

The Gospel of John (112): The King on His Cross

Introduction:

Today we arrive at the passage which records Jesus being crucified, the event to which the entire Gospel of John has been pointing and leading. As one once described this account: “The crucifixion of Jesus is the ‘hour’ when God declares that death has given birth to life, and that the crucified Christ is the true King (ruler of the world), the true Priest (mediator for the world), and the true Son (creator of the world).”¹ Let us read **John 19:17-27**.

¹⁷And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, ¹⁸where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. ¹⁹Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁰Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

²¹Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”

²²Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. ²⁴They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”

Therefore the soldiers did these things.

²⁵Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

We may consider this account of our Lord crucified in four divisions. First, we read of the place of His crucifixion--“the Place of the Skull” (19:17-19). Second, John recorded the title of King assigned to Jesus (19:19-22). Third, we read of the soldiers and His garments (19:23, 24). And fourth, we read of Jesus and His family (19:25-27).

I. The place of Jesus’ crucifixion--“the Place of the Skull” (19:17-18).

¹ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 788.

¹⁷And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, ¹⁸where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.

Last week we concluded the trial of Jesus before Pilate in which he turned Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified. Verse 16 reads, “Then he (Pilate) delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.” In that verse Jesus is shown to have been the object of an illegitimate trial and an unjust sentence. But with verse 17 Jesus again becomes the subject. It does not say, “Then *they led Him out* to the place He was crucified”, rather, “*He went out* to a place.” Jesus is the one who went toward the place of His crucifixion. It is as though John was setting forth Jesus as leading the way to His cross.

But John not only recorded Jesus as having went out, but that He did so “bearing His cross.” In contrast to the accounts of the other three Gospels in which Jesus was relieved of carrying His cross by Simon of Cyrene, John has Jesus bearing His cross. Why did John emphasize this? One proposed this reason:

The author of the Fourth Gospel, however, carefully emphasizes that Jesus bore His cross Himself; perhaps in order to declare that He offered Himself as the sacrifice without human assistance; perhaps in order to give greater precision to the Lord’s saying – *If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me* (Mark 8:34 and parallels, cf. 21:19).²

We read in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus bore His cross until He was no longer able to go farther, for He was weakened due to the abuse and torture to which He had been subjected. The Romans compelled a man named Simon to carry Jesus’ cross the rest of the way to the place of the crucifixion. Here are the accounts in the Synoptic Gospels. First, we read in Matthew’s Gospel:

And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. ³²Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. ³³And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull... (Matt. 27:31-33)

Mark’s record is quite similar.

And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. ²¹Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. ²²And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. (Mark 15:20-22)

And here is Luke’s account:

Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

Luke’s Gospel in particular presents Simeon as somewhat of an ideal disciple, who took up Jesus’ cross and followed Him, bearing it “after Jesus.” But John declared that Jesus carried His own cross to the place of execution. There is much speculation about matters such as this.

Even so, it is important to ask why John omits mention of Simon of Cyrene. The brief answer is that it does not lend support to his central themes, and would therefore be distracting. It is possible to think of Jesus’ death in terms of His resolution, His obedience to the Father, His Father’s plan; it is also possible to think of Jesus’ death in terms of Jesus’ suffering, struggle, weakness, and anguish. Both

² Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, **The Fourth Gospel** (Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 528.

perspectives are correct; both are some measure taught in each of the four Gospels. But John, even though he makes room for the suffering (e.g. 12:27-28), greatly emphasizes the sovereign plan of the Father and the Son's obedience. And so he reports, rightly, that Jesus carried his own cross.³

In the first few centuries the church fathers saw Jesus bearing His own cross as the antitype of Isaac carrying his own cross to the place of sacrifice. We read of this in Genesis 22:3ff.

³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

⁶*So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son;* and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!"

And he said, "Here I am, my son."

Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. (Gen. 22:3-8)

Apparently there were some Jewish scholars who also thought that the account of Isaac in Genesis 22 portended death by crucifixion. One wrote that Isaac had carried the wood to the place of sacrifice "like one carries his stake [= cross] on his shoulder" (*Genesis Rabbah* 56:3 [on Gen. 22:6]).⁴ This was written between AD 300 and 500.

But the interpretations and applications of John's absence of mentioning Simon have become even more "creative."

Again, the second-century gnostic (heretic) Basilides in his commentary on John argues that Simon Cyrene took Jesus' place and died on the cross in his stead—the common view of Muslims to this day. If that view were rising in John's day (and there is no evidence that it was), it is possible that John might find it expedient simply to omit mention of the Cyrene. But we are rapidly approaching the borders of uncontrolled speculation.⁵

Actually it was the common practice of the Romans to force the one executed to carry his cross to the place of execution. He would have borne the cross piece, which was called the *patibulum*, and upon arriving to the place of execution the Romans would have lifted the criminal upon this cross piece unto the upright stake or pole that was permanently set in the ground.

Notice it is said that Jesus "went out" to the Place of the Skull. This going out may be alluding to the fact that Jesus was led out of the city of Jerusalem proper in order to be executed outside the city walls. This would be consistent with what the writer to the Hebrews asserted as having theological significance. We read in the epistle of Hebrews,

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹²*Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.* ¹³*Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.* ¹⁴For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. (Heb. 13:10-14)

³ Donald Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), p. 608.

⁴ Carson, p. 609.

⁵ *Ibid.*

The writer was addressing Jewish Christians who were tempted to forsake Jesus and return to Judaism in order to avoid persecution. The writer argued that one can no longer find God within that system of Judaism, which was centered within the “camp”, the city of Jerusalem. By the way, you might recall from the Old Testament record that after the people of Israel had sinned, God had Moses remove His meeting place with Moses outside the camp (cf. Exo. 33:7ff). When Moses met to speak with God, he had to go outside the camp to do so. And so it was that Jesus was crucified outside the “camp”, the city of Jerusalem. The writer told these Jewish Christians that if they desired to receive salvation through Jesus Christ due to His crucifixion, they must go out to Him, outside “the city”, departing Judaism entirely, embracing Jesus Christ alone in faith.

The “altar” that the Jewish priests had to feed upon was the brazen altar on which animal sacrifices were burned; the food of the altar belonged to the priests and their families. They benefited from the sacrifice which had been offered. But there was a sacrifice which the Jewish priests were not allowed to eat, that of the sacrifice on the annual Day of Atonement. The priests were to remove the animal from the camp and burn it in entirety (Lev. 16:27). In contrast to their altar, our “altar” –the cross on which our sacrifice was offered--was “outside the gate”; that is, outside and away from the camp of the Israelites; more specifically, Jesus was sacrificed on an altar (the cross) outside the “gate” of Jerusalem, which was the center of Judaism. If the readers would “feed” on Jesus, that is experience and enjoy the nourishment and strength that comes from the benefits of His sacrifice, they too, would have to “go out” of Judaism. As Jesus suffered the shame and rejection of the Jews which was epitomized by the manner of His humiliating death; they too, must be willing to suffer the rejection and humiliation that He endured. We then read Hebrews 13:14, “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.” The contrast is between the temporary nature of the earthly tabernacle and camp of the Israelites and the eternal, solid and secure New Jerusalem.

Jesus was crucified at “the Place of the Scull.” It is disputed where this place is located. In the fourth century the mother of Emperor Constantine—Helena—travelled to the holy land and claimed to have identified a number of the holy places which the Gospels associate with Jesus. The place that she declared to be Golgotha became a shrine where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was first built in AD 380. This building was destroyed and rebuilt a number of times over the centuries. There is a problem, however, with this site being the actual place where Jesus was crucified, for it is located within the walls of the ancient city of Jerusalem of the first century. Jesus was crucified outside of the city walls. In the 19th century a number of Protestant scholars proposed another place of Calvary, the principle man was Claude Condor, a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. But it was in 1878, however, that a British army officer, General Gordon⁶, popularized the new proposed site that would have been located outside of the ancient walls of Jerusalem. It is located at a rocky outcropping that indeed appears to be the shape of a human skull.⁷ Ancient tombs were also discovered nearby and it was presumed that perhaps one of these was the tomb in which our Lord’s body was buried. Interestingly, however, Donald Carson wrote, “Gordon’s Calvary is not an option.”⁸

John gave the “Hebrew” name of the Place of the Scull as “Golgotha.” This would have actually been the Aramaic word; “Hebrew” was the family name of languages to which Aramaic belonged. Christians commonly use the word “Calvary” to describe this hill on which Jesus was crucified. Calvary is based on the Latin word for “skull”—*Calvaria*, which is in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible.

John wrote that it was here that “they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.” There have been many varied ways in which the account of these two criminals have been interpreted.

⁶ Major-General Charles George Gordon (1833 – 1885), also known as Chinese Gordon, Gordon Pasha, and Gordon of Khartoum, was a British Army officer and administrator. He saw action in the Crimean War as an officer in the British Army. He was killed in action in Khartoum. He was a noted Christian man.

⁷ See pictures on the last page.

⁸ Ibid. Carson gave a reference that apparently seals this in his mind: Andre Parrot, **Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre** (tr. E. Hudson; SCM, 1957), pp. 59-65.

“Augustine (4th c) remarks, that three very different persons hung together on the three crosses of Golgotha. One was the Savior of sinners. One was a sinner about to be saved. One was a sinner about to be damned.

Cyril (5th c.) sees in the two malefactors a type of the Jewish and Gentile Churches: the one rejected, impenitent, and lost; the other believing at the eleventh hour, and saved.

Many pious commentators remark, that even on the cross our Lord gave an emblem of His kingly power. On His right hand was a saved soul whom He admits into His kingdom; on His left hand, a lost soul whom He leaves to reap the fruit of his own ways. There was right and left on the cross, even as there will be right and left, saved and unsaved, when He sits on the judgment-seat, wearing the crown at the last day.⁹

John said nothing more of these two who were crucified on either side of our Savior. Luke gave the fullest account in which one of these men came to repentance and faith and was instantly and gloriously saved at his last hour on this earth. The Lord Jesus had promised him that he would be with Jesus in paradise that very day [see Luke 23:32-33, 39-43].

John does locate Jesus in the middle of these two other criminals.

John (unlike the Synoptics) is silent on the transgressions committed by these criminals; the point is simply to contrast the sinners with the sacrifice. It is fitting that the narrator is careful to mention the placement of Jesus among the three crosses; He was “in the middle”, a seemingly insignificant detail. But the center was the place of greatest honor (or in this case, shame), possibly making Jesus the most visible to the massive crowd that had gathered for the Passover Feast.¹⁰

But there is more. Mark described these two men as “robbers” (Mark 15:27). Actually this word can be translated as “revolutionaries.” This Greek word used is *ληστές* (*laisatas*). It is the same word that John used for Barabbas. This may suggest a connection between these two thieves and Barabbas. Here are one’s comments on this matter:

The two men crucified with Jesus are described by Mark as *ληστές* (Mark 15:27); that was John’s term for Barabbas (18:40); I suggests that they were associates of Barabbas, fellow freedom fighters or revolutionaries. The point may have seemed too obvious for John to mention. More important to him, apparently, was the fact that the men were set “one on this side and one on the other, and Jesus in the middle.” By this rather fulsome expression John may have wished to draw attention to Jesus’ position, for with the Jews “when three persons are present the most honored shall take His place in the middle” place between the revolutionaries befitted the royal Deliverer, the King. It is even more probable that the Evangelist, with the primitive Church, generally, saw in Jesus crucified between such men as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12.¹¹

Isaiah 53:12 reads,

“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

⁹ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 3 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 301.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 792.

¹¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, **John**, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 346.

Crucifixion was a cruel and inhuman invention of man to punish and shame a criminal to the greatest extent possible in executing him. Here is one description:

The general procedure would look something like the following. The criminal would be flogged and then forced to carry his own crossbeam to the place of the execution, often scourged on the way, both of which were intended to torture the criminal before the crucifixion itself. If not already stripped, the criminal would have his clothing removed and confiscated, thus stripped of both possessions and honor. Then the criminal would normally be fastened to the cross with either ropes or nails through the wrist; in Roman crucifixion the feet of the victim were often fastened to the cross as well. The nails were typically five to seven inches in length, long enough to penetrate the flesh and bone and the wood of the cross to secure the body to it. The upright stake would have been no more than ten feet high, which had in the middle a small wooden "seat" and near the top a groove to receive the crossbeam, thus leaving the criminal hanging just above the ground. Once placed on the cross, the body of the criminal was fully accessible to external conditions, with scores of flies attracted to bodily wounds or animals assaulting the feet of the victim. The suffering also would cause severe bodily distortions, including the loss of bodily control (waste) and enlarged swelling body parts. The prisoner, attached to the crossbeam, would hang in this agonizing position until released by death, which usually came about through difficulty in breathing and stoppage of circulation, not so much through blood loss. The body of the victim was attached to the cross in a manner that facilitated prolonged suffering. If the criminal could lift himself up to get breath, he would survive longer than if unsupported body was deadweight; yet to lift oneself was designed to cause severe pain. If death was slow in coming, the end was often hastened by means of clubbing, stabbing, or poison. The normal Roman practice was to leave the body on the cross until it rotted, but Jewish law demanded that the body of a hanging man to be buried on the day of execution to prevent the land from being defiled (Deut. 21:23). The execution served as a crude form of public entertainment, with the crowds often ridiculing and mocking the victims.¹²

After that graphic depiction and description of the crucifixion, one might take note that the Gospels are quite brief in their description and give little detail to what degree our Lord physically suffered upon his cross.

John describes the horror that was crucifixion in a single word. As in the case of scourging, he simply mentions the fact and passes on. Popular piety, both Protestant and Catholic, has often tended to make a great deal of the sufferings of Jesus, to reflect on what was done and to dwell on the anguish He suffered. None of the Gospels does this. The Evangelists record the fact and let it go at that. The death of Jesus for men was their concern. They make no attempt to play on the heartstrings of the readers.¹³

Given this fact, one might question the method of gaining professions of faith on Jesus by graphically displaying the physical sufferings of Jesus in word or in film. There is a human sympathy that may come forth from most people, excepting perhaps from perhaps the most hardened. But to enter into sympathy with what Jesus did does not necessarily accompany true understanding and faith in what God had accomplished through the death of His Son. Jesus Christ became a curse for His people, cursed in the place of them so that the justice of God could be satisfied respecting the guilt of their sin. Being stirred with empathy or perhaps even wonder at the love of God in the death of Jesus may be present apart from faith in what God accomplished through the death of His Son.

II. John recorded the title of King assigned to Jesus (19:19-22).

Again, here is John 19:19-22:

¹² Klink, p. 792.

¹³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 805f.

¹⁹Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁰Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

²¹Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’””

²²Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

When John recorded that “Pilate wrote a title”, we should understand it as Pilate having prescribed this title to be written. It was the regular practice of the Romans to declare the crime of the individual who was to be executed. They would often cause the man to wear the charge around his neck as he was paraded to the place of execution and then it was either remained hanging from his neck while he was crucified or it was fastened on the cross above him. Rome desired to publish the crime as a deterrent for others to see the consequences of their illegal actions. Pilate had the title written in three languages—Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin. Hebrew (Aramaic) was the common language of the Jewish people. Latin was the official language of the Roman army. Greek was the common language of the Roman Empire, which was well-known in Galilee. “It was written in Hebrew that the Jews might understand it; in Latin that the Romans might know it; and in Greek, the *lingua franca* of the world, that all nations might learn of it.”

The other Gospels have slightly differing readings of this title. Matthew records it this way: “And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. (Matt. 27:37). Mark reads, “And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. (Mark 15:26). And Luke records the title, “There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews”” (Luke 23:38).¹⁴ How do we regard these variations, after all, we believe that every word is inspired of God and that we have an inerrant Bible before us? These variations may be explained as the result of the three languages in which the title was written. “All four of the Gospels record the wording of this placard, with slight verbal variations which may not be unconnected with the trilingual form of its text.”

That Pilate had this charge displayed shows that his sentence of crucifixion of Jesus was due to sedition against Rome. The Jews’ charge that Jesus claimed to be a king, even though Pilate had determined that He was no real political threat to Rome, was the basis of his sentence of guilt.

Pilate dictated this title with the intention of annoying the Jewish priests and leaders who had pressed him to have Jesus executed. “It was a calculated insult to them, and to the nation which they led, to represent a crucified man as ‘The King of the Jews.’”¹⁵ But further,

“It was the last act of (Pilate’s) revenge in the case. He has already taunted the Jews with Jesus’ kingship (vs. 14, 15); here he does so again, mocking their convenient allegiance to Caesar by insisting that Jesus is their king, and snickering at their powerless status before the might of Rome by declaring this wretched victim their king.”

Pilate accomplished his “dig” of the Jewish priests, as seen in their protest and their appeal to him to change the wording of the sign. They said to him, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’”” (v. 21). But Pilate would make no changes, and so the title remained.

Of course the Holy Spirit meant much more in this record than just rehearsing the words of Pilate and the Jewish priests. “Pilate’s malice serves God’s ends.”¹⁶

¹⁴ This is the ESV reading. The NKJV reads, “And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” This reflects a later Greek manuscripts that had at one time been edited by a scribe so as to conform to John’s account.

¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 368.

¹⁶ Carson, p. 611.

So now John sees a deeper meaning in the ‘title’ on the cross than either Pilate or the chief priests could appreciate. ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.’ The Crucified One is the true king, the kingliest king of all; because it is He who is stretched on the cross, He turns and obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory and ‘reigns from the tree’. And the onward significance of His kingship for His true followers has been made plain in His interchange with Pilate recorded in 18:34-38.¹⁷

III. The soldiers and Jesus’ garments (19:23, 24).

John gives details about the garments that Jesus had worn. We read,

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.
²⁴They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”

Therefore the soldiers did these things.

The garments of the one executed belonged to the executioners. Apparently there were four soldiers in this detail of Roman soldiers who had been assigned the task to crucify Jesus. Each one received one of four parts of His garment. A typical Jewish man of the day generally wore a “tunic” next to his skin, and an outer garment that was something like a “robe.” Perhaps they divided the outer garment into four parts, separating the cloth at the seams. But maybe the four parts included the garment, a belt, sandals, and head covering. The inner garment, the tunic, was seamless, so they determined that they would gamble for it. This action was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. John wrote,

²⁴They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”

There is a reference to Psalm 22:18. This psalm was written by King David, nearly 1,000 years before this event. Let us read a portion of this psalm:

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Why are You so far from helping Me,
And from the words of My groaning?
²O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
And in the night season, and am not silent.

³But You are holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
⁴Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
⁵They cried to You, and were delivered;

¹⁷ Bruce, p. 369.

They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

⁶But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
⁷All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
⁸“He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”

⁹But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts.
¹⁰I was cast upon You from birth.
From My mother’s womb
You have been My God.
¹¹Be not far from Me,
For trouble is near;
For there is none to help.

¹²Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.
¹³They gape at Me with their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.

¹⁶For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
¹⁷I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
¹⁸***They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.***

This psalm was written hundreds of years before the instrument of crucifixion was practiced by Rome. God had so ordered the personal experiences of King David and the manner in which he recorded them in this psalm to be a prophecy of our Lord Jesus, the greater Son of David, dying upon His cross.

Here we see the cruelty and the absence of compassion and cruelty of these soldiers, who had so little regard of the one they were executing. By stripping Jesus of His clothing, they were heaping shame upon our Savior. His pain was accompanied with the shame of nakedness. He “who was made sin for us bore that shame, to roll away our reproach. He was stripped, that we might be clothed with *white raiment* (Rev. 3:18), and that when we are unclothed *we may not be found naked*”... While Christ was in His dying agonies, they were merrily dividing His spoils (Matthew Henry).

IV. Jesus and His family (19:25-27)

The last act of Jesus before His death was the care and concern that He had for His mother and the provision He made for her provision and protection. We read in verses 25 through 27:

²⁵Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

All of our Lord's disciples, except for John, had abandoned Him. But the women that attended Him, including His mother, were there at His cross. Here are the words of **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) respecting these women:

A wonderfully striking incident is recorded in this and the two following verses, which is not found in the other three Gospels. St. John tells us that at this awful moment, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women, two if not three, stood by the cross on which our Lord hung. "Love is strong as death," and even amidst the crowd taunting Jews and rough Roman soldiers, these holy women were determined to stand by our Lord to the last, and to show unceasing affection to Him. When we remember that our Lord was a condemned criminal, peculiarly hated by the chief priests, and executed by Roman soldiers, the faithfulness and courage of these holy women can never be sufficiently admired. As long as the world stands they supply a glorious proof of what grace can do for the weak, and of the strength that love to Christ can supply. When all men but one forsook our Lord, more than one woman boldly confessed Him. Women, in short, were the last at the cross and the first at the tomb.¹⁸

It is hard to imagine the grief that Mary was enduring as she saw her Son dying before her in this cruel and shameful manner. When Jesus was first born an inspired man told Mary that one day she would experience the grief that was now upon her. We read in Luke 2:34f, "Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'" But even as Mary grieved for her Son, her Son cared for her, securing her well-being to John, the one who had penned this Gospel. As our Lord watched over His (widowed?) mother, so He watches over all widows who look to Him as their protector and provider.

Our Lord obeyed the fourth commandment. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." He secured the care of His mother at the end of his earthly sojourn. Tradition tells us that John eventually immigrated to the region of Ephesus, and Mary with him. John continued to care for her throughout her life.

Conclusion:

Christ's sufferings are not only redemptive for us, but they are instructive as well. The manner that our Lord faced and endured His sufferings illustrate for us the kinds of attitudes and responses that should characterize us in our sufferings. The manner that Jesus suffered His trial and crucifixion displays for us the manner that we are to react and respond to all trials and sufferings that we encounter as Christians. We read this in Peter's epistle.

¹⁸Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹***For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:***

¹⁸ Ryle, vol. 3, p. 347.

²²“Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;

²³who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet. 2:18-25)

Peter also took up this strain of teaching in his second epistle:

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

¹⁷For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now

“If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

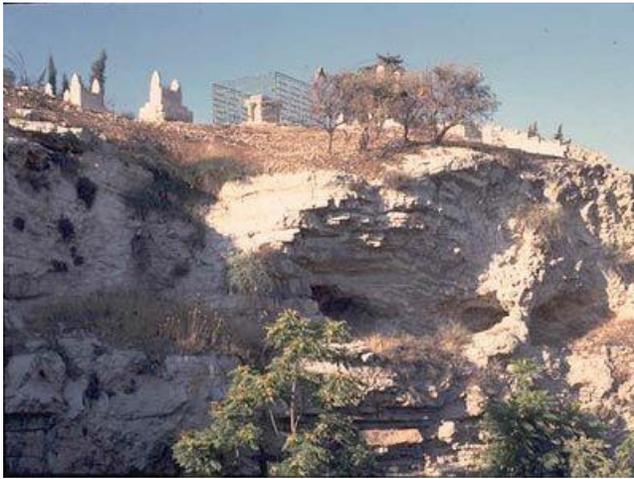
¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (1 Pet. 4:12-19)

When we suffer abuse and injustice, how do we react?. What do we think and how do we feel? Do we feel abandoned by God, that we are not receiving the kind of treatment that we deserve? Do we murmur and complain, grumble and threaten, delve into self-pity and vengeful anger? If we do so we do not follow our Lord Jesus. May God have mercy on us. May He enable us to be as Simon of Cyrene, submit our shoulder to bear His cross that He has placed upon us and follow Him to the place of execution, if need be, and to the certain glory that lies on the other side.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.
The Lord be with you all. (2 Thess. 3:16)

These pictures are of “Gordon’s Calvary” in Jerusalem.

The Place of the Skull?



The Garden Tomb?

