

The Sufferings of Jesus Christ

As human beings, we have a terrible time relating to the pain and suffering of others unless we too have been through a similar experience. It is not because we are coldhearted, but because our hearts and minds want to avoid grief and pain; instead, we seek after love and joy. One reason Jesus Christ had to become flesh and submit to temptation, suffering, and death was so He could *truly understand* how they afflict human beings. It was those experiences that make Him a loving and merciful High Priest, Judge, and Advocate for us before God the Father.

And even though we have not experienced the complete sufferings of Christ, God has given us a Spirit that opens our hearts to understand that tremendous sacrifice. In the remainder of this article are descriptions of many of the ways Jesus suffered. By reflecting upon what He endured, we can come to know Him in a very personal way that continues to deepen as the years go by and we bear our own burdens.

Jesus Was Betrayed

“And while they were dwelling in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘**The Son of man is about to be betrayed into *the* hands of men**’ ” (Matt. 17:22). To be betrayed is the most terrible act that can be done to someone, because the very act means that the love you had for that person was never reciprocated, and that the person despised your love. There is no greater cause of grief in any relationship or any act more devastating.

Jesus Was Secretly Arrested at Night, Having Committed No Crime

“Then they [the High Priest and Sanhedrin] came *and laid their hands on Jesus, and arrested Him*... At that point Jesus said to the crowd, ‘Have you come out to take Me with swords and clubs, as against a robber?’ ” (Matt. 26:50, 55). “But this has happened so that the saying might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘**They hated Me [Jesus] without a cause**’ ” (John 15:25).

Jesus experienced shame and unjust persecution. Note that the arresting party was brazenly led by the High Priest and members of the Sanhedrin—who so *hated* Jesus that they personally led the arrest. Also, His arrest was nothing like today; the Greek for “laid their hands on” indicates a very forceful and physical act. Punishing violence is indicated. Mark 4:37 says “the [storm’s] waves were **crashing** into the ship”—where *crashing* is the same Greek word as *laid* in Matthew 26:50. But Jesus’ arrest was only the beginning of His sufferings.

Jesus Was Deserted by Everyone

“Then all **the disciples forsook him**, and fled” (Matt. 26:56). Not only was Jesus arrested, but everyone *abandoned Him* in the worst hour of His life. He was completely at the mercy of His captors who brutally arrested Him in the middle of the night. The terrified disciples watched from a distance as He was taken to the private home of Caiaphas, the High Priest. Jesus was abandoned by His closest friends whom He loved. This included John, who during Passover had been leaning on Jesus.

Jesus Was Falsely Accused

“Now the chief priests and the elders and the whole Sanhedrin **sought false evidence against Jesus**, so that they might put Him to death.... Then at *the* last, **two false witnesses**... (Matt. 26:59, 61). Imagine being taken secretly before a judge and falsely accused of crimes, all the

while knowing that your captors were doing all of this to murder you. As Jesus stood silently before the most powerful men in all of Judea, He saw the murderous hatred in their eyes that drove them to use whatever means necessary to fulfill their bloodlust.

Jesus Was Spat Upon and Beaten

“Then they [the High Priest and Sanhedrin] **spit in His face and hit Him with their fists; and some struck Him with rods**, saying, ‘Prophesy to us, Christ. Who is the one that struck You?’ ” (Matt. 26:67-68). The beating was far worse than Matthew suggests. Isaiah 52:14 says, “Many were astonished at Him—for *His body was* so disfigured—even His form beyond that of the sons of men.”

Jesus was not hit or beaten with a rod a couple of times; He was pummeled over and over. Isaiah 50:6 adds that they literally pulled out the hair of His beard. And He did not turn aside when they spit in His face. The fist-pounding, clubbing, and hair pulling went on and on, because that’s what it took to *disfigure* His face so that even the people of that time, who had witnessed many such beatings, were *shocked*. His tormentors were filled with the bloodlust of hatred. Remember who did this: the High Priest and the council of elders (or Sanhedrin).

Jesus Was Rejected

“Then the governor answered *and* said to them, ‘Which of the two do you desire *that* I release to you?’ And they [the High Priest, Sanhedrin, and a multitude of people] said, ‘Barabbas.’ Pilate said to them, ‘What then shall I do with Jesus Who is called Christ?’ They all said to him, ‘**Let Him be crucified!**’ ” (Matt. 27:21-22).

The High Priest and Sanhedrin, in their hatred for Jesus, gathered a *mob* together and persuaded them to support their evil plot. These people were necessary to ensure that Pilate would heed their demands out of fear of causing a riot. Jesus watched silently, knowing of their deceit and that even the lowest citizens of Judea rejected Him—as He was about to give His life for theirs!

Jesus Was Scourged

“Then he released Barabbas to them; but **after scourging Jesus**, he delivered *Him* up so that He might be crucified” (Matt. 27:26).

The Bible doesn’t provide the details to fully grasp what they did to Jesus. Roman law prohibited the scourging of Roman citizens because it was so brutal. A description of a scourging reads: “For they say that the bystanders were struck with amazement when they saw them [the martyrs] **lacerated with scourges even to the innermost veins and arteries, so that the hidden inward parts of the body, both their bowels and their members, were exposed to view**” (Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*; bk. IV, ch. 15, para. 4).

Jesus Was Mocked and Despised

“And after plating a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a rod in His right hand; and bowing *on* their knees before Him, **they mocked Him, and kept on saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’** Then, after spitting on Him, they took the rod and struck *Him* on the head” (Matt. 27:29-30).

Such an act would be humiliating enough even without the abuse that also occurred. The wreath of thorns was not just “placed” upon Jesus’ head as if putting a crown on a king. The Greek implies it was done *in a hostile manner*. In other words, the wreath was *shoved* onto His

head, driving the thorns through the flesh and down against His skull. This was further aggravated by hitting Him on the head with the rod, thus intensifying the pain. Furthermore, the *rod* (*reed* in the *KJV*) became in this case an instrument of torture. Jesus was not hit with a light reed or a switch, but a stick—strong and stout so that it could be used as a *cudgel*, a weapon.

Remember, preceding all of this was the brutality of His arrest, the beating by the priests, and the flesh-tearing *flagellum* or scourging; and, still, it wasn't over. Worst of all, it says in Psalms that it *broke Jesus' heart* to hear their hateful words. “Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psa. 69:20).

Jesus Was Nailed to the Cross

“And when they crucified Him...” (Matt. 27:35). Once again, the narrative simplifies a most terrible and cruel act. Nails were driven through His wrists, just below the wrist bone, through the major nerve running to the hand. His ankles were also nailed against the cross, again penetrating major nerves. His hands and feet were about the only parts of His body that had not yet been injured, and it would have been unimaginably excruciating. Crucifixion is a brutally painful way to die. (For more on the agony of crucifixion, you can read about it on the Internet.)

Jesus Was Reviled and Mocked

“Then those who were passing by reviled at Him, shaking their heads, and saying, ‘You Who *would* destroy the temple and rebuild *it* in three days, save Yourself. If You are *the* Son of God, come down from the cross.’ And in the same way also **the chief priests were mocking, with the scribes and elders**, saying ... ‘If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will *have* Him. For He said, “I am *the* Son of God” ’ ” (Matt. 27:39-43).

Notice that, once again, the High Priest and Sanhedrin *led the mocking* of Jesus and even arrogantly pronounced that God had rejected Him. As the Son of the most high God, they not only blasphemed Jesus, but His Father as well. Amazingly, while under such agony that few have experienced, Jesus did not revile back (I Pet. 2:23).

Incredibly, Jesus continues to be persecuted and suffers to this day. It isn't the agony of a physical body, but a spiritual pain: “And after falling to the ground, he [Saul] heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, **why do you persecute Me?**’ ” (Acts 9:4). “**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *him*; and if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *him*.** Now **you are *the* body of Christ, and you are all individual members**” (I Cor. 12:26-27 26). When God's people are persecuted or suffer, Jesus, who is the Head of the body, feels the pain—especially if the suffering is inflicted by fellow brethren.

All of the betrayal, lies, persecution, injustice, shame, false accusations, beatings, torture, and agony came upon Jesus in the space of about eighteen hours. Any one of these would cause unimaginable pain and anguish. Jesus *felt* and *endured* pain that had been perfected in a merciless world—*yet still committed no sin!* Is it any wonder that He sweated blood while praying to God? It was then, at the time of Jesus' *greatest physical affliction*, that God laid the sins of the world—past, present, and future—upon an innocent Christ.

Jesus never committed a single sin, so imagine the torture of the transgressions of billions of people coming upon Him all at once. Some have suggested that Jesus didn't suffer any more than others have in the history of the world. Truly, if we have *any* insight whatsoever into that single Passover, there is no question that Jesus endured what no man ever has—and all for one

reason: *God's love for the world.*

“ ‘Therefore, let all *the* house of Israel know with full assurance that God has made this *same* Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now after hearing *this*, **they were cut to the heart**; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘**Men and brethren, what shall we do?**’ ” (Acts 2:36-37).

Now, what are you going to do?

Prophecies of Jesus' crucifixion: Gen. 3:15; Psa. 22:1, 6-21, 31 (“that He hath done this” literally is “it is finished”); Psa. 31:4-5; Psa. 34:20; Psa. 35:11; Psa. 38:10-11; Psa. 41:7, 9; Psa. 69:6-9, 19-21; Psa. 109:25; Isa. 50:6; Isa. 52:14; Isa. 53; Zec. 11:12-13; Zec. 12:10; Zec. 13:6-7.