

Prepared by Pastor Brad Brandt for Good Friday, 2009

Wheelersburg Baptist Church

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## A Good Friday Neighborhood Bible Study

# *What Jesus said on the Cross, and Why?*

While hanging on the cross Jesus uttered seven statements. In this study we'll be exploring His first...

*"Father, forgive them,  
for they do not know what they are doing."*

*(Luke 23:34)*

## **The Background of Jesus' Crucifixion**

1. What happened the night before Jesus' crucifixion according to the following verses?

According to Luke 22:39-46...

According to Luke 22:47-48...

According to Luke 22:63-65...

2. Who authorized Jesus' execution according to Luke 23:1?

3. What was the Roman governor's assessment of Jesus according to Luke 23:4? Why, then, did Pilate pronounce the sentence of death on Jesus? (note: Though Luke doesn't answer the question directly, he gives us some insight in 23:23-25)

## **Crucifixion from the Perspective of a Medical Doctor**

1. Read Luke 23:32-33. The author of this biographical account of Jesus' life, Luke, was a medical doctor by training. He has a keen eye for details. What information does Luke give us about Jesus' crucifixion?

2. A contemporary doctor, Truman Davis, offers the following explanation of crucifixion. After reading it, describe how it affects you.

Death by crucifixion is perhaps the most atrocious means of execution ever conjured up in the minds of mad men. The soldier grabbed Jesus left arm, and felt for the depression at the front of His wrist. He drove a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through His wrist and deep into the wood. The same was repeated on His right arm. Roman soldiers had it down to a cruel science. They allowed the arms to have some flex. Some victims would hang for as long as a week.

Jesus was then lifted up and attached to the vertical pole. The Roman pressed Jesus' left foot tight against His right, toes pointed down, and knees flexed. A nail was driven through the arches and into the wood.

Medical doctor, O. Truman Davis, described the horror of what happened next as follows: "The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain--the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

"At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward...Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen."

--O. Truman Davis, M.D., "The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View," Arizona Medicine, Vol. 22, no. 3, March 1965.

### **Jesus' First Words from the Cross: Luke 23:34**

1. Read Luke 23:34 and note that Jesus' first words from the cross were a *prayer*.

a. Although in agonizing pain, Jesus didn't pray for Himself. For whom did He pray?

b. To whom did Jesus pray?

2. Imagine being there, hearing those words, "Father, forgive them." What do you think the soldiers thought when they heard what Jesus said?

3. What does it mean to *forgive* someone? Peter, a follower of Jesus, elaborates on the subject in 1 Peter 2:21-24. Read that passage and then discuss what it teaches us about the nature of forgiveness.

4. When Jesus said, "...for they do not know what they are doing," He was not saying that the ignorance of His executioners excused their behavior. That would have been a violation of justice. How so?

Think about it: When Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them," He was not asking His Father to ignore the sin. According to other biblical passages, a holy God cannot simply ignore sin (for instance, see Romans 6:23), for the penalty for sin must be paid. What, then, was the unspoken implication of Jesus' first statement on the cross? (for help, see 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:21)

5. On the third day after He died, Jesus conquered the grave, and a few weeks later returned to heaven. Read His words in Luke 24:46-47 and then answer the question, "How can a person today experience God's forgiveness?" (see also 1 John 1:9)