

"If you are going through hell, keep going."  
—Winston S. Churchill

27-Mar-15

## Jesus' Sufferings on Passover

The leaders of the Jews—the chief priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees—had begun early in Jesus' ministry trying to undermine Him and find a way to get rid of Him. However, under Roman rule and with their jurisdiction limited to Judea, they had been stymied at every turn. When approached by Judas ([Luke 22:1-6](#)), they had their chance, and they pounced.

Yet, in all of their plotting and scheming, they never realized they were working by God's timeline, not their own. The sequence of events that took place on [Passover](#), from Jesus' arrest through His death on the cross, was orchestrated for our learning so that we could "discern the Lord's body" and to appreciate deeply what [God](#) did for us ([I Corinthians 11:27-28](#)).

A close look at the individual events that transpired in His last hours will help us understand what [Jesus](#) suffered and even what may have gone through His mind as He endured that day.

**Betrayal:** One of the first things to occur that evening was Judas' betrayal. How many of us have been betrayed by a friend with whom we had spent practically every day for three and a half years—and known all the while that he was going to do it? Would we have been able to wash his feet and serve

him food? Betrayal by a friend and brother is difficult to endure after the fact, but how Jesus treated him even with His foreknowledge reveals the depth of His character. How many of us would have been emotionally devastated at this point?

**Loneliness:** After finishing the Passover meal, Jesus and the disciples walked to the Garden of Gethsemane ([Luke 22:39-46](#)). Jesus now had to endure the mental torment of waiting for the events that were just about to begin. After pleading three times with His friends to pray with Him for just one hour, He had to face the dread of what was about to happen alone. Even though He knew that He had to carry out His purpose alone, and that it would be horrifying and painful, He urged His friends to pray so *they* would not fall into temptation.

**Arrest:** When a person is arrested, their liberty is taken away; they essentially become a slave of the state and at the mercy of their captors. But the Jews had no mercy for Jesus. They came for Him with a "great multitude" of soldiers with drawn swords and clubs, ready for a fight ([Mark 14:43](#)). Every time they had tried to take Him before, Jesus had slipped away, but this time they came with a mob ready for action.

[Isaiah 50:6-7](#) is a prophecy of what happened to Jesus once He was under the power of His enemies: "I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting." With this in mind, we can continue with Jesus being hustled off to be brought before the Jewish leaders.

**Beaten:** Wherever Jesus was taken that night, someone was waiting to take a shot at Him. It seems that they lined up to punch and slap Him, and one translation ventures to suggest that He was even beaten with a club! A slap with an open hand was considered a form of humiliation in that it showed disrespect for the victim. It was a sign of His weakness.

**Hair Plucked:** Another shaming tactic used at the time was to cut off a man's beard. Hanun, king of Ammon, did this to David's servants, shaving off half their beards and cutting their garments up to their buttocks ([II Samuel 10:4](#)). With Jesus, they went a step further: They *pulled* His beard

off His face! This is the same as if He were skinned alive. It had to be excruciating.

**Spit On:** To spit in another's face is among the most unambiguous gestures of shame, hatred, and contempt that a person can express. Few things are more disgusting or humiliating, yet Jesus endured it without a word. He "set His face like flint" ([Isaiah 50:7](#))—so that the very people abusing Him would have a chance to be in His Family!

**Stripped:** It was customary for a prisoner to be stripped of his clothes. Again, they seemed to be trying to go above and beyond in inflicting pain and humiliation on Jesus. It is quite likely that He remained unclothed throughout this ordeal.

**Scourged:** *Scourge* comes from the Latin word *excoriare*, meaning "to flay." A scourge was a three-corded whip tied to the end of a rod. The tips of the cords had knots embedded with pieces of glass or metal, clearly designed to inflict severe punishment. Jewish law limited punishment to forty lashes, but not Roman law. Many prisoners never lived through scourging. Jesus was beaten so badly He no longer looked human. Isaiah writes, "His visage was marred more than any man" ([Isaiah 52:14](#)). It is hard to imagine Him still being able to go on.

**Scarlet Robe, Reed, and Crown of Thorns:** After Jesus was stripped, His tormentors clothed Him with a scarlet robe and placed a reed in His hand and a crown of thorns on His head. Scarlet is a color of royalty. The reed imitated a scepter, a symbol of authority, but instead, they beat Him with it. A crown symbolizes honor and rank, but He wore a crown, not of gold, but of piercing thorns, symbolizing a curse, vexation, and misfortune.

**Mockery:** Not the least trying of His tortures was the mockery. Mockery is ridicule, contempt, derision. It can also be a counterfeit or absurdly inadequate representation. Christ's accusers took everything He represented and twisted it to inflict pain, suffering, humiliation, and mental anguish.

**Forsaken:** Perhaps the worst that Jesus had to endure was His Father's turning from Him when all the sins of mankind fell on Him ([Matthew 27:46](#))

). Throughout that night and day, Jesus knew that His Father was watching while He suffered and every drop of life was mercilessly drained out of Him. Knowing this gave Him strength to endure, just as it gave Stephen strength and comfort ([Acts 7:55](#)). Yet, as Jesus was hanging on the cross, He may have looked up as Stephen had, and He saw His Father turn away. He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The Father had to turn away. [Sin](#) separates us from God ([Isaiah 59:2](#)), and all of our sins separated Jesus from His Father in the same way. To be our High Priest, to be able to relate to us, Jesus had to know what it was like to be separated from God by sin—and maybe even to taste the terror of those who will be separated from Him forever.

The Father was also suffering. Despite it being part of His plan, He was sacrificing the only Being that He could have a godly relationship with. God has deep feeling and emotion, and as His Son bled out, the Father was hurting! Few human fathers can watch their children going through difficult situations without feeling their pain. How much more our heavenly Father?

Yet, God endured this for us. "For God so loved [the world](#) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)). The Father and the Son gave everything so that we can live eternally with them! What are we willing to endure to spend it with them?

- Ronny H. Graham

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [A Different Kind of Savior](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

At the time surrounding the birth of Jesus, there existed considerable messianic fervor. Simeon the priest, Anna the prophetess, and many others, including the Samaritans, were looking for the Messiah. Andrew and his brother Peter were looking for the Messiah and were prepared to follow Him

instantaneously. There were many prophecies of the Messiah, included the ousting of oppressors, the evil Edomites, and the permanent establishment of David's dynasty and the Kingdom of God forever. Without God's Spirit, people would pick and choose from the prophecies, concentrating on the militant aspects of the Messiah's work, but ignoring the other aspects of the Messiah's work. The Jews were looking for a military leader like Jehu, a furious, hasty, callous, impetuous man with a temper, having as his express purpose, totally eradicating the legacy of Jezebel. Jehu's campaign proved to demonstrate blood-thirstiness and wrath, but he did not heed the law of God. Consequently, peace did not accrue, but he isolated Israel for its ultimate fall, a fall which Israel would not recover from until Calvary.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Why Did Jesus Have to Die by Crucifixion?](#)**

by Staff

Crucifixion is man's most cruel, inhumane form of capital punishment. Why did our Savior need to die this way? What does it teach us? This article also includes an inset, "Was Jesus Stabbed Before or After He Died?"

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