

"Were You There?"

A spiritual song asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way. And in our rush to judgment over who was responsible for the death of Christ, we often overlook our own role, that Christ died for each of us. Were you there?

Welcome to *In Search of the Lord's Way*, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's way to be saved and to live the Christian life. Thanks for taking time to be with us today. We love hearing that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

I've always loved that old spiritual song, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" You know, nothing in life reaches into our souls as does the story of Jesus Christ dying upon the cross. So many emotions just rise up inside of us.

When I consider the cruelty of the scourging and the crucifixion, I become angry and ask "how could they treat an innocent, godly person like that?" When I consider Judas, I wonder how he could betray the Lord Jesus. When I think of Pilate, I wonder why he did what was easy and wash his hands of my Lord. Where was his courage? Then I look at myself. And when I think of my Lord, I wonder how He could love me enough to bear such agony for my sins. I'm utterly grateful that He loved me so much and was willing to redeem me with His blood. And yet, I'm ashamed for all my sins. I'm so sorry for all the evil things I've said or done, all the pain that I've caused, and all the times that I've failed to do the right thing. Going to the cross humbles me and yet blesses me at the same time.

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The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Acts 2:22 to 24, and we'll consider the death of Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 22 to 24. "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." That's the story of the death of Jesus. Let's pray together. Of Father we're grateful for Your love and for Your grace and mercy. And that it was shown through Jesus Christ. But Father, we're so sorry that He had to suffer for our sins, sins that we have committed. Father help us to love You and to Love one another. And may Your will be done on earth as it is heaven. In Jesus name Amen!

The four gospel accounts Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are inspired by the Holy Spirit and describe the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. Now I have merged these four accounts from their words to give a fuller picture of what happened.

Now as they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they

came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when He tasted it, He would not drink it.

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on His right and one on His left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; now also His tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "That they divided my garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Then they sat down and kept watch over Him there.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Now many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So that the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross."

So also the chief priests, and the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with Him also reviled Him in the same way. And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, come down from the cross!"

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you're under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And He said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to Him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (that is to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up His spirit.

Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

And behold, the curtain, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Since it was the day of Preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. Now he who saw it has borne witness—and his testimony is true, and he knows that he's telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

The death of Jesus on the cross was unlike any execution ever known. He was innocent but He bore the sins of the guilty. While being nailed down, He prayed for His Father to forgive his executioners, because they didn't know what they were doing. The Lord Jesus, because He was Divine, could see what we cannot see and He knew what we cannot know. He knew His Father's plan to offer His body as a sacrifice for their sins, but they didn't understand, they didn't know. 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 8 says, that "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now when a person was executed in those days, the Romans posted the charge against the man on the cross to warn others not to commit the same crime. Now His accusers charged Him falsely with blasphemy in saying that He was the Messiah, the King of the Jews, yet they resented the sign that proclaimed Him King of the Jews. Pilate sought to offend the Jews with the statement, but he spoke more of the truth than he knew.

Peter speaks of the remarkable courage and inner strength of the Lord Jesus in His suffering. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 verses 21 to 25, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When He was reviled, He didn't revile in return; when he suffered, he didn't threaten, but He continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly or righteously. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. For by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

There is no wonder the centurion who saw the crucifixion proclaimed "Truly this man was innocent." Guilty men don't act the way that Jesus acted. They don't refuse a drink that would help them with the pain. They don't ask God to forgive their executioners. They don't keep quiet when being mocked. They don't have the sun being darkened and the earth shaking. Jesus was indeed righteous and innocent.

Pilate said more than once, that is four times, that he found no guilt in Jesus. Pilate offered Barabbas, hoping to free Jesus; but the high priests and the scribes incited the people to insist on the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves." And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*. Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, "Behold, the Man!" So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" And Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." My friend, Jesus was no ordinary person. The Jews delivered Jesus up to Pilate, not because He was guilty but because they were envious of Jesus.

At the sixth hour the sun did become dark. The sun was not darkened for a few minutes, as it is in an eclipse. This was different; the sun was darkened for three full hours. And the Bible says that the earth shook so violently that it split the rocks. My friend, only God could do this and God did it.

The veil in the temple was torn from top to the bottom. Now the Temple Veils were 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and four inches thick. They were so heavy that we're told that 300 priests were needed just to move each one of them. The Veil being torn or rent from top to bottom suggests that God's Own Hand had done it, He torn it in two. That veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. And once the veil was torn, that place ceased to be separated or holy.

Now in His death the Lord Jesus opened a new and living way to enter the holy of holies. Hebrews 9 and verse 12 says, that "He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."

Oh, Jesus died a cruel, agonizing death for you and me because of His great love. God was in Christ at the cross offering us redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation. God showed his amazing, and wonderful love in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon the cross in order to reach into our hearts, to reach into our souls, and to bring us back into a right relationship with Him. He wanted His children to love Him. He wanted His children to be right. And He was willing to send His Son Jesus to die for us so that we could be right with Him, so that we could love Him, so that we could have a home with Him for ever and ever. I tell you nobody, nobody will ever love you like Jesus loves you. Nobody will ever die, and could die for you, the way Jesus died for you. Were you there when they crucified my Lord is a great question because if you've not seen what He did for you, I hope that one day you'll take a look. That you'll see the love and the glory and the grandeur of God's caring for us. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us in every way to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. And to give ourselves to you with as much devotion as Jesus gave Himself for us. And Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

My friend, you were there when they crucified the Lord. Oh, oh not physically, but in a spiritual sense yes. Remember that Jesus died for you to save you from sin and open a way to have a relationship with you. He died so you could be reconciled to God in a new covenant, so that you could have a loving relationship with God the Father that would last forever. And in that sense, oh yes, you were in His heart and you were there.

God took the initiative to show His love in the hope that we would respond to it with a total commitment of our own love. We should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls,

all our minds, and all our strength (Mark 12 and verse 30). Now committed love is willing to go to any length to comply with what the Lord desires.

We're saved by God's goodness and grace, and God's offer of salvation through the cross extends to every person. We can't earn our salvation, but we can meet God's conditions for salvation. God wishes everyone would respond to His love, but He knows that not everyone will. We hope and pray that you will respond to Him.

That you'll respond to the remarkable love of God with a love of your own. And that love should lead you to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Jesus before others, and be baptized. Now baptism into Christ is the immersion of a penitent believer in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). These you must do if you wish to show your love for God and become a Christian.

Now if the cross means anything to you and if you realize that your sins were involved in sending Jesus to the cross, you won't wait even one day until you come to the Lord in love and obedience. Won't you do that today?

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