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The Crucifixion, Matthew 27:27-44

By Aaron Shamp

Introduction

- When it comes to the arrest, trial, and crucifixion, what does Matthew choose to highlight? Not the gory details but the shame of the event and ironies.
 - My three points today come from “Ironies of the Cross” by Don Carson.
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“Hail, King of the Jews!”

- First, the man who was mocked as king was the King (27:27-31).
 - When the Roman police arrested someone, it was standard procedure to beat them up. It was considered good interrogation technique. But what they do to Jesus here is unique. They mock him as a failed rebel leader.
 - At the beginning of the Gospel, Matthew tells us that Jesus is a new king in the line of David.
 - Pilate asked him if he was king and he noticed that this was no ordinary king. He had no crown, troops, arms, etc.
 - The men who were mocking him as king were unknowingly abusing the true King. The creation was mocking the Creator.
 - What sort of king is this?
 - In Matt. 20:20-28 we read about Jesus describe the kind of king that he is.
 - “That’s why for three centuries in the early church Christians spoke of Jesus reigning from the cross. You see, they understood the irony. This, at a time when if a king reigned, he reigned with authority, where the cross was understood only to reflect shame and execution, destitution, despair, horrible suffering, and odium. Yet, Christians dared to speak of Jesus reigning from the cross.”

“You who would destroy the temple...”

- Second, the man who is utterly powerless is powerful (27:32-40).
 - Crucifixion was a public execution that would be done in a place where everyone could see it so as to scare off others from similar crimes.
 - The Romans left the uprights in place, and the victim would carry the crossbar.
 - Victims of crucifixion would most often die from suffocation after their muscles would spasm from trying to hold themselves up to breathe. This agony could go on for hours. If the Romans needed someone dead faster, they would smash the victim’s shins.
 - The guards stood there to make sure no friends or family could come and rescue the victim.
 - Jesus was mocked for saying that he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. This might have been the charge they used against him to justify capital punishment to the Romans.
 - However, Jesus was referring to himself (see John 2). The temple was the meeting place between God and the people where they would have their sins atoned.
 - When we see how Jesus gave up his life on the cross it reminds us that he called us to take up our cross—to similarly give up our lives to him.

“He saved others, but he cannot save himself!”

- Third, the man who can’t save himself saves others (27:41-42).
 - What does it mean *to save*? In secular America, it means putting your money in a bank, stopping a goal in a game, or backing up a file...
 - Here, it means that he saves people from their sins. He is able to save people from their sins because he is the offended party—the one who was sinned against.
 - What they didn’t know was that if he had come down off of that cross, he couldn’t have saved others.