

# The Message of the Cross

## John 19:1-27

### **John 19:16-22 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> “So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

<sup>17</sup> They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

<sup>18</sup> There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

<sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

<sup>20</sup> Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek.

<sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’”

<sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

Rome used the cross as a brutal method for executing criminals. Through Jesus’ sacrificial act, its message became one of hope and life for those who believe in Him.

The cross meant various things to different people in the gospel account. To Pilate, Judea’s governor, it was the place where an innocent man had died. The Pharisees and Sadducees, on the other hand, saw the cross as the way to eliminate a problem—it meant that the radical rabbi was finished, and their position and authority were no longer threatened.

When Judas Iscariot heard that Jesus was condemned to die, he became greatly distressed. I believe the betrayer had thought his actions would force Jesus to declare His kingdom, with Judas taking a high position in the new government. Instead, his error in judgment crushed any personal ambition.

In that culture, the cross represented shameful crime. Knowing the perfection of her son’s life and His identity as the Son of God, Mary must have been certain it was undeserved. She also no doubt saw it as fulfillment of prophecy: When Jesus was just days old, Simeon had prophesied that a sword would one day pierce Mary’s soul. (See [Luke 2:34-35](#).) The cross brought that about.

### **Luke 2:34-35 (NASB)**

<sup>34</sup> “And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

<sup>35</sup> and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

To Jesus’ disciples, the crucifixion was the time when their beloved friend and Messiah died. Their close relationship with Jesus seemed to end, as did their dream of being freed from Roman jurisdiction.

What response would you give to the question, “**What does the cross mean to you?**” Is it the place where **1)** a good man lost his life, **2)** a troublemaker was eliminated, or **3)** the Son of God died to save you?