

# The Man in Charge of Crucifying Christ

## Matthew 27:33-54

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### INTRODUCTION:

A. **Matthew 27:33-54** – “At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.

46 At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

47 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah.

48 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a stick so he could drink.

49 But the rest said, ‘Leave him alone. Let's see whether Elijah will come and save him.’

50 Then Jesus shouted out again, and he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart,

52 and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead

53 after Jesus' resurrection. They left the cemetery, went into the holy city

54 The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, ‘Truly, this was the Son of God!’”

B. He was a Roman soldier . . . A Centurion.

1. Beyond that he is a stranger to us.

2. His age . . . His appearance . . . His nationality . . . His personality . . . His career . . . His abilities . . . His family . . . Are all unknown to us.

3. He was a Roman soldier charged with the carrying out the execution of a death sentence in Jerusalem.

4. His voice, however, rings down through the centuries . . . Depending on the translation one might be reading from, only seven or eight of all the words he ever spoke are recorded in the Bible . . . “Truly this was the Son of God.”

5. In the face of overwhelming and mounting evidence . . . And in opposition to Pilate and the Jewish priests . . . He proclaimed his dawning faith in a truth upon which the salvation of all men for all time and in all ages rests . . . “Truly this was the Son of God.”

C. Let us note some things for our further study and contemplation

## AS A ROMAN CENTURION . . .

### A. As a Roman Centurion:

1. He was a Roman soldier, a non-commissioned officer commanding at least 100 other soldiers.
2. He was in charge of one of the sixty centuries (companies of 100 men) in a Roman legion of some 6,000 men.
3. He was a part of a very elaborate and detailed army that ruled the known world during the days of our Lord upon this earth.
4. Centurions would often carry a staff of vine-wood as his badge of office.
5. The ordinary duties of the centurion were to drill his men, inspect their arms, food and clothing, and to command them in the camp and in the field.
6. Good conduct was generally the cause of their promotion to the command of a century (properly 100 men).

### B. Had had the ability, and no doubt the experience, for carrying out such an execution.

1. He marched out of Jerusalem one man . . . He returned to the city a different man.
2. How will you leave this service today . . . The same person or a different person.

### C. Let us consider three things about this centurion of the execution.

1. His **CRUCIFYING** Christ.
2. His **CONSIDERING** Christ.
3. His **CONFESSING** Christ.

## HIS **CRUCIFYING** CHRIST.

### A. It began with the Jews . . . Transferred over to the Romans . . . And was assigned to this centurion to carry out.

1. Apparently he endorsed the world’s verdict.
2. He did as he was told.
3. He made sure the nails were driven through Christ’s hands and feet.
4. He made sure that the cross was positioned correctly.
5. He made sure that death was certain and conclusive.

### B. It was to be just another day at work . . . Just another day at the office . . . Or was it?

## HIS **CONSIDERING** CHRIST.

### A. He spent hours at Calvary . . . An no doubt, Calvary spent the rest of His life with Him.

### B. Never before had he seen such Personality . . . Pain . . . And power involving a crucifixion.

1. The **PERSONALITY** of Jesus.

- a. Instead of ranting, raving, and blaming others, as perhaps some prisoners were prone to do, Jesus quietly said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”
  - b. Forgiving while dying? Yes . . . And He was dying in order for His Father to forgive us.
2. The **PAIN** of Jesus
- a. No doubt sin drove the nails deep.
  - b. No doubt that the devil made sure that muscular soldiers were wielding the hammers that day.
  - c. The centurion saw firsthand and up-close the intense suffering of our Lord while dying for our sins.
  - d. he saw all that was recorded that day . . . And perhaps much that wasn't.
  - e. He saw hatred from the passer-bys . . . And He saw compassion from the One nailed to the center cross.
3. The **POWER** surrounding Jesus – The Calvary miracles were impressive. Note: At least four miraculous events occurred: (1) Darkness . . . (2) Splitting in two of the Temple curtain . . . (3) An earthquake . . . (4) Dead people being raised from the dead and coming forth out of their tombs alive. Listening friends, these things could not have gone unnoticed!
- a. There was darkness over the land.
    1. “Give us a sign from Heaven,” Christ’s enemies had demanded.
    2. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God put a new star in the sky . . . When Jesus died near Jerusalem, God put out the sun at the hour it was shining its brightest.
    3. In addition to the physical darkness . . . There was a spiritual darkness prevailing there as well.
  - b. The splitting of the temple curtain from the top to the bottom. Located between the Holy Place and the Holy of holies.
    1. Split from the top to the bottom and not the other way around.
    2. Symbolizing that the barrier between God and humanity was removed. Now all people are free to approach God because of Christ’s sacrifice.
    3. The Mosaical Law was now fulfilled. **Ephesians 2:15-16** – “By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.”
  - c. The earthquake that split (rent) the rocks.

- d. Dead people coming forth out of their graves alive and going into Jerusalem after Christ was resurrected from the dead.

**Matthew 27:50-51** – “Then Jesus shouted out again, and he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart,

52 and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead

53 after Jesus' resurrection. They left the cemetery, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.”

## **HIS CONFESSING CHRIST.**

- A. He had seen enough . . . He had heard enough . . . He was convinced enough to say . . . “Truly this was the Son of God.”
- B. The centurion certainly recognized Jesus' innocence.
- C. Listening friends: While the Jewish religious leaders were celebrating Jesus' death, a small group of Gentiles were the first to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God . . . And did so through the recorded words of this Roman centurion.

## **LESSONS TO BE GLEANED FROM THIS CENTURION:**

- A. The centurion was right to be afraid.
1. Fear can be the first step toward faith. Perhaps later he found some of our Lord's followers who could explain to Him that Jesus really was the Son of God.
  2. Today people become afraid like the centurion are referred to a counselor for psychological help.
    - a. But it is not a mind problem here . . . It's a soul problem . . . It's a faith problem.
    - b. A life of sin should bring fear as one contemplates the punishment for a life of sin.
  3. Our fears about death . . . Suffering . . . Tragedy . . . and Illness . . . And even tough decisions . . . have one important starting point if we hope to overcome them . . . Jesus Christ! Let your faith displace any fear you may have.
- B. When you examine the evidence of Christ. You will change your mind about Christ.
1. Minds have been made up for the wrong . . . They need to be changed and made up for the right.
  2. This centurion came to Calvary not knowing . . . He left believing . . . How are you going to leave here today?
- C. He was convinced by the truths he saw there that day.

D. The closer one is to Jesus, the more he will see and hear in God’s revealed Word.

**CONCLUSION:**

A. Had these Jewish leaders been the students of the Old Testament that they should been, could they not have seen that of the 300 or so Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, some 100 or so of them were fulfilled in and around the time-frame of putting Jesus to Death? Many who can see simply refuse to see . . . Maybe that was a part of their problem as well.

B. Bumper Sticker: “Real men love Jesus.” It took a real man to confess what he confessed under all the circumstances present that day.

1. The centurion was a real man in many senses.
2. He was awed by the things he saw and heard that day.
3. He was awed by truth . . . Are you?
4. That day we see this centurion:

- a. **CRUCIFYING Christ.**
- b. **CONSIDERING Christ.** Considered the **PERSONALITY** of Jesus . . . The **PAIN** of Jesus . . . And the **POWER** of Jesus.
- c. **CONFESSING Christ.**

**Note:** Our sins helped crucify Christ . . . Are you considering HIM? . . . Are you ready to confess Him as a part of obeying Him?

C. Why did Jesus not come down from the cross as demanded proof by the Jews gathers at the scene?

1. Had he come down He would have been pleasing them . . . And we would still be lost and without the saving blood of Christ.
2. By remaining on the cross, He continued to obey God’s Will.

D. “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?”

1. Jesus was quoting from the first line in Psalm 22.
2. This was the moment about which Jesus had prayed to God in the Garden of Gethsemane to take this cup away from Him . . . The moment when He would be as fully spiritually separated from God as He could be as the sinner-bearer of the world.

E. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**