

# THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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## Chapter 14

### THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

John alone at this point gives us the true sequence of events. He shows that after the scourging, JESUS is brought back again before the people as Pilate seeks once again to have Him released, but to no avail. Matthew and Mark give the account of the scourging and mocking but do not record Pilate's last efforts to free JESUS since these efforts were fruitless. Luke goes from the trial right to the road that leads to Calvary.

**"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him"** (John 19:1).

Like the crucifixion itself where the Scriptures are silent except for the words, "They crucified him," so here. **A veil is drawn over this scene, and it is done purposely.** We should therefore be content with only a few comments and then move on.

The scourging and mocking by the soldiers takes place within the palace itself, and was not seen by the people. John writes to clarify this point. After it was all over, Pilate brings JESUS back before the crowd and they see Him for the first time in this condition.

The scourge consisted of a handle to which several leather thongs were affixed. These were weighted on the ends with jagged pieces of bone or metal. This would help tear the flesh and make each blow more effective.

The victim was stripped, and usually tied to a post with his hands also bound: **"And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"** (Acts 22:25) so as not to be able to defend himself. The blows were normally applied to the back and loins but sometimes the whole body. We shall see shortly reasons for believing that the face and whole body of CHRIST was scourged. The punishment by scourging was so severe that the victim usually fainted, and not rarely died.

According to Jewish law a man could receive no more than forty stripes: **"Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee"** (Deuteronomy 25:3). For this reason the Jews limited their scourgings from either rods

or whips to 39 stripes so as never to break this law if perchance they have miscounted: **"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep"** (II Corinthians 11:23-25).

With the Romans, however, no such limitation was observed; it depended entirely on the commander in charge. The implication of the text is that JESUS CHRIST received a Roman scourging, and it was by no means limited to 39 stripes.

Pilate had a reason for the severity of this flogging. He was seeking to present JESUS CHRIST to the crowd once again and hoped that the severity of His sufferings would suffice. The very fact that JESUS CHRIST is unable to carry His cross is another indication of the suffering He previously encountered. It is not a case that the Lord would not carry His cross; He could not carry it, and the soldiers knew it and knew why this was the case.

The soldiers have finished the scourging, and now they enter into a little sport with this One who is before them. Though it is a breach of military discipline, their own hostility toward the Jews is taken out on the Lord. Not wanting any of their buddies to miss this **"they call together the whole band"** or cohort of soldiers (Mark 15:16), perhaps the same that were used to capture Him in the early morning. They now give a mock coronation to the KING.

**"And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him"** (Mark 15:17-20).

Once the direction was started it continued until it was a full dress occasion. A king must have a robe. They found an old military cloak of purple color. This they threw over His bleeding form and clasped it on the right shoulder: **"And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe"** (Matthew 27:28). This robe was one worn by Roman generals and sometimes presented by Rome to foreign kings. A king needs also a crown. This was supplied by intertwining the twigs from the long-spiked thorn bush which grows in Palestine into a crown. This was put upon His head: **"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head"** (Matthew 27:29a). One thing still was lacking. A king needs a scepter, and finding a reed they place it into His right hand: **"and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"** (Matthew 27:29b). Then they spat upon Him: **"And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head"** (Matthew 27:30).

With the reed, they hit Him on the head. Let us not think of this reed as some little thing that bends every time it is used. This is not the case. The most common reed in

Palestine grows in immense quantities in the Jordan valley along the river and its tributaries. It is a lofty reed often 20 feet high. It would be something like what we know as bamboo. This was what they first used as a scepter in His right hand, but then took and smote Him on His thorn-crowned head over and over again.

John adds one other detail: **"and they smote him with their hands"** (John 19:3). It is in the imperfect tense, which indicates that they kept on smiting Him. All their mockery was in reference to CHRIST being King, while that given before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin was in reference to His being Prophet.

This is still the hour when all that they willed to do was done, but all who had dealings with Him merely revealed the baseness and depravity of the human heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and **"desperately wicked"** (Jeremiah 17:9); who can know it? Since the human heart is being revealed, it is any human heart. It is my heart; it is your heart. Here is a picture of what I would have done had I been there.

**"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!"** (John 19:4-5).

Even though Pilate ordered JESUS to be scourged as the preparation for crucifixion, and this was carried out, Pilate still wants to release Him. He previously had said: **"I will chastise him and release him."** He comes back to the crowd now saying to them: **"Behold the man!"** Is this not enough!

Little did Pilate realize that by this very act he was fulfilling Scripture. We have not examined many of the passages that have been fulfilled during these trials because this has been outside the scope of our present study, but there is one which is significant to this occasion. We need to look closely at Isaiah 52:13-15.

**"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."**

The Hebrew is a very descriptive language, and a very careful examination of these verses reveal precious truths. The measure of many being astonished at Him reveals that He was so disfigured in His appearance from man and His beauty from the sons of men that He would startle all that look upon Him.

In Isaiah 52:13-15 we have an overview of JESUS CHRIST as the true SERVANT of the Lord, followed in chapter 53 by the detailed examination of this One under three categories: (1) the cross (53:1-3); (2) the tomb (53:4-9); and (3) the resurrection (53:10-12).

Here is a brief outline of Isaiah 52:13-15 for our meditation.

A. The Servant and His Position, vs. 13.

1. The Exclamation: "Behold," "Lo," "Look!"

Something of the utmost importance is going to be stated.

2. The Subject: "My Servant."

It is not a King that is introduced, but a servant.

He is One who is sent by GOD to accomplish a work and to fulfill a mission.

**"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).**

3. The Action:

a. The perfect obedience of His earthly life: **"shall deal prudently."**

b. The resultant exaltation by the Father: **"He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."**

The three words are not synonymous, but progressive. They refer to (1) the resurrection; the ascension; (3) the seating: **"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:20-22).**

4. The Astonishment: **"As many were astonished at thee."**

a. The object of the astonishment: The MESSIAH.

b. The subjects of the astonishment: The believing remnant.

B. The MESSIAH and His Sufferings, vs. 14.

1. His Face: **"his visage was so marred more than any man."**

It was His face that was marred more than that of any man.

2. His Physical Form: **"and his form more than the sons of men."**

His form was disfigured more than the sons of Adam. Delitzsch says that "His

appearance and His form were altogether distorted."

C. The KING and His Glory, vs. 15.

1. His Object Ministry: His action.

**"So shall he sprinkle many nations (the Gentiles)."**

He is going to startle the Gentiles as well as Israel that He was in truth the MESSIAH.

2. His Subjective Ministry: The Actions of the Kings.

**"the kings shall shut their mouths at him."**

They will do this because of astonishment and reverence.

**"for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."**

What could not have been told them by any man and was previously unheard of, they shall see and shall understand.

Let us return to this very significant verse of Isaiah 52:14.

The first word is a reference to His face. In the Hebrew it signifies the disfiguring of the face. The second word is a reference to His physical form.

GOD says: **"Behold my servant."**

Pilate says: **"Behold the man."**

and later says: **"Behold your king."**

When they looked, what did they see? Isaiah 53:2b tells us: **"he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."**

Three things are involved in these words:

(1) No form to Him showing His body is beyond recognition.

(2) No comeliness (or honor) because He is rejected by His own people, crowned with thorns as a symbol of the curse, and partakes of a rebel's scourging and death.

Hanging on a tree makes Him, according to the law, an accursed thing: **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"** (Galatians 3:13).

(3) No beauty (or sight).

There is not reason why we should look on Him. The sight is repugnant to our esthetic nature. Israel did not want a suffering Saviour; they wanted a conquering deliverer. He did not answer to their ideal. Barabbas did. They did not want someone spiritual, but

someone political. Sin was not troubling them; therefore a Saviour from sin could not delight them.

Why was JESUS in such a condition that both His face and physical form were disfigured from that of man? Let us review the Saviour's sufferings.

#### The trial before Annas:

1. **"And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"** (John 18:22).

#### The trial before Caiaphas:

2. **"Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands"** (Matthew 26:67).

**"And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands"** (Mark 14:65).

**"And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?"** (Luke 22:64).

Buffet Him, which is "to strike with the fist" from the word: "the knuckles."

3. Smote Him with the palms of their hands.

#### The trial before Pilate

4. **"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified"** (Matthew 27:26).

**"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe"** (John 19:2).

Scourged Him. This must have been all over His body.

5. **"And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head"** (Mark 15:17).

**"And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands"** (John 19:3).

Plaited a crown of thorns and put it about His head.

6. **"And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and**

**bowing their knees worshipped him"** (Mark 15:19).

Kept on smiting Him on the head with a reed (rod).

7. **"And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands"** (John 19:3).

Smote Him with their hands.

After the trials:

8. **"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots"** (Matthew 27:35).

**"Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst"** (John 19:18).

Crucified Him.

It is because of our Lord's great disfiguring that He sought all the more to prove to His disciples that it was He who was alive after His resurrection:

**"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them"** (Luke 24:39-43).

and they required all the more proof to be sure:

**"The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"** (John 20:25-29).

The world, still in their unbelief, sees JESUS as the object of ridicule and mockery. They still would crown Him with a crown of thorns in their hatred for Him.

By faith we who believe see JESUS crowned with glory and honor:

**"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).**

He who once was crowned with the symbol of the curse now wears the garland of the highest honor. As the perfect servant of JEHOVAH, GOD has supremely exalted Him:

**"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).**

Someday He shall appear wearing many crowns or diadems: **"His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (Revelation 19:12).**

These crowns were ribbons or bands which indicate rulership and authority. In that day all shall know He is KING OF KINGS AND Lord OF LordS (Revelation 19:16). The fact that He is who He is will startle many Gentiles as well as the whole nation of Israel. By faith we know who He is today.

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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