

# Our Savior

JESUS ENDURED THE CROSS SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE  
ACCESS TO GOD.

## Matthew 27:27-31,45-54

27 Then the **governor's soldiers** **A** took Jesus into the **governor's residence** **B** and gathered the whole company around him. 28 They stripped him and **dressed him** **C** in a scarlet robe. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, **king of the Jews!**" **D** 30 Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. 31 After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to **crucify** **E** him. [ . . . ] 45 From noon until three in the afternoon, **darkness** **F** came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?**" **G** that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for **Elijah.**" **H** 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with **sour wine**, **I** put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. 49 But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." 50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and **gave up his spirit.** **J** 51 Suddenly, the **curtain of the sanctuary** **K** was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the **Son of God!**" **L**

### Exploring Key Words

- A** A troop of Roman soldiers under Pilate's authority. This cohort could have been as large as six hundred men.
- B** "Praetorium" (NIV). Where Pilate stayed in Jerusalem likely included barracks for troops.
- C** To humiliate Jesus, the soldiers used a robe, a crown of thorns, and a staff (vv. 28-29). Each was a parody of royal trappings.
- D** The Romans used the title as a joke. Yet, it was true in a way they didn't know (Matt. 27:11,42).
- E** The crowd had called for Jesus's crucifixion, and Pilate finally gave in to their demands (Matt. 27:22-26). This was the most brutal form of execution imaginable in the Roman Empire.
- F** Darkness in the middle of the day. Many scholars compare it to the darkness of God's judgment against Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23).
- G** See Psalm 22:1. Jesus's words are quoted in Aramaic. His cry expresses the isolation He felt as sin separated Him from His Father.
- H** Some in the crowd thought Jesus was calling for Elijah to rescue Him. Legend stated that Elijah could come to aid those who were suffering.
- I** A common, bitter drink that was cheaper than regular wine.
- J** Idiom for physical death. Jesus maintained control, even to the moment of His passing.
- K** This thick curtain limited access to the holy of holies. This, along with an earthquake and the raising of the dead (vv. 51-53), were additional supernatural signs.
- L** The centurion's confession mirrored that of the disciples (Matt. 14:33; 16:16) and foreshadowed the gospel being received by both Jews and Gentiles.



NOTES

### **Mocked** (Matt. 27:27-31)

- Following Jesus's trial before Pilate, soldiers sought to humiliate Him. They clothed Him in a scarlet robe and put a crown of thorns on His head. They knelt before Him, mockingly referring to Him as "king of the Jews."
- After they were done mocking Jesus, the soldiers abused Him. They spit on Him and struck Him in the head.
- Finally, they led Him away to be crucified.

### **Forsaken** (Matt. 27:45-49)

- At noon, darkness came across the land and lasted for three hours.
- Jesus cried out in Aramaic, asking God why He had abandoned Him. His words echoed Psalm 22.
- Some of the onlookers mistakenly thought He was calling out for the help of Elijah and offered Jesus a drink.

### **Son of God** (Matt. 27:50-54)

- When Jesus died, the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. This was not the only supernatural event Matthew recorded. He also noted that the earth quaked, tombs were opened, and the bodies of saints were raised.
- When the centurion and others with him saw these things, they declared that Jesus must be the Son of God.

### **Summary Statements**

*Jesus endured the cross so that we might have access to God.*

- Jesus's willingness to endure the shame and humiliation of crucifixion leads us to humble surrender and praise.
- We can be confident in knowing that Jesus's death was part of God's redemptive plan.
- The crucifixion of Jesus calls for the response of faith.

### **Memory Verse**

*Matthew 27:50-51*

### **Key Doctrine**

*Salvation*

Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior. (See John 1:12-13; Titus 2:14.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

## ENGAGE

**Bonus: What was the last biography you read? How much space did it give the person's death?**

- Biographers will spend hundreds of pages describing the life of their subjects, but they generally limit the pages about their death to just a few. For example, *The Last Lion* devotes more than 2,600 pages to Winston Churchill's life and only three pages to his death.
- This is not the case with the Gospel of Matthew's account of Jesus. Jesus's death was central, and Matthew devoted seven out of twenty-eight chapters to the events surrounding Jesus's crucifixion.

**What does the amount of space devoted to Jesus's death tell you about its importance? Why do you think it's important? (PSG, p. 122)**

## EXPLORE

### MOCKED (MATT. 27:27-31)

**Bonus: Which hurts more: physical suffering or emotional suffering? Why?**

- Following His trial, Jesus was handed over to the "governor's soldiers." These were not legionnaires, but conscripted soldiers assigned to Pilate.
- The soldiers mocked Jesus. They put "a scarlet robe" on Him and fashioned a crown of thorns to press into His head. A further symbol of mockery was a "staff" or reed representing a makeshift scepter.
- The soldiers also abused Jesus verbally, ridiculing Him as "king of the Jews." They mistreated Him physically by spitting on Him and beating Him on the head. Jesus had predicted this suffering (Matt. 20:19).
- Finally, Jesus was led off to be crucified. Historians suggest that prisoners usually were naked when led to crucifixion. The Romans may have clothed Jesus to placate the Jews.

**What emotions does this passage evoke in you? (PSG, p. 125)**

### FORSAKEN (MATT. 27:45-49)

**Bonus: When have you felt most isolated? What made Jesus's separation from God so intense?**

- Jesus endured more suffering. Soldiers gambled for His clothes and religious leaders taunted Him. In verse 45, Matthew focused on the last three hours of Jesus's life.
- At noon, everything went dark across "the whole land." This was the first of four supernatural events associated with Jesus's death.
- Matthew recorded only one statement from the cross. Jesus cried out in Aramaic words taken from Psalm 22:1: *Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni*. Translated, this cry meant "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

- God, who is holy and cannot look on sin, turned from Jesus as He bore the world's sins. Jesus's words were misunderstood by some who thought He was calling out to Elijah. Someone offered Him sour wine. See Psalm 69:21.

**How does Jesus's cry on the cross point to the greatness of our sin? (PSG, p. 127)**

### SON OF GOD (MATT. 27:50-54)

**Bonus: What convinced you that Jesus was the Son of God and Savior of the world?**

- The cries of most who were crucified grew weaker over time, but Jesus "cried out" loudly, refusing to die with a whimper. With His cry, Jesus "gave up his spirit." The work of paying the penalty for sin (atonement) was complete. Again, Jesus demonstrated His control by determining when He died.
- Three more supernatural events accompanied Jesus's death. The thick temple curtain at the holy of holies tore from "top to bottom." The veil, which was 21 inches thick, could not have been torn by human hands. Other events included an earthquake and the resurrection of saints.
- Witnessing Jesus's death, a Roman centurion declared Him to be the "Son of God." His confession pointed Matthew's readers to a day when many Gentiles would acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior.

**What evidence from the day's events might be used to help others recognize that Jesus was the Son of God? (PSG, p. 129)**

## CHALLENGE

As a group, list some ways people try to get into heaven apart from Jesus.

**Why is each one a dead end? How do the events that occurred as Jesus was on the cross validate that all the work required for salvation has already been accomplished? (PSG, p. 130)**

Challenge adults to identify "key takeaways" from Jesus's death on the cross.

**How should that impact your life every day? Are there truths that you discovered that you should share with someone else? (PSG, p. 130)**

### FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

## BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 129)

Examine an Old Testament passage to better understand a New Testament truth.

Of Jesus's seven cries from the cross, the only one Matthew recorded was Jesus's quote from Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 is a messianic psalm that predicted much of what Jesus suffered on the cross. Read and reflect on Psalm 22. **Why are these messianic prophecies so important today?** Use what you learned from Psalm 22 as a cross reference for deeper study into Matthew 27:33-50; Mark 15:22-37; Luke 23:33-48; and John 19:17-37.

Group adults into teams of two or three and direct each team to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 129). After several minutes, allow volunteers from each team to report on their findings. Remind adults that Matthew's focus was on showing his Jewish audience that Jesus really was the Messiah. Say: *And fulfilled prophecy was a key tool in proving his argument.*

## OBJECT LESSON: DARKNESS

Make your room as dark as possible. Share a time when you were in the dark and longing for some light. Allow a few volunteers to share their experiences. Note that many children are afraid of the dark, but even adults can feel uneasy when they are surrounded by too much darkness for too long.

Ask: **How does darkness add intensity to a situation? What do you think the people in Jerusalem imagined was causing the darkness? What does this darkness reveal about how God views sin and death?**

Emphasize that darkness in Matthew 27 was supernatural in origin. Point out that the physical darkness passed after Jesus died and that His death and resurrection made it possible for people to overcome spiritual darkness. Encourage adults to consider where they stand with God. If time allows, review the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover and encourage adults to speak with you if they still need to accept Jesus as Savior.

## THE STRANGE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS

In the very words of those who mocked Jesus, we hear the truth of the gospel:

- “The King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37).
- “Save yourself . . . come down from the cross” (27:40).
- “He saved others, but He cannot save himself” (27:42).

Jesus is indeed King, not only of the Jews but also of all creation. Yet, He is a King who came willingly to lay down His life for us (John 10:18). In fact, Jesus would not save Himself *from* the cross because He only could save us *through* the cross. Few capture this paradox more powerfully than D.A. Carson's poem “Cross-eyed.”<sup>1</sup>

Through his words, Carson reflects on the soldiers who mocked Jesus and, unknowingly, spoke truth by hailing the “king.” They were “blind to this stunning theme: Jesus reigning from a cursed cross.”

He also noted how mockers scoffed at the “battered God-man.” They questioned how He could claim to save others when He couldn't save Himself from the cross. The “savage jeering” of Jesus's humiliation was the key to the salvation from the “King of grace.”

Carson summed up the alienation Jesus felt, His separation from the Father, in the poem's final verse. Yet, that very separation provided a path of reconciliation to everyone who believes. Jesus's death (and resurrection) defeated death once and for all:

*Draped in darkness, utterly rejected,  
Crying, “Why have you forsaken me?”  
Jesus bears God's wrath alone, dejected—  
Weeps the bitt'rest tears instead of me.  
All the mockers cry, “He has lost his trust!  
He's defeated by hypocrisy!”  
But with faith's resolve, Jesus knows he must  
Do God's will and swallow death for me.*

1. Carson, D. A., *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

## BONUS CONTENT



### Passion Week

Learn more about Jesus's final week on earth—the events that led Him to the cross and the hope that followed.



These items are available in the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* (print and digital).

Visit [goExploreTheBible.com](https://goExploreTheBible.com) to purchase the pack.

**Pack Item 1:** Map: Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee (Sessions 1-14)

- Locate a map that highlights the key places where Jesus traveled and ministered outside of Galilee in Matthew 14-28.

**Pack Item 2:** Poster: Outline of Matthew 14-28 (Sessions 1-14)

- Refer to page 8 of the PSG to create a poster that outlines Matthew 14-28.

**Pack Item 3:** Poster: Peter in Matthew's Gospel (Sessions 1, 3-5)

- Create a chart that highlights Peter's role in Matthew's Gospel. Include locations, references, and descriptions of each experience.

**Pack Item 4:** Poster: Key Verse: Matthew 28:19-20a (Session 6)

- Create a poster with the text of Matthew 28:19-20a.

**Pack Item 5:** Poster: Parables of Jesus (Sessions 8, 9, 11)

- Create a chart that identifies and explains the key parables of Jesus found in Matthew 14-28. Include the name of the parable, where it is found in Matthew's Gospel, and its teaching emphasis.

**Pack Item 6:** Poster: Loving God, Loving Others (Session 10)

- Create a four column poster with these headings: Heart, Soul, Mind, Neighbors. This will be used in application to help adults identify how they can love God and others better.

**Pack Item 7:** Poster: Key Verse: Matthew 25:40 (Session 12)

- Create a poster with the text of Matthew 25:40.

**Pack Item 8:** Handout: Matthew Time Line (Sessions 1-14)

- Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the Gospel of Matthew. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references for context.

**Pack Item 9:** Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew's Gospel (Sessions 1-14)

- Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in Matthew's Gospel. Focus on the following questions: *What does this passage teach me about God and His character? How should I respond to what He is showing me about Himself?*

**Pack Item 10:** Handout: Traditions of the Elders (Session 2)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that describes the traditions of the elders mentioned in Matthew 15.

**Pack Item 11:** Handout: Why Caesarea Philippi? (Session 3)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that describes the history and significance of the areas where Peter made His great confession of Jesus as the Messiah.

**Pack Item 12:** Handout: The Mount of Transfiguration (Session 4)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that considers the possible locations of the mountain where Jesus was transfigured.

**Pack Item 13:** Handout: Interpreting Parables (Sessions 5, 8, 9)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a chart that explains key principles for interpreting the parables Jesus shared in Matthew's Gospel.

**Pack Item 14:** Handout: Greatness in the Kingdom (Session 7)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that considers how greatness was measured in the ancient world and how Jesus redefined the idea through His teachings.

## COMING **NEXT QUARTER**



### **JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH**

Session 1: **Strong and Courageous** (Joshua 1:1-11,16-18)

Session 2: **Amazing Grace** (Joshua 2:4-21)

Session 3: **Remembering God's Works** (Joshua 3:14-4:9)

Session 4: **Winning Strategy** (Joshua 6:12-25)

Session 5: **Sin Revealed** (Joshua 7:10-23)

Session 6: **Unwavering Determination** (Joshua 14:1-15)

Session 7: **Vital Decision** (Joshua 24:14-24)

Session 8: **Consequences** (Judges 2:11-23)

Session 9: **Called** (Judges 6:1-4,7-16)

Session 10: **Trust** (Judges 7:1-8,19-23)

Session 11: **Compromise** (Judges 16:16-31)

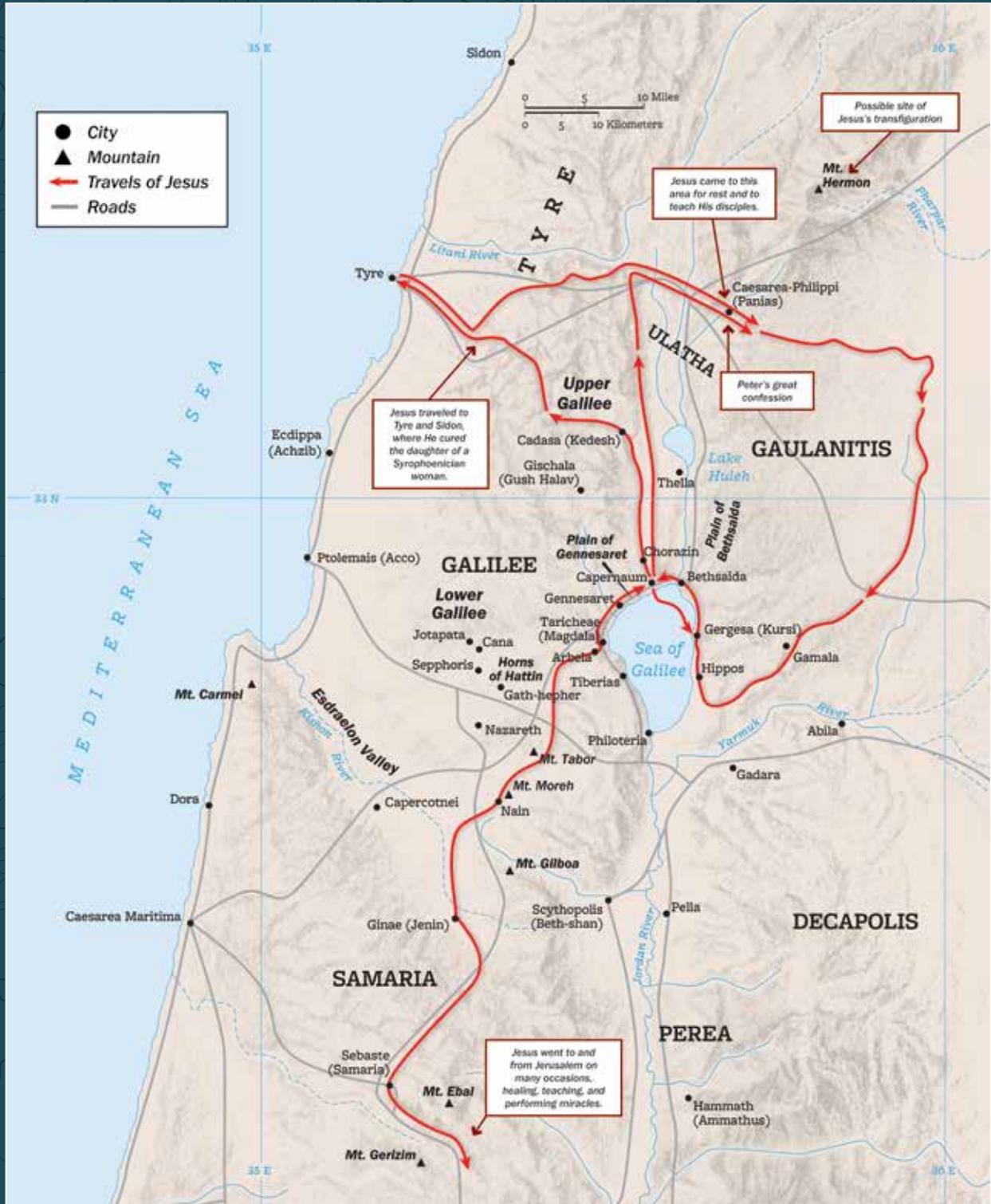
Session 12: **Faithfulness** (Ruth 1:11-18; 2:5-12)

Session 13: **Redemption** (Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17)

# Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me  
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

# Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee



"Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee" is based on "The Ministry of Jesus Beyond Galilee," Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1998), p. 224. Used with permission.

## MATTHEW 14–28

Turning points are key to any story. A character moving in one direction suddenly transitions to a new path. Overcoming obstacles, the hero wins in the end. Matthew 14–28 represents a turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus. After preaching and healing in Galilee, Christ turned His face toward Jerusalem. His steps ultimately took Him to a cross—and an empty tomb. As believers, we benefit from this turning point. Through His example, we learn how to face our fears, overcome opposition, sacrifice for others, and embrace the hope that only He provides. By studying Matthew 14–28, we gain a better understanding of what it means to live out our faith each day—and how we can move forward to make disciples of all nations.

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

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