

The Crucifixion

Luke 23:26-49

by Don Falkos

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As Jesus was being led away, he was supposed to carry the beam of the cross on which he was going to be crucified, but he was so weak from being beaten he couldn't manage it. The soldiers forced Simon, a native of Cyrene in Africa, to carry it for him.

When they came to a place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus along with two other men, both criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't understand what they're doing." And the soldiers divided up his clothes amongst themselves by casting lots.

The religious leaders taunted, "He saved others, let's see him save himself, if he really is the Messiah."

There was a placard nailed to the cross above Jesus' head: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. So the soldiers asked, "If you're the king of the Jews, why don't you save yourself?"

One of the criminals derided Jesus, "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!"

The other criminal shouted back, "We're only getting what we deserve. But this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom."

Jesus answered, "Today you'll be with me in paradise."

At midday the sun was eclipsed for about three hours. The curtain that separated the Holy of Holies in the Temple was torn in two, right down the middle. Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And with those words, Jesus died.

The centurion, the Roman official in charge of the crucifixion, praised God and said, "This was certainly an innocent man."

The crowd went home deeply distressed. While those who had known Jesus, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a respectful distance and watched.