

The death of Jesus on the Cross

37. When we remember the political and social setting of Jewish Palestine in the time of Pilate, we should not be surprised that Pilate was reluctant to execute in such a public and provocative manner a popular prophet from Galilee, whose many followers were present in Jerusalem. Nailing Jesus to a cross could very well instigate a riot, the very thing Pilate hoped to avoid.
38. Jesus had no military intentions, so to Pilate he was nothing more than a fly. Beat him and some jail time would suffice. BUT, the ruling priests wanted him dead. Pilate obliged them, but made it clear that the decision to have Jesus executed was not really his.
39. THE MOCKERY OF JESUS: Crucifixion victims were often mocked before and during execution. SEE Mark 14:65: “truly a prophet would possess clairvoyance and could identify who struck him.
40. SEE Mark 15:17-19: Soldiers mock Jesus, purple cloak, crown of thorns, salute him “Hail, King of the Jews”. Mockery modeled after homage paid to Caesar. Thorns resemble wreath of laurel, reed (scepter), being addressed king; Offer of spiced vinegar to dying Jesus (Mark 15:23) drink mimics spiced wine served to kings.
41. Philo speaks of many occasions where people seized a lunatic (street person) and made sport of them. Dressing them up as a king and mocking them. Even case where Emperor Vitellius (AD 69) was humiliated at the hands of Roman soldiers before he was murdered.
42. Everything we are told about Jesus arrest, trial(s) and mockery is consistent with what we know of Roman practice in the first century. It is also consistent with the political and social establishment of Judea in the time of Jesus.
43. **The Crucifixion of Jesus** Jesus was put to death by crucifixion, a form of execution where a person was tied or nailed to a pole or cross. To be crucified, literally, to be “staked.”
Crucifixion was practiced in the eastern Mediterranean first by the Persians (Herodotus); and others Assyrians, Scythians, Alexander the Great (crucified thousands) Curtius Rufus.
44. It was primarily reserved for murderous or rebellious slaves and was known as the slaves punishment. Josephus tells of Alexander Jannaeus (102-76 BC) crucified a large number of Pharisees who had opposed him and had allied themselves to a foreign enemy. The Dead Sea Scrolls, speaks of Jannaeus as the “Lion of Wrath” who used to hang men alive.”
45. READ **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**: “When *someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession.*”
46. By the time of Jesus this applied also to those hung while still alive. Jesus might have survived the crucifixion had he not been so badly beaten. Scourging was standard

precrucifixion procedure in Roman times. A whip was used made of several leather straps, to which were attached sharp, abrasive items like nails, glass or rocks. Severe laceration of skin were result.

Many were “flayed to the bone.” (J.W. 6.304). Jesus warned his followers he would face scourging (**Matt. 10:17;23:34**)

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47. After such a beating Jesus was compelled to carry his cross. It is not likely that early Christians would invent a story about Jesus being unable to follow his own instruction to the letter. (Take up your cross and follow me). SEE **Mark 15:21** It may well be that Simon’s sons, Alexander and Rufus, were early eyewitnesses to Jesus beating and being beaten so severely he could not carry his cross.
48. Mark 15:26; A *titulus*, or placard was placed on the cross of Jesus and that it was written in more than one language, “King of the Jews”. This did not originate in Christian circles. They called Jesus different titles, Christ, Lord, Son of God, etc. NOT “King of the Jews.”
49. Romans liked to place crosses along well-traveled places, highways, hill tops, city gates. Condemned usually carried their own cross-beam (Patibulum). Sign was often hung around their neck. 4th Century, church historian, Eusebius tells of Attalus the Christian who was lead around the amphitheatre with a placard around his neck that read, “This is Attalus, the Christian”
50. Crucifixion victims were usually left to die, however long that took (sometimes several days.) Sometimes friends and relatives would feed their loved one (Mark 15:23). Guards were posted to insure that no one tried to rescue the dieing. Romans made a point of not taking down dead, but left them unburied, allowing them to rot and be picked apart by animals. (Roman law did permit bodies to be taken down and buried).
51. “Crucify” derived from Latin word: “*cruciare*” which means torture. Also dividing up garments was a typical Roman practice (Mark 15:24). Tacitus tells us that “people sentenced to death forfeited their property” (Annals 6:29)
52. Show slides of crucifixion victim”
53. Next week: The Death of Jesus