

The Story of how Jesus died on the Cross



Jesus had withstood being marched about in chains, hours of angry questioning, a beating from the Jewish officials, and being brutally whipped by Pilate's guards. The crown of thorns was still pressed into His head, sending blood trickling down His pain-filled face. Two Roman soldiers lifted a huge, solid wooden cross over Jesus' shoulder - so heavy that He nearly collapsed from the weight of it. Then Jesus staggered onwards, through the streets of Jerusalem and towards the hill outside the city where He and two other criminals were to be executed.

Thousands of people lined the way, watching the procession. Jesus willed Himself forwards, heavy step after heavy step. But eventually He crashed into the dust, utterly exhausted. The angry guards dragged a strong man from the crowd called Simon of Cyrene and ordered him to carry the cross instead.

People in the crowd yelled insults and spat on Jesus as He stumbled by. But Jesus caught sight of the sorrowful faces of many friends He had made too. Many of the women were weeping. "Don't cry for me," Jesus said, "but for yourselves, your children and for the destruction that is to come."

Eventually they reached the place for the execution. It was called Golgotha, meaning 'place of the skull'. A soldier made Jesus lie down on the cross, and long nails were hammered into His hands and feet, "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing," Jesus moaned. A notice was fixed above his head which said 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews' in three languages, "It shouldn't say that", some Jewish officials objected. "It should say 'This man said he was King of the Jews'." But the Roman governor, Pilate, boomed, "I ordered it to be written just like that and that is the way it will stay!"

The Jewish officials mocked as Jesus' cross was hoisted up high. "You said you're the Son of God - so save yourself!" As the two criminals were raised on

crosses either side of Jesus, one sneered, "Yes, save yourself and save us too!"

"How dare you!" The second thief groaned. "We deserve this, but Jesus is innocent. Lord, remember me when you reach your kingdom." "I promise you," whispered Jesus, "today you will be with me on paradise."

Even though it was midday, darkness suddenly fell over the land. Close by at the foot of the cross, was Jesus' heartbroken mother, and His close friends including John, Mary Magdalene and Salome.

"Mother, take care of John as if he were your own son," Jesus murmured. "John, look after my mother as if she were your own." Jesus hung in agony on the cross for three long hours. Then He lifted His head and cried aloud, 'My God! Why have you abandoned me?' Somebody rushed to lift a stick with a sponge on the end that had been dipped in wine so He could have a drink. Jesus cried out again, "Father, I give up my spirit into your hands. It is finished." And His head dropped.

At that very moment, the earth rumbled and shook, and rocks split open. People said that the great curtain in the temple ripped from top to bottom. Others said they saw graves open and spirits rise from them.

A Roman officer at the foot of the cross looked up and gasped, "This man truly was the Son of God."

Credit: Matthew chapter 27; Mark chapter 15; Luke chapter 23; John chapter 19

Miles Kelly, Five-minute Bible Stories; short stories to share (Essex, 2019) 2nd ed.