

A Study of the Christ Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Journey to Golgotha	27:31-34	15:20-23	23:26-33a	19:17
The first three hours on the cross	27:35-44	15:24-32	23:33b-43	19:18-27
The last three hours on the cross	27:45-50	15:33-37	23:44-45a, 46	19:28-37

Overriding Principles

- Repentance is always possible, if the heart is receptive.
- Forgiveness is always to be sought, even for ones enemies.
- Forgiveness requires repentance.
- The greatest suffering of Jesus was not physical; it was the emotional strain of bearing our sin and being forsaken by the Father.
- The Crucifixion was an event that literally and figuratively shook the earth!

Commentary

Journey to Golgotha (Matt. 27:31-34; Mk. 15:20-23; Lk. 23:26-33a; Jn. 19:17)

- Commonly, the condemned were required to carry the crosspiece of their cross to their crucifixion.
 - The crosspiece weighed about forty pounds.
 - It would be hoisted into the, air with the condemned man nailed to it, to be placed atop the vertical beam at the place of crucifixion.
- Jesus had been so brutalized He could not carry the load all the way to Golgotha.
- Simon of Cyrene, a Roman province in North Africa, was compelled to carry the crosspiece for Jesus.
 - Simon was likely a Jew in Jerusalem for the Passover.
 - As the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mk. 15:21), he may well have been the father of the Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13.
- Cicero tells that the executioner would commonly insert a hook into the condemned man to drag him along to execution.
- Jewish executions required a location "outside the camp" (Lev. 24:14; Deut. 22:23-24; cf. Heb. 13:12).
- "Golgotha" means, "the place of the skull," possibly due to the appearance of the rock formation, perhaps due to tombs at the site.
- "Calvary" is from the Latin, "calvaria," meaning "skull."

- There is a rabbinic tradition indicating a portion of frankincense was added to wine to numb the senses of those being crucified.
 - If this were the case, Jesus refused it because He was fully to suffer for the sins of others.
 - Otherwise, the gall (vinegar) added to the wine may have been but a further insult to Jesus by the Roman guards.
- Jesus tells the ladies mourning for Him to weep for themselves due to the coming destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-21).
- The request to have mountains “fall on us,” reflects the preference of a speedy death to the prolonged suffering characteristic of a city falling after a protracted siege.
- The reference to deeds done when “the tree is green” contrasted to when “the tree is dry” most likely refer to the escalation from the crucifixion of Jesus in peaceful times compared to thousands crucified when the Jews rebelled in A. D. 67.
- The earliest surviving Roman record of Jesus’ crucifixion is from Tacitus about A. D. 116.
- Josephus mentions Jesus’ crucifixion, although elements of the passage are commonly considered to be Christian additions.
 - A recently discovered Arabic version of Josephus probably represents a more accurate rendition of the original:
 - “At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders” (Ant. 15.44).

The First Three Hours on the Cross (Matt. 27:35-44; Mk. 15:24-32; Lk. 23:33b-43; Jn. 19:18-27)

- Crucifixion was an awful way to die!
 - Victims were either tied to the crossbeam or, as in Jesus’ case, nailed.
 - The arms were affixed to the crossbeam in such a way as to require, in order to breathe, painfully pushing up on the feet nailed to the vertical beam.
 - Eventually fatigue and cramping would not allow pushing up so the victim could exhale—suffocation resulted.
 - Recent studies have shown that, contrary to commonly held past assumptions, Jesus may well have been nailed through the palms of His hands, rather than at the forearm. Additionally,

Jesus legs were most likely nailed separately, allowing Him to straddle the cross.

- The Romans developed means to hasten death by how they positioned a man in crucifixion, but Jesus' death in a relatively short time was almost certainly due to a combination of brutal treatment and deep emotional stress.
- The ancients considered crucifixion the most barbaric form of punishment.
- The word "excruciating" comes from the Latin *excruciates*, meaning, "out of the cross."
- Jesus would have been stripped naked as the soldiers removed what little remained of His dignity and protection from the flies that gathered at such times.
- Psalm 22: 18 is fulfilled as Jesus' clothing is gambled away to the soldiers.
- The "robbers" (same term as used of Barabbas) crucified with Jesus were most likely political prisoners guilty of trying to overthrow the Roman occupation.
- Ironically, Jesus was not released because an insurrectionist was preferred by the crowd, additionally, He was crucified between two insurrectionists, guilty of the offense for which Jesus was improperly charged!
- Golgotha would have been a very public location so a maximum number of people could have witnessed the consequences of opposing Roman rule.
- Pilate's written notice of Jesus guilt would have been worn around His neck, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."
 - It was a final dig at the Jews.
 - Pilate did not have to satisfy them on their insistence the placard be prefaced with "He said"
 - They had no leverage on this point.
- Wagging the head was a show of contempt in ancient Jewish culture.
- Rather than calling for the destruction of those present, Jesus sought their forgiveness—He practiced what He preached (cf. Lk. 17:3-5).
- Repentance must, however, precede forgiveness (cf. Lk. 17:4; Acts 2:36-38).
- Near the cross were Jesus' mother, His mother's sister (perhaps Salome, the mother of James and John), Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, and John the Apostle.
 - Jesus' mother was almost certainly widowed, would have been around fifty years old, and would have little or no personal income.
 - Jesus as the oldest son, trusts His mother to John (cf. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16)

The Last Three Hours on the Cross (Matt. 27:45-50; Mk. 15:33-37; Lk. 23:44-45a, 46; Jn. 19:28-37)

- Jesus was crucified at about 9:00 AM; darkness began about noon and lasted until about 3:00 PM.
- Darkness would here represent the Father's profound displeasure with humanity, and the reaction to the sins Jesus bore on His body (cf. Ex. 10:21; Matt. 25:30; I Thess. 5:4-7; I Pet. 2:24).
- Darkness over Jerusalem would have been particularly foreboding (cf. Isa. 60:2).
- Also, in the ancient world, darkness was associated with the passing of great men.
- When Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1, the crowd thinks He is calling for Elijah due to similar sounding words.
 - Elijah was associated with the coming of the Messiah.
 - Additionally, Elijah, in Jewish tradition, since he did not die (II Kgs. 2:1-11), could come to the aid of those in distress.
- Jesus' greatest pain was in dying as a sinner (cf. Phil. 2:8; Heb. 12:1-2; 13:13; I Pet. 2:24).
- In observing Jesus quoting parts of Psalm 22, it should be noted Jesus knew the positive outcome of the Psalm (Ps. 22:21b-31).
 - Verse 21b is especially comforting.
 - The change from verse 1 is dramatic, now God answers the plea of the Son and victory is enjoyed!
- Jesus thirst recalls once again the pivotal Psalm 22 through a reference to verse 15.
- Jesus was again offered sour wine, most likely in mockery; if there was a drug included, now He can drink, the price for sin has been paid.
- Dehydration, blood loss, and most significantly, deep emotional strain, bring the death of a victorious Jesus.
- The tearing of the temple's veil would suggest judgment on the nation, the end of the temple as a viable structure in the Jew's religion, and a new openness made possible for all people through Jesus.
- Psalm 31:5 is used in Jesus' final words as He, the ultimate righteous sufferer, entrusts Himself to God.
- Now, mission accomplished, Jesus can give up His life (cf. Jn. 10:11-18).

Who is Jesus?

- He is the Suffering Servant.
- He entrusted Himself to the Father, no matter what.
- In the greatest suffering He had compassion for those who mocked Him.
- He beat Satan!