

Luke 23:32 - 38 ...there they crucified Him

32 And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. 33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

We come now this morning to a topic that any preacher should feel fearfully incompetent to approach. It is so towering in importance that any teacher who has read James warning; *Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.* Jas. 3:1 should approach this with fear and reservation and reverence.

We are sobered by the dreadful and awesome importance of these four words, actually just 3 words in the greek; they crucified Him. There they crucified Him. Written with the same identical factual brevity by all four gospel writers. Factual truth presented with the least drama possible. Just complete simple matter of fact.

They (a group of people who had power over Jesus to inflict punishment and torture resulting in death); they. Peter is careful to assign responsibility to both the Romans and the jews for this death when he accuses all men at his first ever sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2. The jews brought the charges and rioted to have their victim, and Rome was the power that brought the penalty to completion.

The gospel writers simply use the pronoun "they". They crucified **Him**. Who? Jesus. The Lord of glory was inflicted with the most degrading and

terrible death ever developed. Unspeakable excruciating agony.

This event, defined by 3 greek words, is the single fulcrum that all of history since the fall of Adam in the garden, has looked forward to, and for those of us on this side of the crucifixion, all history looks back on it.

What we learn from truths revealed to us by God that we have no other way of finding out, truths revealed in this book, we learn that from the moment of conception of life, we enter into an eternal consciousness. We become eternal beings, created by God for His glory and ownership. We will be conscious beings forever . . . somewhere.

But we learn we are born condemned. Born into a world that is lost in rebellion against God. A world ruled by Satan. And we learn that all of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory God created us for. Instead of worshipping and glorifying Him, we are born into a rebellion. Born sinners.

The cross is the payment in full for our debt of sin and rebellion. Jesus took the punishment, the degradation, the torment, and the pain that each one of us deserves for our sins. This one moment in history, and what we do with the sacrifice given for us there, matters for all eternity.

Every human life ever conceived must come to this cross for forgiveness or be forever in black darkness of torment away from God for all of eternity. Every life conceived comes here to this cross to either exchange their sins for His righteousness, or reject God's provision and be eternally lost. That's what we're looking at in this passage before us this morning.

But let's look at the historic actual events that surround this single focal point of all history, past, present and future. This is an actual historic event being played out in full drama as presented to us by the 4 gospel chroniclers.

And what a drama we have. The jews hate Rome. Rome hates the jews to some extent. The jews receive a King who they wish would vanquish Rome. Their King pronounces judgement on them! They hate their King and they

hate Rome.

And Rome picks up on the whole King storyline and magnifies it back onto the jews that they hate. This crucifixion of the King of the Jews is a sarcastic comedy that Rome inflicts on the Jews.

Here's your King, Jews. This is what a jewish King looks like. They are using Jesus and the whole King identity to mock the jews. The jews have a king who is going to vanquish Rome?!! Here's your King, you jews.

He has no army. His followers were few and powerless, they have fled. No army, no followers, no wealth, no regalness, no home to call His own. Your king is powerless and ridiculous you jews.

But since He is a king, we're going to crucify Him in Kingly style, with His right hand man, a thief, and His left hand man, a robber, displayed before you Israel, in full royal court. The King in the middle with His right hand and left hand co-regents of His court.

Rome is going to put on full display Israels challenge against Roman sovereignty. You're pathetic Israel. Your King is pathetic. Look at Him up there, raised up above the earth with the label. ***This is the King of the Jews.***

The whole display is a mockery against any challenge powerless impotent Israel should make against Roman sovereignty. And it's not lost on the jewish leaders. The chief priests and mucky mucks of Israel. In John 19 they complain about Pilate's sign, his label that identifies Jesus as a King;

19 Pilate also had a notice posted on the cross. It read:

**JESUS OF NAZARETH,
THE KING OF THE JEWS**

20 Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but only that He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

The rulers of Israel would like a clarification if you please. Don't write that He IS in fact the King of the Jews. Write that He made that claim, which we considered to be blasphemy worthy of death. Can we clarify that please.

And Pilate says no. They forced his hand. They got what they wanted. Pilate will not yeild one more iota to these jews that he hates. The mockery of them, will remain. Take a look at what a Jewish King looks like.

No power, no army, no influence, no wealth, no home, no followers, and we'll flip a coin to see who gets his clothes, the only things He did possess. He is stripped to a loin cloth, battered beyond recognition, lacerated and bloody from the beatings, His face pummeled and non recognizable, covered in blood from head wounds from the crown of thorns beaten onto His head.

He is literally nailed with spikes onto a cross in such a way that the only way to get a successive breath is to push up with your two feet against a common spike holding them in place long enough to gulp in a single breath before you collapse again slumped in exhaustion and excruciating pain.

Did you know our word excruciating has the latin word for cross as it's basis. Crucifix or cross is the deepest level of pain and anguish possible this side of death.

Here is your King, Israel. Your King is laughable. Your King is a joke. Just like you, Israel.

*32 And two others also, who **were** criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.*

Luke is careful to contrast the two who also shared the same fate. Jesus was

not a criminal, but these men were. Jesus did nothing to deserve death, they both had committed crimes worthy of death.

Matthew and Mark both tell us these men were robbers. Thieves. People like to conjecture that perhaps these two were in the same insurrection that Barabbas was a guilty part of, but there's no biblical basis for that. Two robbers are Jesus the King's right hand and left hand man. Robbers for His royal court.

We think of the request of the mother of James and John recorded for us Matthew 20;

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

These robbers, one at His right, and one at His left, give a whole new meaning to Jesus response. Are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink. Oh, yeah, we can handle your cup.

And Jesus says, you will in fact drink from that same cup. James was martyred by Herod, and John was exiled to a remote prison island in the Aegian Sea between Turkey and Greece, Patmos where he eventually died as a prisoner in exile.

33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

An impotent helpless King with a court that consists of criminals. This is Pilate's mockery of the Jews. Of Israel. But everyone will get in a few licks

at the mockery. Jews and romans alike will come together to mock Jesus.

34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

Oh! But they should have known what they were doing. Actually this is a grace because they are responsible to know what is written, and this scene is pre-written history.

What grace! Forgive them because they're clueless about what they are doing? They should have recognized this exact scene; written down as history a thousand years before it happened.

500 years before the Persians invented crucifixion, David wrote these haunting words. Israel should have recognized this exact scene playing out in front of them as Jesus hung on that cross. Psalm 22;

*6 But I am a worm, and not a man,
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.*

*7 All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*

*8 "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."*

*11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near;
For there is none to help.*

*12 Many bulls have surrounded me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.*

*13 They open wide their mouth at me,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.*

*14 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.*

*15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.*

*16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.*

*17 I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;*

*18 They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.*

Everything Luke will write has already been written 1000 years before this event, 500 years before crucifixion had been invented.

The jews didn't pierce hands or feet when they carried out an execution. They stoned their criminals to death. And yet three times, in three different places the old testament pictures messiah as pierced.

Here in Psalm 22; again 1000 years before it happened and 500 years before the beginning of crucifixion in Persia, David writes;

*16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.*

Isaiah, 700 years before the crucifixion of Jesus and 200 years before it's

practice writes: Isaiah 53;

4 *Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

5 But **He was pierced through** for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

And then just about the time of the beginnings of the practice of crucifixion but having never seen or heard of it, Zechariah writes; Zechariah 12;

10 *“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on **Me whom they have pierced**; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.*

In Zechariah 13 a fourth mention of crucifixion; 6 *“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’*

And yet in His grace, Jesus says; *Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*

35 *And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.”* 36 *And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”*

If in fact you are the Christ, the Messiah of God, the Chosen One, who you

claimed to be, use those powers to save yourself. You saved others? Save yourself.

This is shockingly vicious. Taunting the God who spoke the worlds into existence. Jesus could have called 10,000's of angels to incinerate the place. Turn it into a smoking hole in the ground. Make Nagasaki look like a summer picnic.

In fact, scripture indicates a day when this same Jesus who these leaders taunted will do exactly that; Malachi 4

1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." 2 "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 3 "And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

But God never sets aside His plan and His time because of the taunting of wicked men. These men who taunt and mock are fulfilling the prophets.

*7 All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*

*8 "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him." Psalm 22*

The wine with gall which the soldiers offered is a mild sedative. Part of the Roman refinements of crucifixion. Relax the victim slightly to prolong the torture. Draw out the agony. Lengthen the disgrace. Don't let them die too quickly, it spoils the fun.

Jesus refused the sour wine. Jesus is in full control of the millisecond that He

will depart the flesh. He controls the sovereign destiny of the moment He will perish.

38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Paul states the conundrum of the crucifixion so perfectly. 1 Cor. 1;

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The jews are standing gazing up at Jesus on the cross and they say, if you're the Messiah, the Chosen One, come on down. Prove your claim.

The gentiles at the cross gaze up at Jesus and also at the Jews and their whole Messiah business and they hurl insults at Jesus that reflect back onto the Jews. To them the whole Jewish identity and this glaring display surrounding their beliefs in Messiahs and blasphemy of some sky God is complete and utter nonsense. Nothing could be more ridiculous than frenzied jews and their God and their Messiah. Utter nonsense.

Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,

That was the scene then, that's what we see at the cross. And that is the scene now.

The jews are still with us. God has preserved them. That in itself is a miracle that ought to set this book apart from any other religious writings ever conceived.

The jews were scattered to the four winds in 70 AD. They wandered the world with no homeland to call their own. And everywhere they have gone, within their ranks, God has blessed this world with some of the most noble

and gifted minds this world would ever enjoy.

They have remained intact. Remained separated from other peoples, wherever they go. Now that science has given us DNA, we can actually define the Jewish nationality, the Jewish race, by their own DNA.

Please find me a Hittite. Or an Edomite, if you please. Perhaps you know an Amalekite in your neighborhood? Nonsense. But the Jews have remained intact, recognizable, separate, proud.

Most of our American Songbook; written by Jews. Most of our most beloved comedians; Jews. Most of the Nobel Prizes have gone to; Jews. If you did a study of the most important advances that have made our modern world better, more livable, more comfortable, more brilliant, you would find that the Jews have been responsible for more advances in medicine, culture, comfort, security, stability. They are noble, blessed, separate.

But they stumbled over their own Messiah. They reject Jesus. They are still waiting for the messiah, savior. They stumbled.

To the rest of mankind, the cross is nonsense. Who could dream up something so idiotic.

In Rome, at Palatine Hill, there is an ancient guard house that goes back to Roman times and the soldiers left us graffiti. There is a graffiti there of a cross with a crucified man on the cross who has the head of a donkey. A jackass. And there is a man kneeling before the cross with the jackass man on it. And the inscription below it says; "*Alexamenos worships his God.*"

The Jews stumbled and to the rest of the world who ignores me every Sunday morning as I dress in business attire and walk to my car with my black book in my hand, they don't stumble, to them, I'm like Alexamenos. What I do is complete nonsense. Utterly ridiculous.

But in Paul's list of respondents to the cross, there is a third category. The

jews stumble. Everybody else; utter nonsense. But we have a third group;

*24 but to those who are **the called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1Cor. 1:24*

To those who are the called, the man on the cross becomes the exact opposite. To Jews, He is the Power of God. And to the rest, the nonsense crowd, to those who are the called from that group, the man on the cross is the Wisdom of God.

Somehow, by some miracle, people from both groups, jews and gentiles, are awakened, quickened as it were from the dead, called out of this lost world, and that Man that was on the cross that day is the power and wisdom of God.

We're going to visit a perfect example of that miracle of God quickening a once dead person to eternal life next week as we marvel over the thief on the cross.

We have much to be thankful for on this Sunday morning preceeding our Thanksgiving holiday.