

STUDY 7 - MATTHEW 27:27-44

In this section we have the account of Jesus' death on the cross.

Vs 27-31

Matthew records the mockery Jesus faced at the hands of the Roman soldiers before he was crucified. It is a disturbing scene, but it is not surprising - Jesus has already prophesied that he would be mocked as well as flogged and crucified (see Matt 20:19).

The mockery is particularly fierce. These are not a couple of soldiers, "the whole battalion" is gathered before him. This is probably around 600 men. The mockery involves putting a scarlet robe on him (mimicking imperial purple), a crown of thorns to mimic the crowns worn by imperial princes (but with a brutal twist - the thorns would have been painful), and they cried out in sarcasm for a prophecy.

There is a terrifying irony in all of this. The soldiers are doing this because they do not believe who he is - but one day he will be surrounded by innumerable people who will truly worship him. He will wear the long robe of a priest king. He will wear a crown of gold. He will be given a mighty sceptre as a sign of his authority. He will speak words of truth, words that can open or shut the doors of heaven.

There is also a warning Matthew is giving to his readers here. If this is the treatment Jesus received from the world, then his disciples can expect a similar treatment.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Read Matthew 20:19. Is what happens to Jesus in these verses (vs 27-31) a surprise?

What do the soldiers do to Jesus? Why are they doing these things?

In what way is this mockery actually speaking the truth about who Jesus is?

If this is how people treated Jesus, what can we as his disciples expect?

Vs 32-44

These verses focus on Jesus at the place of his crucifixion. Being fully human, Jesus was weakened by the flogging, so another man (Simon of Cyrene) had to carry his cross. He is crucified at Golgotha - probably so called because of its shape. However Matthew probably gives the name of the place for a more significant reason - to anchor this in history. It really happened, so place names are important.

The fact that this was a humiliating death for Jesus is emphasised in Matthew's account. In verse 33 we are told he was offered wine mixed with Gall (Myrrh), probably not a painkiller but a malicious act of soldiers giving prisoners a bitter drink for their own amusement. Jesus is crucified naked (verse 35) and his clothes are divided up (a degrading act). Even in his last moments Jesus has no privacy (verse 36 - the soldiers around him, and the fact he does with common criminals verse 38), and he died under a sign which once more attempted to mock his claim to be king. This sign was presumably a warning to others as well - although like the other mockery it declared far more truth than the Romans realised.

Jesus also had to endure verbal humiliation. In verse 40 there is mockery from those passing by. However, once more, there is irony here. Jesus is the Son of God, and he is showing he is a faithful Son by not coming down from the cross. He will destroy the temple. He will rise in three days. The mockery from the Jewish leaders is similar - he is saving others by not saving himself. By staying on the cross he is ruling and triumphing and securing belief in him. He is remaining on the cross because of his trust in God.

Matthew does not record the salvation of one of the robbers, he merely recounts the fact that at one stage both the robbers also reviled him.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Why do you think Matthew tells us specifically where Jesus' crucifixion happened?

What physical humiliation does Jesus have to endure on the cross?

What verbal humiliation does Jesus have to endure on the cross?

How do the words spoken in sarcasm to Jesus in verses 40-43 point to what is actually going on here? - (not that those who spoke them knew what they were saying)

Read 1 Cor 1:18-25. How does this account of the crucifixion in Matthew vividly show the truth of these words?