

Jesus' First Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of Man

Matthew 27:35-44; Mark 15:24-32;

Luke 23:32-43; John 19:18-27

From 9:00 am to Noon on Friday, the fifteenth of Nisan

DIG: Explain the significance of Yeshua's death on the cross. How would the world view Miryam, and how would she view herself after her son's crucifixion? How do Jesus' words to His mother sound to you (see Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 11:27-28)? How does He challenge your own sense of what gives you meaning and identity? How do Yeshua's words to His mother encompass the lives of every woman from early childhood to old age? How do we, like Mary, find true blessedness? In what ways should believers try to imitate Messiah's attitude toward forgiveness?

REFLECT: A sacrifice should be just that - a sacrifice. Sacrifices may be inconvenient and are costly. Be definition, a sacrifice almost always involves some kind of death or loss. Think of a time when you gave something up for a friend. In what way did your sacrifice help that person? Why is it important to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice on our behalf? Why do people refuse God's gift of salvation? Do you know someone who seems beyond help today? Perhaps you think you are without hope. The God of the Bible specializes in giving help to those regarded as so old, so guilty, or so weak as to be beyond help.¹⁵⁹⁸

It was nine in the morning when they crucified Him (Mark 15:25). The Romans calculated the hours from midnight, a fact which explains the apparent discrepancy between John 19:14, where, at the sixth hour (of Roman calculation), Pontus Pilate brought Jesus out to the Jews, while at the third hour when calculating the same incident by Jewish time. As a result, this was Friday at exactly nine o'clock in the morning, the same precise time of the *Chagigah offering* taking place in the Temple compound.

The commandments of the Passover sacrifice were found in the Torah. Of the six hundred and thirteen commandments that Moses gave, sixteen of these had to do with the Passover. Four of these are positive and twelve are negative commandments. Five had to do with the *Chagigah*, or Second Passover, meaning the Passover Lamb that was slaughtered on the morning of the first day of Passover in the Temple compound as part of the morning burnt offering. It represented one lamb slain for the entire nation. So exactly at 9:00 am

when the Roman soldiers were driving the nails into the wrists and heels of the Lamb of God to crucify Him, the priests were slaughtering one lamb for the entire Jewish nation just as Caiaphas had prophesied (John 11:49-51).¹⁵⁹⁹

When the daily burnt offering was presented by the Levites in the Temple in Jerusalem, at the same time Israelites of all the other tribes would gather in the four hundred or so synagogues throughout the Land in order to read portions of the creation account. The readings were divided up over the six working days. It is remarkable to see how the events of the creation week line up with those of the Holy Week. The synagogue reading for Friday was from **Genesis 1:24-31**. On the sixth day of creation, when the first human, **Adam**, as the crown of creation, received *life* from the Creator's hand (**Genesis 1:24-31**), **Adam's** descendants *killed the Messiah, the last Adam* (**First Corinthians 15:45**).¹⁶⁰⁰

Stage 6 - The Crucifixion: They crucified Jesus there, along with two robbers - one on His right and the other on His left. The Romans kept a busy schedule of executions, so it should not come as any surprise that two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be executed (**Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:24a; Luke 23:32-33; John 19:18**).

It was common for insects to land upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears and nose of the dying and helpless victim. Birds of prey would also tear at those areas. In addition, with each breath, the painful flogging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the cross as the victim pushed up to breath, then slumped down from exhaustion. Back and forth, up and down, again and again. As a result blood loss from the back would probably continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.¹⁶⁰¹

Stage 7 - Messiah's First Words from the Cross: Jesus said: **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing** (**Luke 23:34a**). Christ spoke **seven times** from the cross. These are His first words. For **Luke**, as well as other writers of the B'rit Chadashah (**Romans 2:4, 10:3; Ephesians 4:18; First Peter 1:14**), **ignorance** does not mean a deficient mentality or lack of information, but a **sinful** moral state. This prayer is answered by the death of **Messiah**, which brings the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**).¹⁶⁰² Since speech occurs when you exhale, but on the cross these short, terse statements must have been particularly difficult and painful.

Stage 8 - The Dividing Up of His Clothes: There were always four soldiers assigned to a crucifixion. After they had nailed Him to the stake, they divided up His clothes among them by throwing dice to determine what each man would get. And sitting down, they kept watch over Him there (**Matthew 27:35-36; Mark 15:24b; Luke 23:34b CJB**). Under Roman law, the effects of all condemned people were confiscated by the state. They

divided them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided My clothes among them and cast lots for My garment" (Psalm 22:18). So this is what the soldiers did (John 19:23-24). Jewish garments were normally made up of five pieces of clothing. An outer garment, a head covering, shoes and a robe or coat. That was four shares of clothing for the four soldiers. The fifth was a seamless undergarment that they cast lots for. This means that the Lord was naked. This was part of the shame of the cross.

Stage 9 - The Notice that Jesus was King of the Jews: Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, the most common language in Palestine at that time, Latin, and Greek. In normal circumstances what was erected over the head of condemned one was the crime for which he was to be executed. But Pilate did not want to condemn Nazarene to be crucified, but he had buckled under the pressure from the Jewish religious leaders. In a not to subtle way, he had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. Above Jesus' head they placed the written charge against Him: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This didn't sound like an accusation, but a title. The Sadducees recognized this and protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man *claimed* to be king of the Jews." This was Pilate's own personal revenge against them and he refused to change the wording. Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written" (Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19-22).

Stage 10: The Crucifixion of the Two Criminals: Two zealots were crucified with Him, one on his right and one on his left (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27). They might have been zealots and members of the insurrection of bar-Abbas.

Stage 11: The Fifth Mockery: Because the crucifixion was so public, people stood watching. Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God" (Matthew 27:39-40; Mark 15:29-30; Luke 23:35a)! This savage sarcasm seemed appropriate to them because every time the body of Jesus sagged, it looked as though he could hardly lift himself up, let alone the Temple. There was no reply from the cross. It must have seemed impossible to think that the rebel Rabbi hanging on the cross could have been the true Messiah. Surely the curse of such a death (Deuteronomy 21:23) couldn't be carried out on the real King Messiah.¹⁶⁰³ But they just didn't understand the concept of the two comings of the Anointed One (see *Mv - The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's*). **This was the first attempt to**

get Jesus to come down from the cross. Of course Yeshua never said that He would literally **destroy the Temple**, but in rabbinic midrash form, used similar language to describe own death and resurrection in **John 2:19**.

Stage 12: The Sixth Mockery: In the same way the Sadducees, and the Torah-teachers mocked Him among themselves. They said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is God's Messiah, the Chosen One" (Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35b)! **The second attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross.** He's the king of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him (Matthew 27:41-42; Mark 15:32a). Did He not say, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father?" Let God deliver him." **The third attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross.**

Some of them were so smug that they threw some scripture in His face. They said: He trusts in God? Let God rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God' (Matthew 27:43). They quote from Psalm 22:8 where it says: He committed Himself to ADONAI, so they thought, "let the LORD rescue him! Let God set him free if He takes such delight in him! To them it seemed so logical. The fact that Yeshua stayed on the cross proved (in their minds) that he was an imposter. **The fourth attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross.**

Stage 13 - The Seventh Mockery: Then one of the soldiers joined the mocking. He walked around to a position in front of the cross, and, placing his hands on his hips, looked up into the agonized face of Jesus and said: **If You are the king of the Jews, save yourself.** Then the other soldiers came up and offered Him wine vinegar and also mocked Him (Luke 27:36-37). **The fifth attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross.**

Like the other two who were crucified with Him, Christ's head was lowered at times, with chin touching chest. Again, moved by sudden spasms, His head tossed from one shoulder to the other and His eyes looked directly up into the sun as His lips moved. When His body sagged, in fatigue, its weight hung on the nails in His wrists and His knees bent far forward.

Stage 14 - The Eighth Mockery: In the same way the criminals who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him (Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32b). One of the robbers who hung there hurled insults at Him as if he had a secret grievance against the stranger who was dying with him. He kept glaring across his right shoulder and at last, pushing himself up and exploded in anger: **Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us** (Luke 23:39)! He believed all of Christ's messianic claims were lies, and he challenged the Lord to come down from the cross. Jesus said nothing. This was the ancient Serpent's final

attempt to keep **Christ** from dying for the sins of the world, past, present and future. **The sixth attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross.**

Stage 15 - The Conversion of One of the Criminals: But the other zealot rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:40-41). Did the criminal on the cross become a believer? Jesus said **He** was (see below). His theology was crystal clear. **He** knew **he** was a sinner; **he** knew **Christ** was sinless; **he** knew **Christ** could save **him** and **he** knew **Christ** would come into **His Kingdom**. Was this robber baptized? No. Did **he** have a ministry? No. Did **he** comply with the 613 prohibitions and commandments of the Torah? No. Was **he** a member of a synagogue member? No. **He** was saved purely by his faith: Salvation = faith + nothing.

Stage 16 - Messiah's Second Words from the Cross: Then the criminal took an extra deep breath before **he** started to sink again, and **he** said in humble desperation:

Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.

We are guilty and **He** is innocent.

We are filthy and **He** is pure.

We are wrong and **He** is right.

Christ was not on the cross for **His** sins. **He** was there for ours.

And once the zealot understood this, his request seems only natural. As **he** looked into the eyes of his last hope, **he** made the same request any believer has made: **Yeshua, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.** No stained-glass sermons. No excuses. Just a desperate plea for help.

Jesus raised **Himself** up, breathed painfully and performed the greatest miracle on the cross. Greater than the earthquake; greater than the tearing of the Temple curtain. **He** performed the miracle of forgiveness when **He** said: **Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise** (Luke 23:42-43).¹⁶⁰⁴ Salvation for that man was immediate (see **Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). **He** knew that instant where **he** would spend eternity (**Second Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7**). And the same is true for us. When we realize we are sinners and place our faith/trust/belief (Greek: *pistos*) in **Yeshua's** death and resurrection, this assures us that we can immediately know where we will spend eternity (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8 KJV)**. There is no such thing a purgatory, where the Catholic Church teaches that the sinner must suffer the full punishment due him or her before being allowed to enter heaven. That is a lie from the Enemy of souls.

The major physical effect of **crucifixion**, apart from the excruciating pain, was a significant interference with normal breathing, especially the ability to exhale. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would hinder passive exhalation. Shallow breathing from the diaphragm would result. It is likely that this breathing would become insufficient and that carbon dioxide would build up in the blood, which would hinder breathing even further. As a result, the ability to exhale would require the victim to push up on his feet, while flexing the elbows and lifting the shoulders. But that would place the entire weight of the body on the heels and would produce searing pain.

Flexing the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists where the nails had been driven and cause fiery pain in the arms. Lifting the body would also painfully scrape the flogged back against the rough wooden **cross** and would cause searing pain in the heels at the victim pushed up to try to breath. Muscle cramps and a burning sensation due to nerve damage in the outstretched, uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a cumulative result of all of this, the condemned would find it increasingly difficult to breathe. This up, down, up, down, up, down to try to breath would eventually render the victim unable to push up to catch a quick breath. Each breath would become more agonizing and tiring, leading to lack of oxygen, and ultimately suffocation.¹⁶⁰⁵

Stage 17 - Messiah's Third Words from the Cross: Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother. In the back of her mind, Mary had probably always suspected that this day would come. She had surely heard Jesus speak of His own death. The cloud of inevitable reality had probably hung over her mind since Yeshua was an infant. It was no doubt one of the things she pondered in her heart ever since Simeon had told her, "a sword will pierce your own soul" (Luke 2:35b CJB). Years later, when she stood and watched a Roman soldier thrust a sword into her son's side, she must have truly felt as if a sword had pierced her own soul. At that very moment, she might well have recalled Simeon's prophecy, and suddenly its true meaning came home to her with full force.

Just before He died, Jesus saw Miryam standing nearby with a small group of women and the apostle John. In addition to Yeshua's mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene were also at the foot of the cross. Out of the depths of Messiah's misery, He reached out to Miryam one last time. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the talmid whom he loved standing nearby. He pushed Himself up on the cross, so that He could speak. Clenching His teeth against the pain in His heels, using an economy of words, He said to her: **Mother, this is your son**, and to the talmid He said: **This is your mother** (John 19:25-27a CJB). Young Yochanan fastened his arm around Mary a little tighter. He looked into the eyes of his Messiah and nodded. He understood.

In her book *Lost Women of the Bible*, author Carolyn James describes **Mary's** spiritual journey in more detail. Who was the broken woman leaning on **John, the beloved apostle**, at the foot of **the cross**? **She** had no husband. **She** was losing **her firstborn**, the pride and joy of the family. Had **Miryam's** blessedness come to this? This certainly wasn't the scene **she** envisioned when **Gabriel** spoke that glorious announcement to **her** more than thirty years before. The disgrace **she** feared at **His** birth paled against the shame and disgrace of a **mother** whose **son** was executed like a common criminal. Now instead of a jubilant chorus of angels heralding **the Savior's** birth, **she** heard a savage mob demanded **His** death.

But really, who was this broken woman? **She** was **Jesus'** first disciple. **She** had been one from the beginning - as a thirteen year old. **She** was a hearer and doer of **God's** Word. Faced with the hard and costly choice, **she** blazed a path of faith and courage for all women - young and old - and demonstrated the power of a woman who will risk everything to advance **God's** cause. **Miryam** is a hero in anyone's book. **She** offers teenage girls today a stronger role model than most of the alternatives that call out to them. **She** sets an example for those of use who are adults also. **Mary** was the first to believe and lay down **her** life for the Gospel. **She** was the first to leave all and follow **Jesus**, first to love **Him** and minister to **His** body, first to hear and treasure **His** words, and the first to share in **His** sufferings. Incredible as it sounds, for a brief period of time, **Miryam** had **Jesus** all to **herself**.

In the epilogue of **Mary's** story we find **her** right where **she** belongs - with **John** and the other disciples of the resurrected **Lord**, waiting for the coming of **the Holy Spirit** at Shavu'ot (**Acts 1:14**). **She** had no prominent place. Like **her Son**, **she** was focused on **her Father's** business. **She** was a widow, and **her son** was absent. But **she** still knew who **she** was. **She** was the blessed disciple - firmly established as a **sister** and a **mother** in the growing family of **the Messiah**. **She** was at peace. **Her** life hadn't turned out as **she** expected, but **her** identity and mission were intact.¹⁶⁰⁶ Once the first messianic congregation was born, you never hear **her** name mentioned again in the B'rit Chadashah. Never again. It is clear that the early congregations of **God** never thought of praying to **Mary**, or even thought that **she** could help **Jesus** in **His** work of redemption like the Roman Catholic Church does today. As a **mother**, **she** had once taken care of all **His** needs; but in the final analysis, **He** was **her Savior** and provider. **He** should be no less for us today.¹⁶⁰⁷

His arms were now in a **V** position, but death was not ready. **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** became conscious of two unendurable circumstances: the first was that the pain in **His** wrists was beyond bearing, and that the muscle cramps that knotted **His** forearms, upper arms and shoulders screamed with pain; the second was that **His** pectoral muscles at the sides of **His** chest were momentarily paralyzed. This induced in **Him** an involuntary panic; for **He** found that while **He** could draw air into **His** lungs, **He** was unable to exhale.¹⁶⁰⁸

The cross of Christ has moved many people - artists have painted the picture, songwriters have written music about it, and authors and preachers have sketched those moments with words. But there is a danger of dwelling on His death in a sympathetic way. The Messiah did not die to elicit anyone's sympathy. He does not want your sympathy, He wants your trust. When the Lord was on His way to the cross, some women began to weep. Jesus turned to them and said: **Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep for yourselves and for your children (Luke 23:28)**. If you have tears for Jesus, save them for yourself and your family. **Do not weep for Him**, because He does not want any of your sympathy. **Yeshua Meshiach** wants your faith.¹⁶⁰⁹

Fifteen semicircular steps led from the Nicanor Gate and into the Court of the Women (see Nb - **The Nicanor Gate**). At the great feasts these magnificent steps served as a podium for the choir and the orchestra. **From the Talmud Tractate *thamid***, we know exactly what Psalm would have been sung on which day of the week in connection with the daily burnt offering in the Temple. It is exceedingly impressive how the daily psalms astonishingly agree with each of the daily events during Holy Week. So as Jesus hung on the cross, the Levitical choir, with instrumental accompaniment from the Temple orchestra, sang Psalm 93:1-5.

On this Friday the united Roman and Jewish enemies rose like surging waves of the sea against the Son of God. **ADONAI, the deep is raising up, the deep is raising up its voice, the deep is raising its crashing waves. More than the sound of rushing waters or the mighty breakers of the sea, ADONAI on high is mighty (Psalm 93:3-4 CJB)**. Yet they could do nothing against the sovereignty of God that stood exalted over them. **ADONAI is king, robed in majesty; ADONAI is robed, girded with strength. The world is well established; it cannot be moved. Your throne was established long ago; You have existed forever (Psalm 93:1-2 CJB)**. Rather, in their blind rage they inadvertently fulfilled God's plan of salvation, just as it was determined in His Word (**Acts 4:27-28**). **Your instructions are very sure; holiness befits Your house, ADONAI, for all time to come (Psalm 93:5 CJB)**.¹⁶¹⁰