

"Were You There?"

An old hymn asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way. In our rush to judgment over who was responsible for the death of Christ, we often overlook our own role. Christ died for each of us. Were you there?

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's way to be saved and to live the Christian life. I've always loved the old spiritual song, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" You know nothing in life reaches into my soul as does the story of Jesus Christ dying upon the cross. And I can't think of it without several emotions coming up inside of me. The cross is at the heart of what we believe. Thanks for taking time to be with us today. We love hearing that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

When I think of the cruelty of the scourging and the crucifixion, I become angry and ask, well, "how could they treat an innocent, good person like that?" When I think of Judas, I wonder how he could betray the Lord Jesus. When I think of Pilate, I wonder why he gave in to the Jewish leaders and washed his hands of my Lord. Where was his courage? Then I look at myself and my own sins. And I wonder how my Lord Jesus could love me enough to bear such agony for me. I'm very grateful He loved me so much that He was willing to redeem me with His blood. And yet, I am ashamed for all my sins. I'm so sorry for all the evil things I've said and done, all the pain I've caused, and all the times I've failed to do the right thing. Remembering the cross humbles us and yet blesses us at the same time.

We hope that today's Bible study, will be such a blessing to you that you'll want a free copy. We'll never hassle you for money on this program. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, you can call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org.

Larry Owsley will now lead us in song, we'll read from Acts 2:22 to 24, and consider what the cross truly means.

Our reading today comes from the book of Acts chapter 2 verses 22 to 24. And here Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost and giving the gospel for the first time.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Yes Jesus did arise from the dead. Let's pray together. Oh, Father, we're thankful that Jesus was willing to die for us. But we're also grateful Father, that He arose from the dead. Help us to put our faith solidly in Him. It's in His name, Jesus our Lord, that we pray, Amen.

The four gospel accounts Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are inspired by the Holy Spirit and describe the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. Now, I've merged these four accounts from their words to give a fuller picture of what happened.

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they

came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he wouldn't drink it.

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." Well, this was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

Pilate wrote an inscription and put it on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, were there. And when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on His right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross."

So the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling (for) Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

The death of Jesus was unlike any execution ever known. He was innocent but bore the sins of the guilty. While being nailed down, He prayed for His Father to forgive his executioners, because they didn't know what they were doing. The Lord Jesus, because He was Divine, could see what we cannot see and know what we cannot know. The Father planned to offer His body as a sacrifice for their sins, but they didn't realize it. 1 Corinthians 2 verse 8 says, that, "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had (known), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

When a person was executed, the Romans posted the charge against the man on the cross to warn others not to commit the same crime. His accusers charged Him falsely with blasphemy in saying that He was the Messiah, the King of the Jews, yet they resented the sign that proclaimed Him the King of the Jews. Pilate sought to offend the Jews with the statement, but you know what, he spoke more of the truth than he knew.

Peter speaks of the remarkable courage and inner strength of the Lord Jesus in His suffering. 1 Peter 2:21 to 25 says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

There's no wonder the centurion who saw to the crucifixion proclaimed "Truly this man was innocent." Guilty men don't act the way that Jesus acted. They don't refuse a drink that would help them with the pain. They don't ask God to forgive their executioners. They don't keep quiet when being mocked. They don't have the sun darkened and the earth shaking when they're being crucified. Jesus was indeed, righteous and innocent.

Pilate said more than once that he found no guilt in Jesus. Pilate offered Barabbas, hoping to free Jesus; but the high priests and scribes incited the people to insist on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Pilate washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to Him, to them, rather, "Behold, the Man!" So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." Jesus was no ordinary person. The Jews delivered Jesus up to Pilate, not because He was guilty but because they were envious of Jesus.

At the sixth hour the sun became dark. The sun was not darkened for a few minutes, as it would be in an eclipse. This was different; the sun was darkened for three full hours. The earth shook so violently that it split the rocks. God did this.

The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. The veils were 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and four inches thick. They were so heavy they needed 300 priests to move each one. The Veil being torn from top to bottom means that God's own Hand had torn it in two. That veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. And once the veil was torn, that place ceased to be separated or holy.

By dying the Lord Jesus opened a new and living way for us to enter the holy of holies. Hebrews 9 verse 12 says, that, "He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."

Jesus died an agonizing death for you and for me because of His great love. God was in Christ at the cross offering us redemption, offering us forgiveness, offering us reconciliation. God showed this amazing wonderful love in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus upon the cross in order to reach into our hearts and souls. And to bring us back into a right relationship with Himself. I tell you, no one, but no one, will ever love you like Jesus Christ. No one will ever care for you like that. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father we are so grateful that Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself in such a painful way. To give His head to a crown of thorns, His hands and feet to being pierced with nails. His back to a cruel whip. His face to slaps and spit. And Father to His side to a spear. Father, we're thankful He did all of those things for us. Help us to love Him the way He has loved us. It's in His name, our Lord Jesus, that we pray, Amen.

My friend, you were there when they crucified the Lord. Oh, no, you weren't there physically; but yes, you were there spiritually. Remember: Jesus died for you to save you from sin and to begin a relationship with you. He died so that you and I could be reconciled to God in a new covenant, so that you could have a loving relationship with God that would last forever. Yes, you were in His heart then; and you're in His heart now.

God took the initiative to show His love for us all, on the cross, hoping that we would respond with a total commitment of our love. We should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength (Mark 12 verse 30). Committed love is willing to go to any length to comply with what the Lord desires. We're saved by God's grace, and His offer of salvation extends to every person. We can't earn our salvation, but we can meet God's conditions for salvation. God wishes everyone would respond to His love.

And you respond to that remarkable love of God with a love of your own. That love leads you to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, to repent of your sins, to confess Jesus, before others, and to

be baptized. Now baptism into Christ is the immersion of a penitent believer in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now, these you must do if you wish to show your love for God and become a Christian. Now, if the cross means anything, anything, to you and if you realize your sins were involved in sending Jesus to the cross, you won't wait even one day until you come to the Lord in love and obedience. Won't you do that today?

If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs, a map with the location of churches, churches of Christ, that are in your area. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, you may want to write in and give us your name, but don't worry, we're not here to spread your name to others or to get your money or to exploit you. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Why not show your love for God today, by worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. Why not worship with them today? And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.