

The Incomparable Crucifixion

Luke 23:44-49

Intro

About 2,000 years ago Jesus hung on a Roman cross. So What? Thousands of others were put to death in the same manner. Caesar Augustus boasted of capturing 30,000 fugitive slaves and crucifying all who were unclaimed. Also Crassus captured over 6,000 rebellious slaves led by Spartacus and all 6,000 were crucified.

Wasn't Jesus just another unfortunate victim of Roman cruelty? No, He wasn't. His death on the cross was absolutely unique and matchless. Jesus did not die by chance. He was not caught up in unfortunate circumstances.

His death was foreordained and prophesied. He came in the flesh to die this type of death as a sacrifice for the sins of all people. Yes, thousands upon thousands were crucified on rugged crosses but Jesus crucifixion possessed a special dimension. His death is absolutely unique for the following reasons:

1. There had to be a perfect living sacrifice.

In Leviticus 22:19-21 we read, *"You must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. ²⁰ Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. ²¹ When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable."*

And in Hebrews 9:14 it says, *"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

2 Corinthians 5:21, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Jesus actually became all that sin personifies. He became in God's sight, the greatest thief, the most shameless liar, the most wicked and immoral person that ever lived.

It must have been awful for Christ – who never knew sin – to be made sin for us, to be cut off, to taste death physically and spiritually to the fullest.

Why did Jesus do this? Why did He voluntarily go to the cross? Why was He obedient to the point of death?

He did it because there was no other possible way to bring humanity – you and I – back to God.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...(John 3:16)

2. His death on the cross was absolutely incomparable because His attitude and behaviour were different from others.

Those who were crucified usually struggled and screamed. Those crucified at times cursed the guards and the cruel, jeering crowds and the judicial system.

But Jesus was different. He was silent, meek and he didn't fight. He voluntarily gave Himself to be nailed on the cross.

Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

When Jesus was crucified it was an incredible injustice because He was innocent. Also He suffered intolerable pain and affliction. In spite all of this, yet He prayed for His enemies. He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

His attitude was an attitude of absolute unselfish love. In spite of great physical and spiritual pain Jesus thought of others.

One of the thieves beside Jesus cried out in faith, *"Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* Jesus answered him, *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:42-43).

At another moment on the cross Jesus asked His disciple John to take care of His mother (John 19:26-27). He showed concern in the midst of great bodily and emotional torture. Never had people seen death by crucifixion with such dignity; never had they seen such an unselfish attitude of love and care.

3. The moment Jesus died on the cross a strange phenomena took place in nature.

It was as if creation itself was crying out against this unjust and terrifying death.

From 3:00 p.m. darkness fell upon the land. Scriptures say that the sun was darkened and dread fell over Jerusalem. Also there was an earthquake and it shook Jerusalem.

Upon seeing this one of the Roman soldiers terrified said, *“Truly, this was a righteous man, surely this was the Son of God”* (Matthew 27:54). He realized that this was not a death like other crucifixions.

The celestial armies of God were agitated. These glorious beings gazed upon the horrible spectacle, ready to sweep down and bring justice.

In Matthew 26:53 Christ said to Peter, *“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”* (Matthew 26:53). A legion is 6,000 and multiple that by 12 which is 72,000 powerful angels.

4. The moment Jesus died on the cross a strange phenomena took place in the temple.

At the moment Jesus cried out, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30) the veil in the temple was torn in two pieces from the top to the bottom.

Through this act of God in the temple He was declaring, *“Any man, woman, boy or girl who come through my blessed Son and through Him alone, has direct access into my immediate presence.”*

A way has been opened for humanity to come close to God. We were alienated from God, but now we have direct access to Him through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

In Hebrews 10:19-22 we read, *“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”*

We have direct access to God through Jesus’ death upon the cross.

Christ’s crucifixion is absolutely incomparable, unique and matchless. He did it for us!