

Come Down from the Cross

Matt 27:35, 39; Lu 23:27-44

Introduction:

1. The crucifixion, was it the world's greatest tragedy or the world's greatest triumph?
 - a. Was Jesus the sad, helpless victim of wicked men, the victim of circumstances He could not handle?
 - b. Or was He God's sacrifice for the sins of all who would believe?
2. Many stood looking at the cross and taunting Jesus
 - a. They mocked Him
 - b. "If you are the Christ, come down from the cross."
 - c. They saw no eternal meaning in the crucifixion
 - d. They saw no merciful atonement
 - e. They saw no manifestation of God's love
 - f. To them the cross of Christ was foolishness
3. God goes to great lengths to record those who said to Jesus, "Come down off the cross."
4. The Scriptures name those who mocked and reviled Jesus and said, "Come down from the cross"
 - a. We do well to consider who they were
 - b. We do well to find out why the cross was to them a stumblingblock

I. WHO SAID, "COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS"

A. *The Crowd Said It – Matt 27:39*

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [it] in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

1. Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover
2. Thousands of visitors had descended on Jerusalem for Passover
3. People from many nationalities, rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant were in Jerusalem that day
4. B.H. Carroll estimated that perhaps a million people passed by on the road during the six hours that Jesus hung on the cross
5. If Jesus were crucified today, there would still be a crowd mocking
6. The cross is not precious to the lost since they have no concept of it's meaning

B. The Chief Priests Said It – Matt 27:41-42

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking [him], with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

1. Jesus hangs on the cross, the Lamb of God dying, and here come the chief priests from the temple
2. They had been set aside from birth to attend to the things of the temple which pointed to the Savior's coming and dying
3. Every sacrifice, every goat, dove, ram, lamb, scapegoat, pigeon, turtledove pictured Christ the Lamb of God
4. On the left, as the priest entered the holy place, stood the lampstand – picturing Christ the light of the world
5. On the right side of the holy place is the table of shewbread – revealing Christ as the bread of life
6. Poor, blinded priests – they offered sacrifices, lit the lamps, saw the fresh loaves of bread, but did not get the message
7. They paid tithes of all they owned, they fasted, they prayed long and loud and yet they said, “Come down from the cross”
8. These priests represent many who turned over a new leaf, but don't

have a new heart

c. The Scribes Said It – Matt 27:41-42

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking [him], with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

1. The scribes were copiers of God’s Word – there were no printing presses so copies were made by hand
2. Each word was carefully copied
 - a) *The letters in each line were counted*
 - b) *If a mistake was found, then the whole page was recopied*
3. These scribes copied each page of scripture, but they did not see the suffering Savior on each page
4. Along with the others, they said, “Come down from the cross”
5. It was the scribes that King Herod called when he wanted to find out where the Messiah would be born
 - a) *They knew Micah 5:2 and Isa 7:14*
 - (1) Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting.
 - (2) Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
 - b) *They knew that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem just as Jesus had done the week before*

d. The Elders Said It – Matt 27:41-42

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking [him], with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

1. These were the rulers of the people – the Sanhedrin
2. Everyone knew that the elders wanted Jesus dead
3. They took their public position very seriously, but not the Savior
4. Two were different from the rest
 - a) *Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus*
 - b) *They later buried the body of Jesus*
5. How good it is when God gives us leaders who are saved

E. The Thieves Crucified with Christ Said It – Matt 27:44

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

1. The thieves crucified with Christ said the same thing – “Come down from the cross”
2. Surely they would understand that Jesus was not one of them – He was innocent
3. One thief did repent and turn to Christ

F. The Soldiers Said It – Lu 23:36-37

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

1. These soldiers represented the Roman Govt and Pilate
 - a) *They had put a scarlet robe on Christ*
 - b) *Given Him a crown of thorns*
 - c) *Put a reed in His hands for a scepter*
 - d) *They bowed in mock humility*
 - e) *They blindfolded Him, spit on Him, pulled out His beard*

2. One day they will bow before Him on whom they spit

II. SATAN WAS BEHIND THIS REQUEST?

A. Satan Had Tried to Kill Jesus Earlier

1. There was unanimity around the cross that day because of the cry of Satan himself
2. He hated the cross of Christ with unholy hatred
3. Was it not Satan who got into that dark and cruel mind of Herod when he decided to kill all the baby boys of Jerusalem?
4. Herod didn't want a rival and Satan didn't want a Savior to die on a cross for sinners
5. Satan filled the hearts of those Jews with hatred who heard Jesus preach in the synagogue that day when they led Him to a cliff to...
6. He couldn't kill Jesus before and now he was saying, "Come down from the cross"

B. Satan Had Tried to Tempt Jesus Earlier

1. Remember that Jesus was filled with the Spirit and led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan
 - a) *First it was the temptation to turn stones to bread*
 - b) *Then Satan tried to get Jesus to test God*
 - c) *Next, Satan wanted Jesus to bow before him*
2. Satan would give Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth and Jesus would not even have to go to the cross
3. Jesus refused the offer of Satan and walked the path that His heavenly Father had chosen for Him
4. Jesus did not take the easy way, He suffered and bled and died

C. Satan Tried to Stop the Fulfillment of Prophecy

1. If Satan could not stop Jesus from dying, then he would try to make

the death of no effect

2. He knew that the death of Christ had to be exactly according to Scripture – at the right time, in the right place, the right way
 - a) *His hands and feet must be pierced*
 - b) *He must be crucified between 2 thieves*
 - c) *He must ride into Jerusalem on a donkey*
 - d) *He must be buried in the tomb of a rich man*
 - e) *If Scripture failed, then Jesus' mission failed*
3. Satan tried to have His legs broken
4. Satan caused Peter to rebuke Jesus so he would not go to the cross

III. WHAT IF JESUS HAD COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS?

A. He Could Have Come Down

1. Jesus' death was voluntary
2. He was not some martyr, not a victim of circumstances
3. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep
Joh 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.
4. Jesus could have called for 12 legions of angels
Mt 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

B. We Would All Be Eternally Damned

1. If Jesus had come down off the cross, we would be lost
2. If Jesus hadn't borne the curse, then we would have to
3. If Jesus had not taken our place, we ... have to suffer for our sins
4. God the Father turned His back on Jesus, His Son – we won't have to

experience that

5. He took what I deserved so I could have what He deserved

C. What Held Jesus to the Cross that Day?

1. Nails of iron didn't hold Him on the cross
2. The Roman seal on the tomb did not hold Him when it was time to arise
3. Jesus stayed on the cross because He was in agreement with God's plan
4. Jesus stayed on the cross because the Word of God was at stake
5. The integrity of the Bible and the integrity of Christ must stand or fall together
6. Love held Him on the cross

D. Not Everybody said, "Come Down"

1. Peter denied His Lord, and then wept bitterly, but he never said, "Come down"
2. Mary, the mother of Christ, didn't say, "Come down"
3. No believer said, "Come down"
4. Neither Joseph of Arimathaea nor Nicodemus said, "Come down"
5. If you were there that day, would you have asked Jesus to "come down"?

Conclusion:

Dr. Chamberlain, one of the oldest missionaries in India, says that one day while he was preaching in Benares, among the devotees who came to bathe in the sacred stream, was a man who had journeyed wearily on his knees and elbows from a great distance with the pain of conviction at his heart. He hoped that by washing in the Ganges to be relieved of his "looking for judgment." Poor soul! He dragged himself to the river's edge, made his

prayer to Gunga, and crept in. A moment later he emerged with the old pain still tugging at his heart. He lay prostrate on the bank in his despair, and heard the voice of the missionary. He raised himself and crawled a little nearer. He listened to the simple story of the Cross. He was hungry and thirsty for it. He rose upon his knees, then upon his feet, then clapped his hands and cried, "That's what I want! That's what I want!" The story of the Cross is what our dying world needs! —Watchman-Examiner