

(Matt. 27:27) – The crowd chose to release Barabbas, a man who was guilty and worthy of death, and send Jesus in his place to be scourged and crucified. The Scriptures do not tell us if Barabbas ever came to believe in Christ, but by this act of divine providence, we are given a vivid picture of our own salvation by substitution. We are by nature sinful human beings who deserve nothing but death and hell, but Christ took our place and was crucified for our sins so that we are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Here, Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, was humiliated, scourged, and mocked by sinful men, that we, His sheep, be saved, exalted, and embraced by God Almighty Who justifies the ungodly based upon the sufferings unto death of Christ. Luke tells us that Pilate tried to appease the Jews by scourging Him rather than crucifying Him (Luke 23:22). But the Jews wanted His death. Therefore, we read here that the order was given first for our Lord to be scourged and then crucified. This scourging of Christ was an emblem of the strokes of divine justice which He endured in His soul when He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted by the sword of divine justice as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. All this was according to prophecy (Psa. 129:3; Isa. 50:6; 53:5).

(Matt. 27:28) – The soldiers, then, *“STRIPPED HIM, AND PUT ON HIM A SCARLET ROBE.”* The shame of nakedness came into the world with sin (Gen. 3:7). Nakedness is an emblem of our lack of righteousness, and we know that when Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves (a symbol of man’s works), God showed them that this would not work unto righteousness for them. He then slew an animal and made them “coats of skin” (Gen. 3:21). The “scarlet robe” pictures His blood shed for our sins. All this was a symbol of the righteousness of Christ which He accomplished in His obedience unto death for our sins and which righteousness has been imputed to us. Having been “made sin” by our sins imputed to Him, Christ experienced the shame of nakedness and pain of death, symbolically showing His being exposed to the wrath of God for our sins.

(Matt. 27:29) – The soldiers *“PLATTED A CROWN OF THORNS”* and *“PUT IT UPON HIS HEAD.”* This crown of thorns was designed by them to torture Him. But it was also made and shoved upon His brow according to the purpose of our God. Recall that thorns are the result of sin and part of God’s curse upon it (Gen. 3:18). Therefore, when Christ was being made a curse for us and would remove it from us, He wore the emblem of that curse. Then, they put *“A REED IN HIS RIGHT HAND”* and *“BOWED THE KNEE BEFORE HIM, AND MOCKED HIM, SAYING, HAIL, KING OF THE JEWS!”* This was a bamboo scepter, as if to imply that His claim to a throne and His kingdom was no more than a reed shaken in the wind. But we who know and believe in Him know the reality – HE IS KING OF KINGS; HIS KINGDOM IS FOREVER, AND HIS SCEPTRE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS (Psa. 45:6). Like Joseph’s brethren, they said, “Shalt thou indeed

reign over us?” (Gen. 37:8). Like multitudes today, they mocked His claims of sovereignty and dominion. But man’s mockery will not last for long. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Php. 2:9-11).

(Matt. 27:30) – *“AND THEY SPIT UPON HIM, AND TOOK THE REED, AND SMOTE HIM ON THE HEAD.”* Nowhere do Isaiah’s words ring truer in describing our natural enmity against Christ – *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not”* (Isa. 53:3). This is the depth of humiliation for our Savior, that He allowed such sinful creatures to spit on and beat Him on His sacred head. As we read this, always remember WHY He willingly went through this. IT WAS FOR HIS PEOPLE! The Son of God endured this misery, this shame, this torture, that He might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and peace, and glory! But these torments alone could never satisfy the justice of God. He must be crucified! Therefore, we read, *“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Php. 2:8).

(Matt. 27:31) – *“AND AFTER THAT THEY HAD MOCKED HIM, THEY TOOK THE ROBE OFF FROM HIM, AND PUT HIS OWN RAIMENT ON HIM, AND LED HIM AWAY TO CRUCIFY HIM.”* Isaiah tells us that He was “led as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7). And where did they lead Him? As the Holy Spirit tells us in Hebrews 13:12, He was taken outside “the gate,” i.e. outside of Jerusalem to a hill called Golgotha which was called “a place of a skull.” These high-minded religionists did not deem Him worthy to be executed in their holy city. As Isaiah wrote, they (as all natural sinful people) judged Him to be “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa. 53:4). They called Him a blasphemer. And what is so ironic about this is that He truly was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” by His heavenly Father, but NOT BECAUSE HE HIMSELF WAS, OR EVER BECAME, A BLASPHEMER. Again, we need to realize that our Lord and Savior was (and is) the impeccable Godman Who never sinned and Who knew no sin. His personal experience with sin was only by IMPUTATION (the sin-debt of His people laid to His charge) and by PROXIMITY (He walked among and dealt with sinful people without any contamination from them). But it did please the Lord to crush Him BECAUSE HE WAS THE SURETY, SUBSTITUTE, AND REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE GIVEN TO HIM BY HIS FATHER BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN! He was led outside the camp that He “might sanctify the people with His own blood” (Heb. 13:12; cf. 10:10-14). And His obedience unto death secured the complete salvation of all the sinners for whom He died and arose again. His obedience unto the death, which satisfied God’s justice as indicated by His resurrection from the dead, is the ground of their justification before God and the power of their being given spiritual and eternal life!