

THEY WATCHED HIM THERE

MATTHEW 27

Text: Matt 27:36

(Matthew 27:36) "And sitting down they watched him there;"

Introduction:

The passage that we just read is the account of the Saviour on the cross. However the events leading up to this I believe need to be considered.

The Lord's passion started prior to His betrayal and arrest. While praying in the garden He became engaged in a fierce battle. He wrestled a problem so great that his sweat is described as great drops of blood. The Bible doesn't reveal the nature of the struggle, but its fierceness was such that the capillaries in the skin ruptured causing blood to leak from His pores as sweat.

While in the garden the betrayal took place. The soldiers under Judus' direction seized Christ and brought Him to Pilate's judgment hall. There, under Pilate's command Christ was whipped. Jewish law states that a man should not receive more than 40 lashes, but it doesn't specify the type of whip. In mans

depravity they designed a whip with a wooded handle and several leather straps, each studded with a stone or metal or a piece of glass. In this way they could fulfill the letter of the law while satisfying their own cruel nature.

By the end of the whipping the back of the Lord was a shredded mass of crimson tissue. Long strips of torn skin and muscle were dangling like red icicles dripping blood.

Then the games and mockery began. One by one the soldiers would strike, spit on, or pull the beard of Jesus and ask Him to prophecy which of them was guilty. A robe was placed about His bleeding shoulders to proclaim Him King. A branch of fire wood is twisted into a wreath and the thorns are driven into His scalp. As they drive the crown of thorns into the Saviour's brow, his face hair and the beard that remained were soon saturated with blood. They mock again and call Him "The King of the Jews." These men mocked and jeered at the Lamb of God, a bleeding, broken, beaten man near shock from blood loss.

It has now been 24 hours since our Lord has had any sleep. He is exhausted and His strength is failing. This broken man is then presented to the Jewish nation. Though His mind is dulled by lack of sleep, and His life is oozing from the many wounds, He still can hear clearly the strong chant, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

So as to please the throng, Pilate pronounced the sentence. It would be as they wished death by crucifixion.

As was the custom in those days the condemned was to carry the cross from the prison to the execution site. The cross was very extremely heavy. The cross member alone many believe that it weighed approximately 175 lb. He started the march toward Galgotha. But this former carpenter who was strong in His youth and manhood was so weakened by the blood loss, punishment and lack of rest the He collapsed beneath the weight of the cross.

His physical energy is nearly gone. A man standing nearby is commanded by the soldier to carry His cross. Simon removed the timber from the shoulders of Jesus. His body battered by the fall, His back is burning as with fire, His head pounding with each heart beat, He is dragged to His feet and guided between two guards as He staggers and stumbles the rest of the way.

Arriving at Galgotha the executioner drives the nails in to the hands of Jesus. The cross was then lifted into place. The weight of Christ's body sags and the full torture effect of the nails is felt. Next, His feet are fixed to the upright. With his knees slightly flexed, the left foot is placed on top of the right and a single nail is driven through both feet. The torture of the crucifixion

lies in the bent arms and flexed knees. The pain is a constant seesaw from hands to feet. As He would stiffen His legs to relieve the pain in His hands, the agony in His feet would build till He would pull with His arms to relieve His feet.

As the muscles in His arms and legs fatigued, the shock deepens and the agony increases. A new pain begins. Deep within His chest, a crushing, viselike feeling begins to mount as His hearts starts to fail. His breathing becomes very short and labored. Each breath is a gasp. It is with great effort and pain that seven times He stiffens His legs and draws in enough breath to utter those last cries.

The time of death is drawing nigh. To the passerby, it is a Jew dying on a cross. But the Bible says, that the "Soldiers watched Him there."

Notice:

1. THEY WATCHED COMPLACENTLY IN THE CRUCIAL HOUR

- A. They had witnessed many crucifixions.
- B. To them it was just another crucifixion.
- C. This may be the reason the cross means so little to many today.

1. They mutilated the Master before He reached the cross
2. They doubt His virgin birth and reject His deity
3. So believe the He is just another man.

D. Who was it that died that day?

1. The One the prophets spoke of.

(Isaiah 50:6) "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

(Isaiah 53) "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? {2} For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. {3} He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. {4} Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. {6} All we like

sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. {7} He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. {8} He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. {9} And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. {10} Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. {11} He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. {12} Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

2. The One who was miraculously born

(Isaiah 7:14) "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

3. The One who could open blind eyes and raise the dead.

E. See who is dying there and you will never get over it.

Illustration:

Gypsy Smith: "I have never lost the wonder of it all."

2. THEY WATCHED CALMLY IN AN HOUR OF CRISIS

A. This was the hour of the ages, and they were not moved.

B. They were just observers as the scene unfolded before them.

1. There was the priest who taunted Him

2. The thieves who cast the same in His teeth.

3. The wondering disciple afar off in tears.

4. The little group of faithful ones near the cross.

C. The forces of Heaven and Earth stand poised

1. He could have called 10,000 angels

2. The earth hovered between destruction and deliverance.

D. We are living in an hour of crisis today and still many are unmoved.

3. THEY WATCHED CARELESSLY IN THE HOUR OF GOD'S GREATEST EXAMPLE OF CARING

A. They saw it all, knew all the facts, but did not respond.

Close:

As the whole world watches, the very God of Heaven, Christ's own Father, cannot watch, for He cannot look on sin. God the Father turns His back on His only begotten Son. The sun in the sky grows dim, clouds roll into place obscuring from God's eyes this horror on Golgotha's hill.

Christ looks quiet now, but wait, He moves. With the forces of sin heavy on His raw shoulders, the guilt of mankind on His back, the pain of disobedient children searing in His hands and the poker of hell burning His feet and the broken heart of rejection by God and man struggling within His chest, He forces His legs to lift Him one last time He raises His head and sucks in that last breath and looks up into the darkened sky and cries triumphantly, "It is finished."

Have you responded to God's love?

What does the death of Christ mean to you?

How does the death of Christ affect your life?