldiers in Jerusalem.
- b. Their mocking is ironic because what they intend as jest is actually true. (vv. 28-29)
 - i. They put a royal robe on him
 - ii. They crowned him, although with a crown made of thorns
 - iii. They gave him a royal scepter made of reeds
 - iv. They knelt before him in honor
 - v. Called him king of the Jews
- c. Their fake reverence turns to real violence as they spit upon and beat him, the second significant beating he has endured after already having been scourged. (vv. 30-31)
- d. Too weak to carry his own cross beam all the way, a substitute is enlisted from the crowd. (v. 32)
 - i. Cyrene is a town in north Africa in modern day Libya
 - ii. His sons are listed in Mark's account – he is described as the father of Alexander and Rufus – likely because they were believer's known by the early church. Many have wondered if this experience up close with the soon to be crucified Jesus led to Simon following Christ as a disciple. We don't know for sure though.
- e. At Golgotha he refused the wine mixed with gall (vv. 33-34)
 - i. This place was on the western side of Jerusalem, the opposite side from the Mount of Olives and its garden of Gethsemane where He had prayed before His arrest.
 - ii. It's called the place of a skull probably because the hillside had that appearance. Our word "Calvary" comes from the Latin translation of the word for skull.
 - iii. The wine mixed with gall was possibly to numb the person's senses but more likely another form of mockery. It was too bitter to drink with the gall – a vague word for a drug that is bitter.

2. The **crucifixion** of Jesus (27:35-44)

- a. "When they had crucified Him..." (v. 35)
 - i. Notice the short, simple description.
 - ii. All 4 of the gospel writers describe His actual crucifixion this way.
 1. They maximize their attention on His agony in the garden, on the mocking, the injustice, the significance of His death, the meaning and accomplishment of His death, but the actual final means of His death – the crucifixion – are described briefly.
 2. It was brutal – the executed was usually stripped naked, nails driven through his limbs, the pressure of hanging from those nails often caused dislocated joints, it was a struggle to breath until death came from suffocation, heart failure, or blood loss.

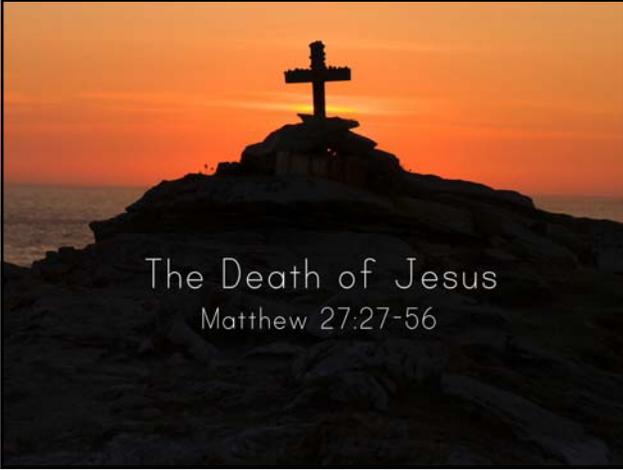
- b. His clothes were divided up by the soldiers, a “perk” of serving as an executioner (v. 35)
 - c. They kept watch (v. 36)
 - i. So that he wasn’t rescued by his disciples and revived before death. Closing any loopholes in the narrative that would indicate deception in his death.
 - d. The mocking continued, this time by 3 different groups
 - i. The passersby
 - 1. They came “hurling abuse,” wagging their heads, and repeating the same misinformed accusation about him destroying the temple.
 - ii. The religious and political leaders of the people
 - 1. “in the same way,” so repeating similar abuse
 - 2. “he saved others” – speaking more than they realized – if he is to save others he cannot save himself
 - 3. They continued to repeat truths but in jest – he is the king of Israel, he trusts in God let God rescue Him if He delights in Him, he said “I am the Son of God.”
 - a. Each is true but they mean each as a mocking insult.
 - b. Leon Morris – Matthew is mocking the mockers.
 - iii. The other men crucified with him
 - 1. **John 1:11** He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
 - 2. Luke tells us that one of the two robbers eventually stopped his mocking, repented, rebuked the other, and placed His faith in Jesus.
 - 3. It’s been said, One thief was saved on the cross that we may never despair that it is too late to be saved, but only one was saved that we may never presume.
 - iv. There are those of other religions who kill and attack when their god or prophets are dishonored.
 - 1. Christ shows us that the way of his followers is different.
 - 2. He himself was mocked and yet did not retaliate, showing us that we should respond in the same way.
 - 3. **1 Peter 2:23** and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;
 - 4. If Christianity is mocked, or Jesus is mocked, or we are mocked for following Jesus we can keep silent like Jesus, or we can pray, or we can seek to persuade people of the gospel.
3. The ***final words*** of Jesus (27:45-50)
- a. Darkness fell supernaturally during the day from 12 pm to 3 pm.
 - i. Not an eclipse as it would have been during the full moon because it was the weekend of the Passover and you can’t have a full moon and an eclipse at the same time.
 - ii. MacArthur and Mayhue – The presence of darkness symbolized both the loss of fellowship’s light and the reality of abandonment.
 - iii. The darkness is a symbol of the agonizing content of Jesus’ cry. (adapted from Hendriksen)
 - b. We have recorded in Matthew some of the final words of Jesus before His death.

- i. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - ii. How are we to understand this? Was the eternal trinitarian relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit really severed? Was Jesus referencing the whole Psalm 22, from the cry of lament to the resolution of faith?
 - iii. There’s mystery here so we must tread carefully.
 - iv. Jesus told His followers that although they would scatter He would not be alone “because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32). He knew He would rise again and had told His disciples this many times.
 - v. And yet for those hours on the cross, 3 long hours of darkness, He who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).
 - vi. It was in willing cooperation with the Father as He laid down His own life. He still said, “My God,” an expression of trust.
 - vii. And yet for those hours He felt wrath of God. He propitiated the wrath of God.
 - viii. Wayne Grudem – (after explaining that no human parallel can be adequate and yet acknowledging that human experiences can help us to understand) Perhaps as children we have faced the wrath of a human father when we have done wrong. Not referring to the explosive, inappropriate sinful anger or undeserved anger based in pride or selfishness, but an understandable anger when we have really done what is wrong. Or perhaps as adults we have known the anger of an employer because of a mistake we have made. We are inwardly shaken, disturbed by the crashing of another personality, filled with displeasure, into our very selves, and we tremble. We can hardly imagine the personal disintegration that would threaten if the outpouring of wrath came not from some finite human being but from Almighty God. If even the presence of God when he does not manifest wrath arouses fear and trembling in people (cf. Heb. 12:21, 28-29), how terrible it must be to face the presence of a wrathful God (Heb. 10:31).
 - c. Mistakenly thinking He is calling for Elijah to rescue him, some wanted to offer him sour wine (vinegar) but others wanted to wait to see if Elijah would save Him.
 - d. He cried out with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit.
 - i. John 19:30 tells us what the words were, “It is finished.”
 - 1. The wrath is finished. The work is finished. The agony is over. 3 long hours of darkness. 33 years living incarnate in the world He made that had rejected Him.
 - 2. The Father’s wrath was propitiated
 - a. **1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.
 - b. It was satisfied. There is none left for those who are united to Jesus by faith.
 - c. *Empty pitcher analogy*
 - ii. “yielded His spirit” shows the voluntariness again of His death.
 - 1. He has already said that no one takes His life from Him but He lays it down.
4. The *effect* of Jesus’ death (27:51-56)

- a. Just like the darkness was a visible symbol of Jesus' agony and sense of being forsaken as He bore our sin, so several other things happen after He died that communicate something about the effect of His death.
- b. Perhaps most significant was the first mentioned: the veil of the temple was torn in two.
 - i. There were a series of increasingly restricted areas on the temple grounds and in the temple.
 - 1. The court of the gentiles
 - 2. The temple courts where Jewish men and women could go
 - 3. Inside the temple was the holy place where only the priests could go
 - 4. But separated by a thick veil was the holy of holies where only the high priest could go and that only once per year to make atonement for the sins of the people.
 - a. It's that veil that was torn and it was torn from top to bottom, in other words, it wasn't torn that way by men but by God.
 - b. The veil that kept people from getting too near to His holy presence was torn, it was taken away because now of course we can draw near to His holy presence.
- c. Additionally, the earth shook and rocks were split
 - i. All of creation magnified the significance of this moment.
- d. Tombs were open and after Jesus' resurrection others were raised as a foretaste of new life in Jesus.
 - i. There are many questions we might have: who were these people? Did they rise again to the age in which they were when they died or to some other point in life? Did they stay raised and ascend to heaven with Jesus or die again? What did they say to people when they met them?
 - 1. Matthew doesn't answer any of those questions!
- e. The guards saw these things and they had the appropriate effect – they were afraid because they recognized that Jesus really was the son of God.

5. Applying truth to life

- a. God demonstrates His own ***love*** toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ ***died*** for us. (Romans 5:8)
- b. His wrath is ***finished*** toward those who are in Christ.
- c. It's no wonder that the empty cross became the symbol of Christianity.
 - i. It could have been other things – a manger, a shepherd's crook, a lamb – but the cross reminds us of the whole storyline of the Bible as the creator of the universe stepped into time and space to rescue humans who had made a mess of His world and their lives. They had rebelled against Him and separated themselves from Him. He willingly went to a brutal death on a cross as our substitute. But the cross is empty because after He died He was buried and then rose again showing that the price was paid. It was indeed finished.



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MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*: The presence of darkness symbolized both the loss of fellowship's light and the reality of abandonment.

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Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us ...

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1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

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