

Learning More with Stories of the Master

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~ *It is Finished!* ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Matthew 27:27 and John 18:15-18 and 18:25-19:16.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Matthew 27:27-66 NASB	Matthew 27:27-66 NLT
<p>²⁶Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.</p> <p>²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole <i>Roman</i> cohort around Him. ²⁸They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on Him, and took the reed and <i>began</i> to beat Him on the head. ³¹After they had mocked Him, they took the <i>scarlet</i> robe off Him and put His <i>own</i> garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.</p> <p>³²As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.</p> <p>³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.</p> <p>³⁵And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots ³⁶And sitting down, they <i>began</i> to keep watch over Him there. ³⁷And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."</p> <p>³⁸At that time two robbers *were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who <i>are going to</i> destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ⁴²"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. ⁴³HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.</p> <p>⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" ⁴⁷And some of those who were standing</p>	<p>²⁶So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.</p> <p>²⁷Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. ²⁹They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" ³⁰And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. ³¹When 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.</p> <p>³²Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. ³³And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull"). ³⁴The soldiers gave him wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.</p> <p>³⁵After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice ³⁶Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. ³⁷A sign was fastened above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.</p> <p>³⁹The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. ⁴⁰"Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!"</p> <p>⁴¹The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. ⁴²"He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him!" ⁴³He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.</p> <p>⁴⁵At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. ⁴⁶At</p>

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there, when they heard it, *began* saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.⁴⁹ But the rest of them said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.”⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.⁵¹ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.⁵² The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.⁵⁴ Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

⁵⁵ Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him.⁵⁶ Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

⁶² Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate,⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’⁶⁴ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.”⁶⁶ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

⁴⁷ Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah.⁴⁸ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink.⁴⁹ But the rest said, “Wait! Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰ Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.⁵¹ At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart⁵² and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead.⁵³ They left the cemetery after Jesus’ resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴ The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

⁵⁵ And many women who had come from Galilee with Jesus to care for him were watching from a distance.⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

⁵⁷ As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus⁵⁸ went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him.⁵⁹ Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth.⁶⁰ He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left.⁶¹ Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb and watching.

⁶² The next day, on the Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate.⁶³ They told him, “Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: ‘After three days I will rise from the dead.’⁶⁴ So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we’ll be worse off than we were at first.”

⁶⁵ Pilate replied, “Take guards and secure it the best you can.”⁶⁶ So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

These insights from Bruce Malina, A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels,

1. Hailing Jesus as king of the Jews would insult the people of Israel and of Jerusalem. 138
2. Roman soldiers were entitled to have local populations carry their gear for one Roman mile (1000 paces – 2 steps each). This is why they could force Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. See also Mt 5:41. 139

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3. The placard, “This is Jesus, king of the Jews” was meant to show the world how Romans dealt with anyone who dared to challenge their power. 139
4. Providing for burial was a legal obligation of friends and family in the Greco-Roman world. A proper burial would be all important for a family. 139
5. The women mourning – this was a traditional gesture of women, especially of breast-beating. Men would do it only in the direst of circumstances. 321

From J.Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*

1. In regard to the Roman soldiers – “It must be remembered that these were men who on the field of battle were inured to bloodshed and at Rome found their chief delight in watching the sports of the arena, where gladiators butchered one another to make a Roman holiday.” 477, quoting Stalker
2. In the city of Rome, there was usually a two day interval between a verdict and an execution, but in the provinces this would not be as strict. 479 (quoting Edersheim)
3. Four soldiers would be detached to each cross and a centurion would be in charge.
4. The cross would be carried by the one being executed.
5. The centurion or another soldier would lead the procession. He would carry a placard naming the crime.
6. Normally they would take the longest road to the place of execution and through the most crowded streets to attract attention.
7. Romans learned crucifixion from the Carthaginians.
8. Romans would not allow one of its own citizens to be crucified. It was for foreigners, slaves, and people living in the provinces.
9. The cross of Jesus would be slightly taller than a man and the feet of the one crucified would be only about a foot off the ground.
10. There were several types of crosses used but the one used for Christ was probably the Tau cross with the transom below the top.
11. A victim would be stripped naked and his garments given to the soldiers.
12. The vertical beam would be planted in the ground and the victim would be laid on the ground with arms stretched on the crossbar. They would wrap the arms with cords to the crossbar and then drive nails into the hands. Then the victim nailed to the crossbar would be fastened to the vertical piece. Spikes would then be driven through the feet.
13. The gall was a narcotic to alleviate the senses and the suffering.

The Roman Whip or the Flagrum <http://www.bible-history.com/past/flagrum.html>

The Romans would, according to custom, scourge a condemned criminal before he was put to death. The Roman scourge, also called the "flagrum" or "flagellum" was a short whip made of two or three leather (ox-hide) thongs or ropes connected to a handle as in the sketch above. The leather thongs were knotted with a number of small pieces of metal, usually zinc and iron, attached at various intervals. Scourging would quickly remove the skin. According to history the punishment of a slave was

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particularly dreadful. The leather was knotted with bones, or heavy indented pieces of bronze.

Sometimes the Roman scourge contained a hook at the end and was given the terrifying name "scorpion." The criminal was made to stoop which would make deeper lashes from the shoulders to the waist. According to Jewish law (discipline of the synagogue) the number of stripes was forty less one (Deut. 25:3) and the rabbis reckoned 168 actions to be punished by scourging before the judges. Nevertheless, scourging among the Romans was a more severe form of punishment and there was no legal limit to the number of blows, as with the Jews. Deep lacerations, torn flesh, exposed muscles and excessive bleeding would leave the criminal "half-dead." Death was often the result of this cruel form of punishment though it was necessary to keep the criminal alive to be brought to public subjugation on the cross. The Centurion in charge would order the "lictors" to halt the flogging when the criminal was near death.

Answer these reflective questions.

When Jesus said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" do you think he was asking this for the Roman soldiers? For the religious authorities? For the whole world?

Two men, thieves and revolutionaries, were being crucified with Jesus. One was angry and joined with others in insulting Jesus. The other was penitent and asked for Jesus' mercy. Why do you think there was such a different attitude by these two men who were in the same situation?

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What do you think was going through Mary’s mind as she saw her son, Jesus, dying on the cross? Is there anything we can learn from her in this time of grief?

When Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” why do you think he said this? What was going through his mind? What was happening at this moment on the cross?”

Read Romans 6:8-10; Hebrews 9:28 and 10:10. How do these verses shed light on Jesus’ statement, “It is finished.”

Read Hebrews 10:19-25. What do these verses teach us about the death of Christ?
