

HOW DID JESUS END UP ON A CROSS?

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 Luke 23:32-33

Introduction: There's no doubt or question, the cross was a hideous tragedy, a blight on the record of humanity. How did it happen in the first place? Insane, made people? A sudden rush of hysteria? Surprisingly, it was brought on by ordinary people just like us - kindly, likeable, with families. Century by century Jesus is recrucified by each generation. We are not exempt for we, too have crowded too eagerly to Calvary and watched, even helped nail Jesus to His cross. We have laughed in His face, stood by and watched Him die, and then went on about our business and daily lives. "Oh, not me!" you cry? Let's see which crowd you would have fit in if you had been present during Jesus' last week.

I. WOULD YOU BE AMONG THE PHARISEES? (*Matthew 26:3-4*)

- They resented this uneducated layman. "You can always tell a person by the company he/she keeps."
- The Pharisees were very religious, church-going folk who prayed, fasted, lived according to the law and were good devout people. (Sound familiar?)
- They tended to keep their religious life separate from their regular life and saw no need to mix them.
- They didn't want change. They wanted things left the way they had been since the days of Moses. They liked things as they were.
- Through the centuries only faces have changed. There are still those who are very religious, church-going people who refuse to mix their religious life with their daily life and refuse to accept anything new from God. (Do you fit in with these kind of people?)

II. WOULD YOU BE AMONG THE SADUCEES?

- They held the "high" places in the "church" but were totally unspiritual. Politics was the answer and the only way to get things done.
- They did not believe in a resurrection or eternal rewards or eternal punishment. The present life was all there was, so get all you can now.
- There are people like that today who do not think about eternal life and put all their interests, energies, enthusiasm and efforts into things of this life. The cram into every day all they possibly can.
- Sadly, they grow harder and harder to spiritual things and to talk to them about Jesus is like talking to a stump. They don't need Jesus and become offended and even angry when someone does dare talk to them about Jesus. (Do you fit in with these kind of people?)

III. WOULD YOU BE ANOTHER "JUDAS?" (*Mark 14:43-46; Matthew 27:1-5*)

- Jesus loved Judas and was patient with him, prayed about him before calling him to be a disciple.
- All of us have our own opinion about Judas' betrayal. Why did he betray Jesus?
 - Maybe Judas thought Jesus wasn't moving fast enough.
 - Maybe Judas thought he could speed things up a bit by putting Jesus in a serious situation that Jesus would be forced into action. However, all his efforts to speed things up, ended in the horror of the cross.

- Yes, we too, act like Judas. How so? Like Judas we get in a hurry and can't wait for the Lord to act in answering our prayers so we devise ways to help, hurry, and try to force God along in doing what we want. Isn't this so?
- If we don't want to be like Judas, then we must cease our engineering, organizing, continual talking and conferring and just sit quietly and reverently in God's presence, worshipping him and **WAIT!**
- Judas was impatient and he thought he knew what was best better than Jesus. Does this sound familiar?

IV. MAYBE YOU WOULD BE LIKE PILATE (*Mark 15:15; John 19:12-13*)

- A pathetic coward was Pilate. He knew Jesus wasn't guilty. He knew Jesus was innocent and even said so. Why then didn't he put those loud-mouthed priests in their place? Why did he sign the order to allow them to put Jesus to death? Why?
- The Jews had always been a troublesome lot and a sore spot with the Roman government and orders were to keep the Jews satisfied and quiet at all costs.
- Pilate recognized that if he released Jesus, the Jews would cause all sort of trouble. Therefore peace must be kept at all cost, even allowing an innocent man to be put to death. It really didn't matter. Peace must be kept at all costs. Pilate didn't want any trouble from his superiors.
- Have we changed today? Peace at any price? So what if a few have to suffer, it will be better for everyone else in the long run. Let's not make any waves.
- Don't we also go to about any degree to have "peace" or to not be bothered or to have our life style changed? What do we allow our children to do in order to have some peace at home?
- If we can't have our "peace" or our the way of life we want and do God's will at the same time, what do we do? What is our choice? Which will be given up, our want-to's or God's will?
- You see, we too can be like Pilate.

V. WOULD YOU FIT IN WITH THE CROWD? (*Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 15:8-14*)

- Pilate thought the people would do the "right thing" as he remembered how the crowd had thronged around Jesus, following Him wherever He went and how they liked Him. Everybody seemed to really like Jesus so let them decide and they will let Him go.
- Good, decent, kindly, religious people will always make the right decision, right?
- Where was everyone who had been following Jesus? There were just a few present, even Jesus' closest followers were not there.
- Knowing the people would be loyal to the man they had been following, Pilate turned to them and asked them what they wanted. He was stunned! "Crucify Him!"
- So it continues today. Good, decent, kindly, religious people, followers of Jesus, excited, faithful one day and then all at once their interest in Jesus is gone and so are they. Where are they?
 - Busy with more "important" things. People today also leave the Lord. Hot-Cold they are.

CONCLUSION:

1. Would things really be so different if what happened to Jesus then were to happen again today?
2. Perhaps now you can see why God and Jesus had to do it all because we cannot be trusted.
3. Where would you have fit in then? Where would you fit in today?