

THE GREATEST INSULT TO JESUS

This essay may be disturbing to many. I have mentioned the content several times, in passing, in Bible class and in sermons. A few days ago I decided to take a stab at writing it down in an essay. Some things are like jazz compositions; they are easier to play or verbalize than to put on paper.

There are some historical details or events that may be depressing or unpleasant. We need not discuss them constantly, but they need to be discussed periodically, lest they are forgotten.

Much of the cruelty and disrespect of the crucifixion of Jesus has been watered down. It has been watered down for many reasons, all with good intentions.

Many have romanticized the crucifixion so much that the brutality has been all but deleted.

Others have taken a euphemistic approach because to be totally forthcoming would have put our Savior in a disgraceful, humiliating narrative. They could not process the cruelty or humiliation that our Savior endured.

The problem is also caused by the discontinuity of intergenerational communication. Many things are obvious to one generation. Since it is so obvious, it is unspoken because everyone at the time, of a certain generation, is aware of it. Since it is not articulated the succeeding generations are not educated about it and it is lost. That which was once obvious then becomes obscure or unknown. This is what happened to many of the details of the crucifixion. This is significantly true of the response to the fifth statement of Jesus from the cross – “I thirst.” Everybody of that time knew the torture of crucifixion and the obscenities that were hurled at those who were crucified. It was obvious and thus not passed on.

Many Bible scholars and historians have been reluctant to fully explain the horror of the crucifixion in fear that the masses may not be able to handle it.

Crucifixion was totally brutal. Yet, it was more than brutal; it was meant to bring shame and disgrace before ending the life of the prisoner. It was pure torture. It was used as a deterrent to insurrection and anarchy. It was so brutal that it was illegal for a Roman citizen to be crucified. This is why Apostle Paul, a Roman citizen, was beheaded and not crucified. When one was crucified, he was either an insurrectionist or had no value whatsoever to the empire. The worst criminals were made to work in the salt mines until they became blind due to the irritation of the salt, or they were made to row the triremes

or other war ships. Those who were crucified were considered irreversibly bad and totally useless.

The Romans learned crucifixion from the Persians, but they perfected it. They knew how the victim's body would react at every step of the torture. They had made it an exact science. They had surgical precision. A centurion was required to supervise each execution. His task was to keep the victim alive and conscious for an extended period of time and inflict the maximum amount of pain before assured death. It must be emphasized, it was not just to kill the individual, but to torture and then kill the victim. It was standard operating procedure not to directly injure vital organs such as the heart and lungs. Such injuries would cause the victim to die too quickly. When Joseph of Arimathaea begged Pilate for the Lord's body, Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. (Please read Mark 15:44). The length was shorter than usual for a crucifixion. Jesus had already surrendered His life and the other two were killed quickly because of the Jewish Passover.

The physical reactions to crucifixion were gory, to say the least. It was nauseating for decent people to watch. The victims would vomit, urinate, defecate, and experience convulsions. Many would beg to be quickly put out of their misery. One of the last physiological reactions before death on a cross was severe dehydration and the victim would beg for water. This provided the opportunity for a Roman soldier to give the ultimate, obscene insult before expiration. This malicious, obscene ritual was performed on every victim of crucifixion.

Each Roman soldier carried as part of his equipment a little pouch of vinegar and a sponge on a stick. This sponge on a stick or reed was called a ***tersorium*** or a ***xylospongium***. These were used by the soldiers to clean themselves after they had defecated in the field. To be blunt, they were used to clean their anuses after they had "done number two."

After Jesus said, "I thirst," the soldier then dipped the sponge on the stick into the pouch of vinegar, ran the sponge between the cheeks of his buttock, and then sarcastically and maliciously offered it to Jesus. This act was to taunt the victim and have some "sick" fun. First, vinegar would not quince a thirst. Secondly, this was an act of total obscenity. The only cultural equivalency for us today is the phrase we have heard, but not used, which tells someone to kiss an undesirable body part.

Some theologians have tried to put a positive spin on this act and say the vinegar was to make the victim numb to the pain or moisten His lips. It just does not add up.

After Jesus had endured the ultimate obscene humiliation, He declared, "It is finished" and He commended His spirit to the Father.

Ok, I get it. This may be too much information for some of us. I know it sounds “gross.” It is hard to think about Jesus being disrespected like this. As I stated before, this is why Bible scholars stop teaching this part of the crucifixion. Yet, we need to know the length that Jesus took to bring us salvation and how horrible sin is. He paid the price for our salvation and He did not get a discount. He paid the full price.

The truth shall make you free, but sometimes it will make you miserable before it makes you free.

Our fore-parents had it right when they sang, ***See How They Done My Lord.***

Always Give God The Glory! Always Give God All Of The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Psalm 69:21

Matthew 27:48

Mark 15:36

John 19:29

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