

# Bible Studies

## The Flagellation



### Read Matthew 27v26-31

The Gospels mention this with such brevity that it is easy to miss it's significance. Some versions say that Jesus was flogged, others that he was scourged or whipped.

Jesus was beaten (illegally) after his trial before the Sanhedrin, But this was the first physical punishment Christ received, it occurred half way through his trial before Pilate.

**Read John 19v1-5**



### Flagellation.

The prisoner was stripped naked and tied to a post, his back exposed. His arms were secured above his head, his knees were 20cm off the ground and his legs trailed behind him, this way the prisoner could not brace himself against the whip.

The whip, called a flagrum or flagellum had several tails, (4 or 5), they were made of leather and had pieces of bone, glass or metal, threaded though the ends. A wooden handle was attached. The length of the whip was only about a metre. Because of the attachments, the effect of the whip went beyond damaging the surface of the skin, each successive blow took the injuries deeper, ripping away the flesh, even to the point of exposing bone. The sides of the body were also exposed and the face could also suffer damage, it was quite possible to loose an eye during flagellation.

Flogging was usually inflicted by two soldiers, (lictors), one either side of the prisoner, taking alternative blows. The object of the scourging was to bring the victim to a point just short of death. As you can imagine the blood loss would be substantial. Many people did not survive flagellation. The severity of the flogging depended on the disposition of the lictors. As a prelude to crucifixion, a merciful scourging was a severe scourging! This is because the severity of the scourging had an inverse relationship to the amount of time you could expect to survive on the cross.

Sometimes flagellation was practised while the condemned man was carrying his cross to the place of execution.

The Gospels do not say how seriously Jesus was scourged. Some people have taught that the scourging was restricted to 39 lashes, in accordance with Jewish Law and practice, Deuteronomy 25v3, (40 was reduced to 39 by the Rabbis in case the administrator accidentally lost count.) This was a *Jewish* law which the Romans had no reason to keep. It is safe to assume that the scourging was very severe. Jesus lifestyle would suggest that He was very fit man, but He struggled to carry His cross and expired quickly. This tells us that He must have been seriously injured by the flogging.

The Greek used in 1 Peter 2v24 also suggest the severity of the beating.

We do not know whether this severe beating was an attempt by the soldiers to be lenient.

Scourging could be associated with crucifixion, but as with so many of the elements in Jesus passion, it was relatively uncommon, the majority of people were not scourged before crucifixion. Most Roman historians do not associate flagellation with crucifixion, however we do know that such a link did exist. Some people see this flagellation as an attempt by Pilate to give Jesus a lesser punishment than crucifixion, which the priests rejected. It is possible to see this in the account given by John. It is hard to believe that many people would recover from a serious scourging to live a long and happy life. Jesus scourging was probably a standard precursor in a severe crucifixion regime.

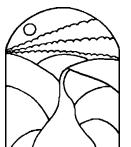
Peter found great significance in this scourging.

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed 1 Peter 2:24*

**What did Jesus stripes attain for us?** cf Matthew 8:17

**Read Isaiah 53v4-6** (NIV wounds = stripes)

**Is Isaiah talking about spiritual or physical healing?**



I think Isaiah is talking primarily about healing from sin. Peter seems to be talking about physical healing, I think both are true.



### **Beating and Humiliation**

Next it is recorded that Jesus was mocked. This is something that many find strange. Pilate showed himself favourably inclined to Jesus. The soldiers certainly had no reason to hate Jesus, why then did they mock Him? Some have suggested that these were local troops belonging to Herod, this is unlikely. It must be understood that ritual humiliation was an integral part of the crucifixion process. This mocking often began during the scourging and continued through the crucifixion.

**What effect do you think this kind of humiliation would have on the prisoner?**

*All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. Psalm 22:7*

*For zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me. Psalm 69:9*



### **How did the soldiers mock Jesus?**

There are several plants native to Israel with long thorns. The crown was then beaten on to his head. Mark 15v19. The skull bleeds profusely. This crown of thorns is not unique to Jesus death, it was a known form of torture. (Clement of Alexandria)

Jesus was shown to the crowd mockingly dressed as a king. He is intended to be seen as an object of contempt, but also of pity.

*Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness— Isaiah 52:14*

**What effect would the removal of the robe from His back would have had?**

The wounds on His back would have been reopened many times during the crucifixion process, carrying his cross and moving against the upright while on the cross. Jesus must have lost enormous amounts of blood.

All of this was in accordance with prophecy.



### **Read Isaiah 50v5-7**

**What things were prophesied?**

**According to Isaiah what was Jesus attitude during his sufferings?**

Whether intended or not, there is some powerful symbolism here.



**What did thorns represent?** Genesis 3v18, Hebrews 6v8

Thorns were the effect of the fall. Jesus is the one who came to restore Adam's failure. The second Adam. He bore the effects of the fall as a crown.



**What colour was the robe?**

**What did this represent?** Isaiah 1v18

Again the idea is that Jesus wore a robe of sin, he took our sins upon himself, so that we might wear a robe of righteousness.

**Do you find anything ironic in Jesus' portrayal as a king?**

This parody is still found in peoples response to Jesus today.



**Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to bear shame as well as death?**

You could say that what Jesus suffered, is what he removed from us.

He took our shame by bearing our shame etc.

**What else did Jesus take from us by bearing for us?**



**What physical condition would Jesus have been in prior to crucifixion?**

It has been said that Jesus sufferings were Physical, emotional and spiritual

**What elements were emotional and spiritual?**

# Bible Studies

## The Flagellation



### Read Matthew 27v26-31

The Gospels mention this with such brevity that it is easy to miss its significance. Some versions say that Jesus was flogged, others that he was scourged or whipped.

Jesus was beaten (illegally) after his trial before the Sanhedrin, But this was the first physical punishment Christ received, it occurred half way through his trial before Pilate.

### Read John 19v1-5



### Flagellation.

The prisoner was stripped naked and tied to a post, his back exposed. His arms were secured above his head, his knees were 20cm off the ground and his legs trailed behind him, this way the prisoner could not brace himself against the whip.

The whip, called a flagrum or flagellum had several tails, (4 or 5), they were made of leather and had pieces of bone, glass or metal, threaded through the ends. A wooden handle was attached. The length of the whip was only about a metre. Because of the attachments, the effect of the whip went beyond damaging the surface of the skin, each successive blow took the injuries deeper, ripping away the flesh, even to the point of exposing bone. The sides of the body were also exposed and the face could also suffer damage, it was quite possible to lose an eye during flagellation.

Flogging was usually inflicted by two soldiers, (lictors), one either side of the prisoner, taking alternative blows. The object of the scourging was to bring the victim to a point just short of death. As you can imagine the blood loss would be substantial. Many people did not survive flagellation. The severity of the flogging depended on the disposition of the lictors. As a prelude to crucifixion, a merciful scourging was a severe scourging! This is because the severity of the scourging had an inverse relationship to the amount of time you could expect to survive on the cross.

Sometimes flagellation was practised while the condemned man was carrying his cross to the place of execution.

The Gospels do not say how seriously Jesus was scourged. Some people have taught that the scourging was restricted to 39 lashes, in accordance with Jewish Law and practice, Deuteronomy 25v3, (40 was reduced to 39 by the Rabbis in case the administrator accidentally lost count.) This was a *Jewish* law which the Romans had no reason to keep. It is safe to assume that the scourging was very severe. Jesus' lifestyle would suggest that He was very fit man, but He struggled to carry His cross and expired quickly. This tells us that He must have been seriously injured by the flogging.

The Greek used in 1 Peter 2v24 also suggest the severity of the beating.

We do not know whether this severe beating was an attempt by the soldiers to be lenient.

Scourging could be associated with crucifixion, but as with so many of the elements in Jesus' passion, it was relatively uncommon, the majority of people were not scourged before crucifixion. Most Roman historians do not associate flagellation with crucifixion, however we do know that such a link did exist. Some people see this flagellation as an attempt by Pilate to give Jesus a lesser punishment than crucifixion, which the priests rejected. It is possible to see this in the account given by John. It is hard to believe that many people would recover from a serious scourging to live a long and happy life. Jesus' scourging was probably a standard precursor in a severe crucifixion regime.

Peter found great significance in this scourging.

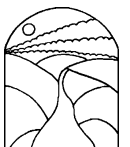
*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed 1 Peter 2:24*

**What did Jesus' stripes attain for us?** cf Matthew 8:17

**Read Isaiah 53v4-6** (NIV wounds = stripes)

**Is Isaiah talking about spiritual or physical healing?**

S  
T  
R  
E  
A  
M  
S  
  
I  
N  
  
T  
H  
E  
  
D  
E  
S  
E  
R  
T



Waiuku AG  
Ray Moxham  
www.wag.org.nz  
WaiukuAG  
@wag.org.nz

I think Isaiah is talking primarily about healing from sin. Peter seems to be talking about physical healing, I think both are true.



### **Beating and Humiliation**

Next it is recorded that Jesus was mocked. This is something that many find strange. Pilate showed himself favourably inclined to Jesus. The soldiers certainly had no reason to hate Jesus, why then did they mock Him? Some have suggested that these were local troops belonging to Herod, this is unlikely. It must be understood that ritual humiliation was an integral part of the crucifixion process. This mocking often began during the scourging and continued through the crucifixion.

**What effect do you think this kind of humiliation would have on the prisoner?**

*All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. Psalm 22:7*

*For zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me. Psalm 69:9*



### **How did the soldiers mock Jesus?**

There are several plants native to Israel with long thorns. The crown was then beaten on to his head. Mark 15v19. The skull bleeds profusely. This crown of thorns is not unique to Jesus death, it was a known form of torture. (Clement of Alexandria)

Jesus was shown to the crowd mockingly dressed as a king. He is intended to be seen as an object of contempt, but also of pity.

*Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness— Isaiah 52:14*

**What effect would the removal of the robe from His back would have had?**

The wounds on His back would have been reopened many times during the crucifixion process, carrying his cross and moving against the upright while on the cross. Jesus must have lost enormous amounts of blood.

All of this was in accordance with prophecy.



### **Read Isaiah 50v5-7**

**What things were prophesied?**

**According to Isaiah what was Jesus attitude during his sufferings?**

Whether intended or not, there is some powerful symbolism here.



**What did thorns represent?** Genesis 3v18, Hebrews 6v8

Thorns were the effect of the fall. Jesus is the one who came to restore Adam's failure. The second Adam. He bore the effects of the fall as a crown.



**What colour was the robe?**

**What did this represent?** Isaiah 1v18

Again the idea is that Jesus wore a robe of sin, he took our sins upon himself, so that we might wear a robe of righteousness.

**Do you find anything ironic in Jesus' portrayal as a king?**

This parody is still found in peoples response to Jesus today.



**Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to bear shame as well as death?**

You could say that what Jesus suffered, is what he removed from us. He took our shame by bearing our shame etc.

**What else did Jesus take from us by bearing for us?**

*Sickness, guilt, death, separation from God, sin, insults, helplessness, hopelessness, rejection. etc.*

**What physical condition would Jesus have been in prior to crucifixion?**

It has been said that Jesus sufferings were Physical, emotional and spiritual

**What elements were emotional and spiritual?**

# Bible Studies

## The Crucifixion



### Read Matthew 27v32-54

It is thought that crucifixion was first used by the Persians around 500BC. It was outlawed by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century. During the 800 years that crucifixion was used many thousands, probably hundreds of thousand of people were executed this way.

Mass crucifixions were not uncommon, in 71BC after the Spartacus revolt, 6000 men were crucified at one time. There are many references to crucifixion in ancient writings. Crucifixion was a dreaded form of execution. It was both cruel and humiliating.

It was mostly reserved for men and almost exclusively reserved for the lower classes.

As a means of execution, crucifixion was not very efficient, it's aim was to serve as a deterrent. Quintilian (35-95AD) wrote "*whenever we crucify the guilty, the most, crowded roads are chosen, where most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect.*"



### Why was crucifixion not an efficient form of execution?

### What did the Romans hope to achieve in crucifixion?

### What does Matthew 27v39 imply about the place of Crucifixion?

The methods of crucifixion used were diverse. There were four basic types of cross, a simple pole (I), an **X**, a **T** (tau cross) shape and the cross shape (**t** Latin cross) that we are all familiar with. There are at least 10 different Latin words to describe different designs. Different crosses were favoured in different areas, in Britain the **X** was commonly used. The **I** shape was probably the original form, because of its simplicity, seems to have been used for mass execution. The convict's hands would have been tied to the top of the pole, his feet unsupported, this would lead to death by asphyxiation within one hour. The **T** shape seems to have been the most common. The *Latin* or *lower tau* cross (**t**) was favoured in Israel at this time. Within each style of cross there was a wide variation of techniques used. A skilled Roman soldier could control the length of time it took to die and the severity of the suffering. For example a half seat fixed to the cross at the height to the buttocks could prolong the suffering dramatically. The technique varied according to the outcome desired by the Roman authorities.

### Do we know for sure what kind of Cross Jesus died on?

We do not know for sure, but there is no reason to doubt that the standard shape we are familiar with was not the kind used. Even if it was the more common **T** shape, the addition of the inscription, often elevated above the cross beam, still gives us the shape we are used to.

*Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus John 19v16*

Once handed over, the same group of four soldiers, would be responsible for the prisoner and would stay with him until he was dead. They were very professional in their knowledge and experience of crucifixions.

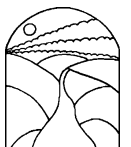
Usually ropes were used to secure the person to the cross, sometimes a combination of ropes and nails. The use of nails seems to be associated with individual crucifixions and where there was a desire for specific cruelty. Josephus writing about the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD says; "*the soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures.*"

The nails themselves were highly prized, and worn by Jews and Gentiles, as healing amulets. Despite the strong literary evidence for crucifixion, only one example of the remains of a crucified man have been found. There are two reasons for this; Crucified men were often not permitted to be buried, their bodies were thrown onto the rubbish dumps or left on the crosses. Secondly, if ropes were used, crucifixion left no evidence on the skeleton. Crucifixion was usually 'bloodless', Christ death, for various reasons was an exception. His Death must have been a very bloody sight.

### What wounds would the blood have come from?



The discovery was made in 1968 north of Jerusalem. The mans name was, according to an inscription, was Jehohanan. He was executed in the first century, close to the time of Christ. Although the skeleton was in a bad state of decay, it appears that his arms were draped over the top of the cross beam and secured with ropes. An 11.5x1 cm iron nail, square in shape with a round head was still fixed in one of his ankles. Both feet were nailed individually, (11.5cm is not long enough to go through both feet.) The nail went through the side of the ankle suggesting that the feet were nailed to the sides of the uprights. Splinters of olive wood indicate a wooden plaque between the foot and the nail head, to prevent the foot from pulling off the nail.





*"Each criminal condemned to death bears his cross on his back"* Plutarch (46-120AD)  
This was not the whole cross, which would have been far too heavy to carry for any distance. It was the cross beam (*patibulum*) which was carried, this was 1.8m long and weighed between 35 and 50 KG. The uprights (*strides*) were usually permanent fixtures.

### **Why did Jesus struggle to carry the patibulum?**



The cause of death for those crucified, is usually assumed to be from asphyxiation, however this was not always the case. The key factor was the angle of the arms.

If the hands were fixed to the cross close together, or in the case of the **I**, directly over the head, this fixed the diaphragm in the inhale position and death would be by asphyxiation. The person had to pull himself up to exhale. Once they lost the strength in their arms to do this, they would die. Fixing the feet to the cross, made it easier to push the body up to exhale. This is why the Gospels record that the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals crucified with Christ. If you were lucky, the soldier severed the arteries and you bleed to death quickly.

### **Can you imagine what it would be like to support your body with broken legs?**

If however, the arms were spread wide, as is usually portrayed in Christian art. Death was not by asphyxiation, but as a result of Hypovolaemic shock. This is a condition where low blood pressure reduces the flow of blood causing cell and organ damage. The blood and water that flowed from Jesus side are consistent with the effects of hypovolaemic shock. In reality death was probably a combination of these and other causes, like dehydration and exposure.

Either cause of death would come slowly, it could take a few hours or last several days. This depended on the method used and the strength of the condemned man.

Three of Josephus' friends were accidentally crucified by the Romans after the fall of Jerusalem, they were taken down from the crosses, one out of the three survived. (Life of Josephus 75.420-421)

### **Is it possible that Jesus was not dead when taken down from the cross?**

Traditionally Christ is portrayed with nails through the palms of his hands.

#### **Why is this not possible?**

Clearly the nail would have ripped through the skin. Nails are not mentioned in any of the gospel accounts of Jesus' death. We only know nails were used from a comment of John, Peter (Acts 2v23) and later of Paul (Colossians 2v14).

*So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." John 20:25*

The Greek used here can mean hand, wrist or forearm. The Bible does not say the nail went through the palm. In reality it would have gone through the wrist between the carpals and the radius, this missed the Radial and Ulnar Arteries preventing the condemned man from bleeding to death. It did sever the Median Nerve inflicting excruciating pain and paralysing the hand into a claw. Each time a crucified man pulled himself up to breathe the pain would be intense. The victim would also have suffered severe muscle cramps. The feet could be nailed in a variety of ways sometimes together sometimes separately, on the front or the sides of the cross.

### **What would happen to the laceration on Jesus' back as He pushed up to breathe?**

The details of Jesus' crucifixion are very much in keeping with what we know about crucifixion. Such things as dividing the clothes among the soldiers, offering the condemned man gail (wine and myrrh) as a mild anaesthetic, and the need to ask Pilate (the Judge) for Jesus' body, are all consistent with Roman Law. However from the above you will realise Jesus' crucifixion was by no means typical, it represents the extreme and severe form of the practice.

### **Why do you think Jesus refused the gail?**

### **Why do you think Jesus said 'I thirst' John 19v28**

The Gospels make reference to a sign fixed above Jesus' head. It said *Jesus of Nazareth king of the Jews*. This was common practice, it was called a *titulus* and recorded the condemned man's crime. (Remember crucifixion was intended for its shock value and as a deterrent).



#### **Why do you think the chief priests objected?**

#### **Why do you think Pilate wrote this?**

#### **Was it true?**

It is clear from the account that the priests manipulated Pilate into acting against his will. This was Pilate's revenge, a way of humiliating the priests. At the same time it stands out as one of the greatest declarations of truth of all time.

Jesus' time on the cross was quite brief, six hours, Mark 15v25&34.

### **Why do you think the other condemned men lived longer?**

To ensure Jesus was dead, the centurion thrust a spear up under His rib cage, piercing the cavity around the heart. This released, what John calls, blood and water. The water, which would have come first, was Pericardial fluid or separated blood. Which implies not only that Jesus was certainly dead, but that He died of heart failure associated with Hypovolaemia.

### **Is it significant that Jesus died of heart failure?**