

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

STUDY EIGHTEEN

Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50

God gave us His one and only Son to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. It took a spotless Lamb, Jesus, who was willing to bear the sins of the whole world. All our sins are fully and completely forgiven.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

TO die on a cross was to die in shame. Even the Romans believed crucifixion to be “a most cruel and disgusting punishment.”¹ To the Jews, it was particularly vile. They categorized crucifixion with hanging, applying Deuteronomy 21:23 to both: “anyone who is hung is cursed in the sight of God.”

No right-thinking person would honor a crucified man, much less worship him. Yet, Christians look at Jesus and see God in human flesh, humbling Himself “to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8 NASB). We see in Jesus’ death the ultimate expression of God’s “great love” for sinners (Romans 5:8); and in the cross, the power of God rescuing us from the curse of sin when Jesus “took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing” (Galatians 3:13).

Let’s walk with Jesus through the final hours of His passion in reverential awe at the amazing truth unfolding before our eyes. Through Christ’s disgrace, God poured out His grace on us, and in the blood that flowed from Immanuel’s veins, we are cleansed.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prepare your heart to enter the somber scenes of Christ's suffering described in Matthew 27:27–50.

Father, I admit, the brutality of Christ's passion is hard to watch, and I long to turn away. Yet, on the cross of shame, Christ bore my shame, and through His death, I gain eternal life. Only You can turn a symbol of fear and abuse into a beacon of hope. Take me trembling to the cross and fill my heart with wonder, praise, and love for My Savior. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Convinced Jesus didn't deserve the death penalty, Pilate ordered Jesus flogged with the intention of releasing Him (Luke 23:16). Accounts of the whip's fury were well known, so Matthew spared his readers the gory description of a Roman scourging.² He simply stated that Pilate "ordered Jesus flogged" (Matthew 27:26). Then Pilate relented to the mob and "turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified" (27:26).



Observation: The Way to Golgotha and Death on the Cross

The Roman soldiers were barracked at Antonia Fortress, a large military complex on the northwest corner of the temple mount. From the towers on the four corners of the fort, sentries could keep watch over the temple area, standing ready to crush any insurrection.

Mocking and Abuse at the Antonia Fortress—Matthew 27:27–31

View the picture of a model of the Antonia Fortress on page 285 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, noting the size of the complex with its open courtyard. The governor's soldiers who brought Jesus to the fortress "called out the entire regiment," about 600 soldiers. They dragged Jesus into the courtyard as the soldiers stopped their morning routines to gawk sadistically at a Jew who claimed to be king.



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50

What did the soldiers do to Jesus, according to [Matthew 27:27–30](#)? Why do you think they abused Him in this way in front the entire regiment?

They cynically play-acted a coronation of Jesus, mocking Him and hitting Him repeatedly.³ It was as if each soldier was trying to top the other's joke and get a bigger cheer from the bloodthirsty spectators. Yet, Jesus bore it all with silent, patient dignity.

*He did not retaliate when he was insulted,
nor threaten revenge when he suffered.
He left his case in the hands of God,
who always judges fairly. (1 Peter 2:23)*

The Way of the Cross—Matthew 27:31–33

The soldiers then forced Jesus to carry the beam of His cross through the crowded streets of Jerusalem to the site of His execution. Exhausted from the flogging and multiple beatings, Jesus carried His cross for a while but must have fallen under the beam's weight at some point along the way. So what did the soldiers accompanying Jesus do, according to [Matthew 27:31–33](#)? Read page 286 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary for Simon's background and a description of the route.



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50

The Crucifixion at Calvary—Matthew 27:34–50

Jesus arrived at Golgotha, meaning “Place of the Skull” (Matthew 27:33)—or in Latin, *Calvarius*, from which we derive *Calvary*. After Jesus refused the “wine mixed with bitter gall,” an elixir meant to dull pain, the Roman soldiers “nailed him to the cross” (27:34–35).⁴ Again, Matthew respectfully refrains from describing the details; instead, he focuses on the action around Jesus after His cross was raised and set.

What did the soldiers do in *Matthew 27:35–36*?

For what crimes were the two men on either side of Jesus crucified, according to *27:38*?

In the following chart, write down the three groups that hurled insults at Jesus and the accusations they made.

Verses	Group	Accusations
<i>Matthew 27:39–40</i>		
<i>Matthew 27:41–43</i>		
<i>Matthew 27:44</i>		



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50

What similarities do you see in their accusations? Also, how do they echo Satan's temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (*Matthew 4:3, 6*)?

Eventually, the taunting voices went silent. Darkness smothered the light of the noon sun for three hours, and out of the darkness, Jesus' voice rang out. What words did the Son of God call out at the climax of His suffering (*27:45–46*)?

Those nearby mistook the word, *Eli*, for the name of the prophet, Elijah. One of them extended a sponge filled with "sour wine" to Jesus' lips to quench His parched throat, while the others gaped to see if Elijah would save Jesus (*27:47–49*). Little did they realize that *they were the ones needing saving*, and the One doing the saving was right before them taking His final breath: "Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit" (*27:50*).

In that brief period of time, Jesus bore your sins, my sins, the sins of the whole world.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Jesus' Cry of Dereliction

How should we interpret what theologians call Jesus' cry of *dereliction*, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (*Matthew 27:46*)? What took place in the darkness when Jesus voiced that lament from Psalm 22:1?



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50

For answers, read the following verses and summarize what happened in those moments: *Isaiah 53:6*; *Matthew 20:28*; *2 Corinthians 5:21*; and *Galatians 3:13*.

At Gethsemane, Jesus had vowed His willingness to drink the cup of God's wrath. Now, hanging on the cross, Jesus drained that awful cup to its dregs. Not a drop of judgment was left for us! "Now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)!

Had it not been for what Jesus did for us on the cross, we would all perish in our sins. We would die doomed, and our world would be a dark world without hope. Is there a worse way to live than without hope? Thank God for His forgiveness! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50



Correlation: Prophecy Fulfilled

Throughout his gospel, Matthew has consistently shown how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.⁵ What actions surrounding Jesus' crucifixion can you identify in the following prophetic passages?

Prophecy	Fulfillment in Jesus' Crucifixion
<i>Psalm 22:1–2</i>	
<i>Psalm 22:6–8</i>	
<i>Psalm 22:12–14</i>	
<i>Psalm 22:16–18</i>	
<i>Isaiah 53:3–5</i>	
<i>Isaiah 53:7</i>	
<i>Isaiah 53:12</i>	

Jesus' passion was finally over, and He could enter His rest. He had fulfilled His prophetic mission to bear our judgment and free us from sin's dreaded curse. In the next study, we'll witness the remarkable events that occurred in the aftermath. For now, let's linger at the cross as we offer our own sacrifice of praise for the sacrifice of our Savior.



Those Final, Dreadful Hours

Matthew 27:27–50



Application: Gratitude

In the following space, write a prayer of thanks to your heavenly Father for His Son and the price He paid for your salvation. What does Jesus' death mean to you?

Jesus' death was bittersweet—*bitter* as the cup of God's wrath He drank during His suffering and *sweet* as the forgiveness He offers all who believe. Praise God for the gift of eternal life made free to us through Christ Jesus our Lord!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in the brutalities of the cross, I witness the shameful reality of my sin. Not just the sins of the Jewish authorities, Pilate, or the Roman soldiers but my own sins. I also see Your incomprehensible love. Your own Son died to give me eternal life. What gift can I give in return, poor as I am? Take my heart, my life, my all. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Cicero, as quoted by John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 24.
2. "A soldier tied [Jesus] to a low post and stripped off His outer garments. To inflict the most damage, the *lictor*—the one responsible for the scourging—would typically select a whip with small weights or bits of sheep bone braided into the straps. Because this kind of whip caused so much physical harm so quickly, the victim often passed out or went into shock within just a few lashes." Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 280.
3. "The scarlet robe (Gr. *chlamys*) they put on Jesus (v. 28) was probably the reddish purple cloak that Roman military and civil officials wore. Perhaps the thorny spikes that the soldiers wove into a circle to resemble the one on Tiberius Caesar's head on Roman coins consisted of palm branches. The imperfect tense of the Greek verb translated "beat" means they beat Jesus on the head repeatedly (cf. Isa. 52:14)." Thomas Constable, "Matthew 27:28–31," Constable's Notes, netbible.org.
4. In "Excursus: Crucifixion" on page 289 of his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll describes how the Romans crucified victims and includes an illustration of the type of cross on which Jesus died.
5. Previous examples of Jesus fulfilling prophecy include His virginal conception (Matthew 1:22–23), location of birth (2:5–6), flight to Egypt (2:15), escape of Herod's slaughter of the infants (2:17–18), announcement in the wilderness (3:3), ministry in Galilee (4:14–16), healing ministry (8:17), ministry to Gentiles (12:17–18), three-day entombment (12:39–40), speaking in parables (13:13–15), triumphal entry (21:3–5), and betrayal by Judas (27:8–10).

