

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CROSS

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When reading about what took place before our Lord was nailed to the cross, one is amazed at the fact that He was able to sustain life to make it to the cross. Jesus was fatigued mightily, treated shamefully and beaten unmercifully. All of this took place before the first hammer blow to the spikes that went through His wrists.

Before Jesus was ever taken captive, He spent time with the apostles. The conversation is recorded in John 13-17. No doubt this was a stressful time for Jesus. He instituted the Lord's Supper at a table that was occupied by the one who would betray Him and cause His physical death. There was also the matter of the apostles not understanding the events that were about to take place. During this conversation it was revealed that, at least on Philip's part, there was still a misunderstanding of exactly who Jesus was (John 14:8-11). The grief shown by the apostles because of His imminent departure must have weighed heavily on the mind of Jesus as well. Added to all of these things was the knowledge that those closest to Him would deny Him at His time of greatest need (Luke 22:33-34).

Jesus left that upper room with the apostles and then went to the Mount of Olives. On this mount was the Garden of Gethsemane, a place often visited by Jesus in order to pray. Eleven of the disciples were with Him, Judas having already left to gather the mob to arrest Jesus. Three of these, Peter, James and John, went further with Jesus. These three would fall asleep while Jesus prayed. Three times Jesus prayed that the cup of anguish that was coming His way might be turned aside if it be the Father's will. All three times Jesus would say that the Father's will must be done and not that of the Son.

Luke reveals an amazing physiological event that took place: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). The word "agony" means "severe mental struggles and emotions" (#74, Online Bible Greek Lexicon). "Earnestly" carries the idea of intensity. Thinking of His impending death, the weight of the sins of the world on His shoulders, the separation from the Father and all of the things that were involved in His death, our Lord burst blood vessels in His forehead. This is a medical event called hematidrosis. This is defined by Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary as "the excretion through the skin of blood or blood pigments." It is a very rare event that takes place in only the most extreme mentally agonizing situations. Jesus has now suffered from extreme mental anguish and blood loss.

Judas now comes into the Garden with his mob. They take Jesus and bring Him to the high priest's house, who was Caiaphas. As one studies the various trials through which Jesus went and does so in light of the laws of the land, one quickly comes to the conclusion that the trials were a mockery of justice and highly irregular, if not illegal.

Wayne Jackson, in a two-part article entitled "The Theological Implications of the Trial of Jesus," has gone into great detail about the violations of Jewish and Roman law that took place during the trials of Jesus. In the second installment of this series of articles br. Jackson listed twelve violations that took place and wrote that other authors have suggest there were as many as

twenty-seven violations that occurred. We will just note a few that br. Jackson mentioned in his article which can be found at www.christiancourier.com.

It is interesting that there were no formal charges brought against Jesus. There was no type written warrant for the arrest of Jesus as was mandatory under Jewish law. In fact, the Bible says a “great multitude” came to arrest Jesus. The word “multitude” means “a casual collection of people” (#3793, Online Bible Greek Lexicon). This was a mob action not a judicial action.

The assembly at the high priest’s house was led by Annas, a deposed high priest and father-in-law to the true high priest, Caiphas. This assembly was also at night which was against Jewish law.

The one that jumps out at everyone who reads the inspired record is that of the false witnesses being used to testify against Jesus (Matthew 26:59-61). Notice that verse fifty-nine indicates that the Sanhedrin had sought out liars to use to testify against Jesus. It is also interesting to note that these false witnesses contradicted each other (Mark 14:56, 59). Notice this statement from br. Jackson, “The trial should have been terminated then and there. But it was not, because justice was not the goal.”

While this mockery of justice was going on, our Lord was being slapped, spit upon and verbally abused. Truly the inspired words of Isaiah were fulfilled: “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” (53:7).

After all of this, we see one of the greatest understatements in the history of man: “Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him” (John 19:1). Friends, we will never know the pain and agony Jesus underwent as that flagrum was lashed against His back. This cruel instrument had several braided thongs of different lengths. At the end of each thong was either a metal ball or some sharp, jagged object such as a piece of bone. There was no limit to the lashes that could be given. In no way am I promoting the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, having never seen the whole movie, but I did see the scene where the actor portraying Jesus was scourged. If the scourging of Jesus was anything like what was depicted in that movie, it was horrific. History tells us that scourging was called the “little death” before the “big death” of the cross. Words cannot possibly describe the suffering Jesus underwent during this process.

After this, Jesus was taken and mocked by the soldiers. A thorny crown was placed on the head whose blood vessels had already broken. These thorns were normally an inch long with a needle-sharp point at the end. His clothes, having been placed back on him were then removed and a robe of purple was placed over his raw and bleeding shoulders and back, later to be taken off after the blood had dried to it. Jesus was then commanded to carry His cross to Golgotha. Unable to bear the burden because of the tortures of the night and morning, Jesus fell beneath the great weight. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way to the place of the skull. Then our Lord was nailed to that cross.

I am well aware of the fact that I have not done justice to the suffering our Lord endured before He was ever nailed to that cross. Words do not do justice in describing the great sacrifice Jesus endured so that we would not have to do so. You see, Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust

(Romans 5:6-8). How can we not love the One endured so much just to get to the place where the crucifixion would take place?