

JESUS

THE LIFE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD | WEEK SEVEN

THE CRUCIFIXION



OF FIRST IMPORTANCE

The crucifixion of Jesus is the most important moment in our faith (along with the resurrection, which we'll talk about next week). The early church leader, Paul, wrote to some Christians and said, "The most important thing I've ever told you is this: Christ **died** for our sins." (1 Corinthians 15:3)

That's a big deal.

How would you rank the top moments in the ministry of Jesus? He did so many amazing things and taught so many profound truths that it's impossible to rank them in order by importance. This eight-week study will work through some of the highlights of Jesus' ministry, culminating in His death and resurrection.

The cross wasn't an accident or an afterthought. It wasn't a surprise to Jesus. He actually told His disciples ahead of time that it was going to happen. Jesus made it clear over and over again: *it was necessary for Him to die on the cross*. It was the central moment in God's plan.

The whole story of God working in the Bible leads up to the **cross**. From the very beginning of creation... to God calling Abraham to leave his home... to Moses leading God's people out of slavery... to kings like David... to prophets like Isaiah—basically everything we learn about in our Old Testament year of Bible Bootcamp—all of it was pointing forward to this moment.

And even though we talk about the cross in church, and even though we're surrounded by cross symbols and necklaces, we don't usually slow down and really think about it.

- 1) Why did the Romans crucify people in the first place?
- 2) What all happened when someone was crucified?
- 3) How can something 2,000 years ago change my life today?

Those are big questions. Let's take them one at a time and discover why the cross matters so much.





Why did the Romans crucify people? To mock them.

There are a plenty of ways to kill a person. Some are quick. Some are slow and very painful. Crucifixion is one of the most painful and terrible ways ever invented to end someone's life.

To crucify someone meant nailing them to a tall wooden beam and leaving them there until they died. It often meant days of agonizing thirst, muscle cramps, suffocation... (more on this later).

Crucifixions had been around for a long time, but the Romans became especially known for it. They had figured out how to make it as painful and as humiliating as possible.

But here's the key question: **Why?**

The Romans didn't crucify people just to kill them. They did it to send a **message**. A crucifixion was like putting up a giant warning sign for everyone to see. It said two things:

- 1) "This person lost. We won. We're in control."
- 2) "Don't you dare act like this person—or this will happen to you, too."

It was meant to **shame** someone in front of the whole world. People thought, "If God really loved this person, He wouldn't let something this horrible happen to them." So they assumed anyone who was crucified must have been far from God—maybe a fake or a fraud—but at very least, a failure.

Now think about Jesus. He made the Jewish religious leaders furious.

Remember when He told a man who couldn't walk, "Your sins are forgiven"? The religious leaders said only God could do that. *Who did Jesus think He was?!*

Remember how He spent time publicly with people others called "sinners"? The religious leaders didn't like that either. If He kept that up, *it might send the wrong message*.

Remember how He broke the religious leaders' manmade rules or how He called them whitewashed tombs—good on the outside but dead inside? Ouch. *They really didn't like that!*

Then came Palm Sunday. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem and the crowds started cheering for Him, the religious leaders felt threatened. They knew people loved Him. So, **they didn't just want Jesus dead**. They wanted everyone to think He was a fraud—someone who did *not* have God's approval.

And what better way to send that message than **crucifixion**? If Jesus died on a cross, hanging there in shame, people would think, "See? He wasn't who He said He was." At least... that's what the religious leaders thought.

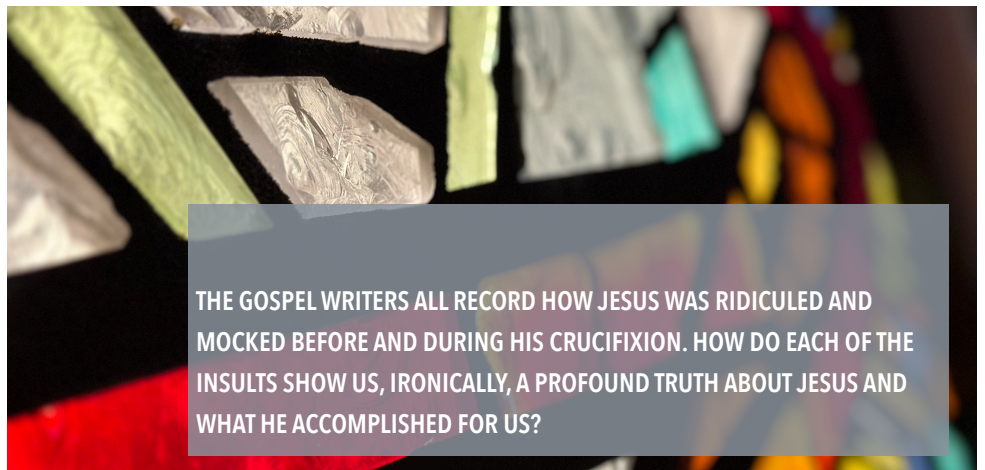
So, they made arrangements and captured Jesus in the dark. They held secret court hearings through the night and got Jesus sentenced to death in the morning. They thought, "Finally, people will see the truth about Jesus."

In a way, they were right. But the irony was that every time Jesus was mocked, it showed something profound. Let's look at the different ways people made fun of Jesus as He was being crucified:

"He's not a king!" (Read **Mark 15:16-20**)

"He can't build a temple!" (**Mark 15:29-30**)

"He's no savior!" (**Mark 15:31-32**)



THE GOSPEL WRITERS ALL RECORD HOW JESUS WAS RIDICULED AND MOCKED BEFORE AND DURING HIS CRUCIFIXION. HOW DO EACH OF THE INSULTS SHOW US, IRONICALLY, A PROFOUND TRUTH ABOUT JESUS AND WHAT HE ACCOMPLISHED FOR US?

What happened in a crucifixion? Agony.

Part of what made crucifixion so humiliating was how incredibly harsh and painful it was. One of the worst parts was **thirst**.

Our bodies can actually go a while without food. But without water? Not long. People who've been lost for days in a hot desert say it's hard to describe how painful their thirst was. Your mouth burns. Your tongue cracks. Your muscles cramp. Your head pounds. All you can think about is one tiny sip of water.

When Jesus was crucified, He probably suffered what doctors call hypovolemic shock (dangerously low on blood) and isotonic dehydration (dangerously low on both water and sodium). He had been brutally beaten. He had carried a heavy wooden beam through town. His whole body was screaming at Him.

But as awful as that was, thirst wasn't what finally killed Jesus.
It was breathing.

As people hung on a cross, their body would sag downward. In that slumped position, it became harder and harder to breathe. Have you tried holding your breath through a tunnel? It's not easy. We need to breathe!

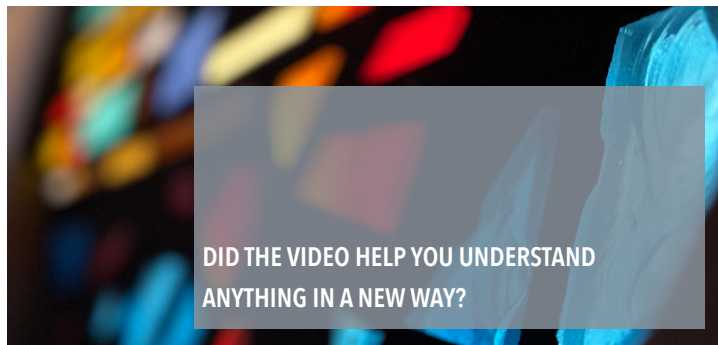
On a cross, to take a breath, a person had to push up with their feet (against the nails in them) and pull with their arms (against the nails in them) just to lift their body enough to inhale one breath. Then they would sink back down again.

Over and over.
Push up to breathe. Sink down in pain. Push up again.

This could go on for hours... even days. That's why, when soldiers needed to speed things up, they'd break the person's legs. Then the person couldn't push up anymore—and they would die quickly.

Let's read about the pain Jesus went through in His final moments, and what happened immediately after He died in **John 19:28-37**.

Jesus' death wasn't pretty. It certainly looked like a painful defeat. Let's watch this 4-minute video about the crucifixion of Jesus: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/gospel-luke-4/>



How can something that happened 2,000 years ago change my life today? Hope.

Do you remember what John said happened after Jesus died? The soldiers were about to break Jesus' legs, but when they saw He was dead, they pierced His side instead. Why does that matter?

Have you ever wondered why we call Jesus "**the Lamb**"?

In the Old Testament, God told His people, the Israelites, to offer lambs as sacrifices at certain times. It wasn't just sad—it was serious—and it taught an important lesson. Everyone sins. Everyone messes up. Sin has consequences. But instead of the people being punished right away, a lamb could be offered in their place.

The lamb was a picture—a way of showing that someone else was taking the punishment.

Remember the very first Passover in Egypt? God told each family to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on their doorposts. When the angel of death came through Egypt, he "passed over" the houses marked by the lamb's blood. They were **saved** by the blood of the lamb.

Something similar happened every year on the Jewish Day of Atonement (called Yom Kippur). The high priest placed his hands on a lamb. It showed that the sins of the people were being placed on the lamb. Then the lamb would be sacrificed. Again, they were **saved** by the blood of the lamb.

But here's something important. In all of these ceremonies and sacrifices, the lamb had to be healthy and perfect—no injuries, no defects, no broken bones. Why?

Because if a lamb was already damaged, it wouldn't make sense for it to "pay" for sin. That would be like if you broke your friend's new TV and you

said, "Don't worry, I'll replace it." But then you bought a an old, used, open-box TV that flickered all the time. That doesn't make things right. That doesn't fix things.

The lamb had to be whole, young and **perfect**. If it was deformed or already about to die, it wasn't really a sacrifice. It wouldn't really cost the person who owned the lamb anything.

Now think about Jesus. He had to be whole, young, perfect. So, it was no accident that the soldiers didn't break Jesus' legs—this was all part of God's plan. **No broken bones**. No defect. The perfect sacrifice.

So, Jesus is our perfect Lamb. He had no sin.

He didn't deserve punishment. And yet He gave His life for us.

What difference does His crucifixion make in your life?

It means **grace** when you fail.

It means you are **loved** and valued..

It means your **debt is paid**—completely.

It means **eternity** with Jesus.

The cross looked like defeat. But it was actually God's rescue plan—working perfectly, right on schedule. That's amazing grace.

Let's read **Luke 23:39-43**. The people overhearing this conversation probably thought it sounded ridiculous. Here were two dying men—talking like one of them was about to become king!

And this shows us something important to remember: Jesus wasn't trapped. He wasn't powerless. At any moment, He could have stopped it.

He could have overpowered the soldiers.

He could have stepped down from the cross.

He could have disappeared completely.

He had that kind of power.

But He didn't use it. Why?

Because He knew something. He knew that the only way to **rescue** us—the only way to forgive our sins and bring us back to God—was for Him to go all the way through with it. His death and resurrection were the rescue plan.

So when Jesus said to the criminal hanging next to Him, "Today you will be with Me in paradise," that wasn't an empty promise.

Think about it. A guilty criminal—forgiven. And not just forgiven, but promised eternity with Jesus. How is that possible?

Only because of the blood of the Lamb. Jesus chose the cross. He chose the suffering. He chose to stay. For you. For me.

The cross wasn't just something that happened to Jesus. It was something He did – because He loves us more than we can imagine. Jesus even said in John 15:13, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." What a **friend** we have in Jesus.

