

# The Crucifixion

Matthew 27:27-44; Mark 15:16-32; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:16-27

PPT Title

## The Crucifixion

**Main Point:** Even though Jesus was innocent, He willingly suffered for those who were guilty.

**Key Verse:** *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.* - 2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT

**Props:** Crown of thorns; **Optional:** Purple cloth; Sign that says: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews"; A large paper cross taped up on the wall, sticky notes and pens for several volunteers, a sign that says "Jesus", tape

**Teacher, begin with prayer:** Lord, the truth that we will study today is very difficult for us to think about. Help us to understand that because You were willing to go to the cross in our place, we can be set free from punishment and the power of sin! Amen.

## BACKGROUND/REVIEW



**Say:** Jesus was betrayed by Judas. He was arrested and put on trial before the Jewish leaders. When Jesus declared that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the Sanhedrin said He was a liar, or blasphemer. They wanted Him put to death. They took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate, who was ruling over the Jews at that time. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, so he did not want to kill Jesus. Pilate offered to release any prisoner that the people chose. He hoped they would choose Jesus. **Ask:** Can anyone remember whom the crowd cheered for? *Barabbas*. **Say:** They shouted for Pilate to let Barabbas go, and for Jesus to be crucified. The words of the people must have stung the ears of Jesus. How must it have felt to be hated and despised by the ones He had come to save?

Barabbas was a famous criminal. He was guilty of murder. Soon, we will see that Jesus took the place of the murderer, Barabbas. Jesus took the punishment that Barabbas deserved.

In Biblical times, the meaning of a name was very important. The name Barabbas means: "the son of a father." The son of a father? What is special about that? That could be anyone, right? Actually, that could be *everyone*. When Jesus died on the cross, He took the place of every murderer, liar, and thief. He took the place of every sinner - **every man, woman, and child** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**Application for older students:** The crowd yelled out, "Barabbas! Set Barabbas free! Kill Jesus instead." I can easily imagine my own name in place of Barabbas. Because I am a sinner, I deserved to be punished. My sin earned death for me (Romans 6:23). But Jesus took my place. It's as if, all those years ago, the crowd was shouting, " \_\_\_\_\_! Set \_\_\_\_ free! Take Jesus instead!" And Jesus willingly went in my place. Can you imagine your name in place of Barabbas?

## MOCKED BY SOLDIERS (Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20)

**Say:** The next part of the story is very sad. After Pilate gave in to the people's demands,

to release Barabbas, the soldiers took Jesus away. They whipped Him across His back, over and over. The blood of our Savior began to be poured out, just as He had told the disciples at the last supper (Luke 22:20). The soldiers also beat Him with a wooden staff, and they made fun of Him.

**Note to Teacher:** Pilate handed Jesus over to be scourged, as was the custom, before He was crucified. Scourging was a particularly cruel and brutal tradition. The Roman scourge, or "flagrum" was a short whip made of several strips of leather attached to a handle. The strips were knotted with pieces of metal or bone. The criminal was whipped across his back, quickly removing flesh and exposing muscle. Due to excessive bleeding, the scourging left the criminal near death. With no legal limit to the amount of blows that could be administered, the scourging stopped just short of killing the criminal, so he could be subjected to the public humiliation of the cross.



*The soldiers put a purple robe on Jesus. Then they twisted thorns together to make a crown. They placed it on His head. They began to call out to Him, "We honor You, King of the Jews!" Again and again they hit Him on the head with a stick. They spit on Him. They fell on their knees and pretended to honor Him.*

*After they had made fun of Him, they took off the purple robe. They put His own clothes back on him. Then they led Him out to nail Him to a cross. - Mark 15:17-20*



The soldiers made a crown out of thorny vines and placed it on Jesus' head. **Teacher:** Show your crown of thorns. They did this to make fun of Jesus because He said He was the King of the Jews (Mark 15:2). The soldiers did not realize that the thorns were a **symbol** of something very important.

In the beginning, thorns were the consequence, or punishment, of Adam's sin. Once Adam and Eve sinned, they could no longer live in a perfect garden. God told Adam, "I will produce thorns and thistles for you." (Genesis 3:18) Thorns are a symbol for sin (Ezekiel 28:24). When the guards put the thorny crown on Jesus, it showed a picture that Jesus had come to wear our sin (Isaiah 53:6).

**Additional teaching for older students:** The soldiers also put a purple robe on Jesus. **Teacher:** Hold up your purple cloth. Back in the time of Moses, when God's people were wandering in the desert, God told them to build a Tabernacle, or large tent. Inside, there was a room called the Holy Place, and inside that there was the Holy of Holies (or Most Holy Place). At certain times, God's glory would enter into the Holy of Holies. A thick curtain separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33). That curtain was woven with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. When God's presence entered the Holy of Holies, this curtain stood between a perfect God and sinful men. Hebrews tells us that Jesus' body became like the curtain for us (Hebrews 10:20). Only Jesus could stand between us and God, because God is holy.

**THE CROSS** (Matthew 27:32-44; Mark 15:21-32; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:16-27)



**Say:** Being hung on a cross was called crucifixion. It was the way the Romans punished criminals back in Jesus' time. Anyone who was guilty of a crime, such as stealing, murder, or rebelling against the government, was crucified. It was a very humiliating, shameful way to die because the person was hung for everyone in the town to see. The person who was going to be crucified was usually forced to carry his own cross to the place of execution. Then the large wooden cross was laid on the ground. The person was forced to lay on top of the cross with his arms outstretched. The soldiers would tie or nail the person's hands and feet to the cross. Then several soldiers hoisted the cross upright and jolted the bottom of it into a hole that had been dug in the ground. Most people died of suffocation, because they could not catch their breath while hanging with their arms out. Sometimes it took several days for the person to die.



After all of His beatings, Jesus was probably too weak to carry the heavy beams. The Roman soldiers forced a man who was passing by to carry Jesus' cross. His name was Simon (Mark 15:21). They came to a place called Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull (Matthew 27:33). There, the soldiers nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross (John 20:25). The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh. This mixture was used to help relieve some of the pain. But Jesus did not take it (Mark 15:22).



Pilate ordered that a sign be placed on the cross above Jesus. **Teacher: Hold up the sign.** It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews." (John 19:19) The religious leaders complained, saying it should say that Jesus *claimed* to be the King of the Jews. But Pilate refused to change the sign. This may be further proof that Pilate believed Jesus was who He said He was.



When the soldiers hung Jesus on the cross, Jesus prayed these amazing words: *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."*

*The soldiers divided up His clothes by casting lots.* - Luke 23:34



Just imagine, through His pain, Jesus prayed for the men who had beaten Him and nailed Him to the cross. Even while the soldiers were gambling for His clothing, Jesus prayed for their forgiveness. By saying they didn't know what they were doing, Jesus meant that the soldiers did not understand the full impact of what they were doing. They thought they were just doing the same job they did day after day - hanging criminals. They did not know that they were crucifying the very Son of God. They did not realize who Jesus was until after His death (Matthew 27:54).

In our human mind, it is almost impossible to imagine Jesus praying for the people who tortured Him. But we must remember, forgiveness was the very reason Jesus came and the reason that He willingly died on the cross (John 12:47).



Jesus looked down and saw His mother standing helplessly next to the cross. Mary was broken-hearted. Jesus took pity on her. His disciple John was also there.

*Jesus said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, the disciple took her into his home.* - John 19:26b-27

Jesus tried to comfort Mary, and make sure that someone would take care of her.

**Note to Teacher:** This event was God's plan since the beginning, yet it was excruciatingly difficult for Mary and those who loved Jesus. The pain of this moment was foretold to Mary by Simeon when Jesus was just an infant. "And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:35)

Many people were very sad about Jesus (Luke 23:27), but some yelled insults at Him.

*In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders made fun of Him. "He saved others," they said. "But He can't save Himself! He's the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross! Then we will believe in Him.* - Matthew 27:41-42

**Note to Teacher:** These taunts and jeers are very reminiscent of Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. In essence, Satan said, "If you are the Son of God, prove it! Show off your power." Satan attempted to snare Jesus in the same way he, himself, was tempted: pride. In the wilderness, as at the cross, Satan tried to derail God's plan for the salvation of man. Satan did not take into account Jesus' perfection. He was without the sin-nature that we have. Jesus did not falter. "For the joy set before Him, (He) endured the cross, scorning its shame." (Hebrews 12:2b NIV)

**Ask:** Could Jesus have come down off the cross if He wanted to? **Yes!** **Say:** Yes, Jesus was fully God. He could have come down with great power. But Hebrews 12:2 says, "He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy He was looking forward to." **Ask:** Can anyone guess what JOY He was looking forward to? *Listen for answers.* He was looking forward to bring people back to God.

## **TWO CRIMINALS** (Luke 23:39-43)



**Say:** The Bible tells us that Jesus was not the only man condemned to die that day. There were two robbers who were crucified with Him, one on either side of Jesus (Luke 23:33, Matthew 27:44). This was foretold in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:12 says, "He was counted among those who had committed crimes." One of the criminals believed that Jesus was who He claimed to be, but the other criminal did not.

*One of the criminals hanging there made fun of Jesus. He said, "Aren't you the Christ? Save Yourself! Save us!"*

*But the other criminal scolded him. "Don't you have any respect for God?" he said. "Remember, you are under the same sentence of death. We are being punished fairly. We are getting just what our actions call for. But this Man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."*

*Jesus answered him, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with Me in paradise." - Luke 23:39-43*

This robber had faith in Jesus, and because he trusted in Jesus, Jesus promised that he would see heaven that day. There was nothing this criminal could do to earn God's approval. He simply believed, and Jesus made him right with God.

The believing robber said that he and the other criminal *deserved* the punishment they were getting, but Jesus had not done anything wrong. Jesus was innocent. Why did the innocent Jesus hang on a criminal's cross?

Ever since the first people chose to disobey Him, God has required an animal to be killed on the altar to pay for the sins of His people. They couldn't use just any animal. Very often it was a lamb (Exodus 12:3), and it had to meet several requirements.

### **THE SACRIFICE:**

- firstborn
- male
- without any flaws
- had to die
- no broken bones
- the blood of the animal paid for the sin of the person

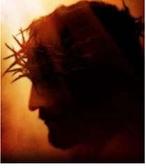
The sacrifice had to be:

- firstborn (Exodus 13:15)
- male (Exodus 12:5)
- without any flaws (Exodus 12:5)
- had to die (Exodus 12:6)
- no broken bones (Exodus 12:46)
- the blood of the animal paid for the sin of the person (Leviticus 17:11)

John the Baptist called Jesus, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus was all the things that God required:

**Teacher:** Point to the PowerPoint slide of God's sacrifice requirements when listing the characteristics of Jesus.

- Jesus was firstborn among his brothers and sisters (Matthew 1:25)
- Jesus was a male (Matthew 1:21).
- Jesus was without flaws because He never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Jesus was killed on a cross (Romans 5:8).
- None of His bones were broken (John 19:36).
- 1 John 1:7 tells us, "The blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from all sin."



**Application:** The Bible says that each one of us has sinned, and we each *deserve* death. Because Jesus was completely sinless, He was able to be our substitute on the cross. If we place our trust in Jesus, His blood makes us right with God. Our sins will be forgiven, and we will have eternal life.

**Say:** I have sinned. My sin has earned death. ***Not death on a cross, but death that is eternal separation from God*** (2 Thessalonians 1:9). **Teacher:** Point to cross on the wall. This cross can be a symbol for death and separation from God. Write your name on a sticky note and stick it to the cross. Call for volunteers. (You may choose to use adult leaders.) As volunteers come up, hand them each a sticky note. Have them write their name on it and stick it to the cross. **Say:** This is what each of us deserves. But that is NOT what God wanted for us. He sent His Son. Jesus did not die for His own sin - He was innocent. He hung on the cross in my place, and your place, and your place. All we do is place our trust in Him. Take down the sticky notes, and place the sign with "Jesus" on the cross. **Say:** Let's read this verse together:

**PPT Key Verse**

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**PPT Main Point**

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