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THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST AND HUMAN SUFFERING

A Thesis
Presented to the Department of Biblical Studies
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Biblical Studies

Presented by
Dennis Charles Heiberg
May 1992
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The greatest amount of support has come from my precious wife, Cindy. Thank you for your ceaseless encouragement and understanding, not merely during this project, but throughout these past ten years of ministry training.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my gratitude and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, who through his passion, has revealed his awesome love for me!


"A Summary of Reasons for Suffering" is from A Path Through Suffering © 1990 by Elisabeth Elliot Gren. Published by Servant Publications, P.O. Box 8617, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107. Used with Permission.

What motivates a student to spend hours of research focusing upon one thesis topic out of the myriad of possible alternatives? For me, the answer begins close to home. In recent years I have been greatly affected by the intense suffering of those involved in my daily world. A grandmother is struck by a truck as she crosses a street. A week later she dies from internal injuries. . . . A loving parent struggles with mental and emotional anguish in the midst of her marriage. . . . The only son of a Bible College professor is killed as his car skids off the interstate. . . . A best friend's infant daughter dies after living outside her mother's womb thirty-six short hours. . . . A Seminary professor and advisor is killed in a plane crash as he returns home from a ministry conference. . . . A woman and her children bear the deep wounds of years of abuse from a tyrannical husband. . . . A faithful wife sits beside her ailing husband's hospital bed for sixteen months hoping for a miracle while his body is reduced to skin and bones. . . . A precious saint cries out for mercy as he realizes he will now lose his second leg to the radical effects of sugar diabetes. . . . The list could go on and on.

Even before I began my career as an ordained minister, my heart was pierced by the pain other individuals experienced. And now, nearing the end of my first decade of ministry, the suffering of individuals seems to surround me.

My motivation was further stirred to research this complex issue while enrolled in a course entitled "Servant as Pastoral Care Giver." The professor, well seasoned from thirty years of pastoral service, challenged each of us to make sure we had a grasp of our "Theology of Suffering" before we entered as ministers into a suffering world.

Someone has said "Theology is tested in the hospital!" Therefore, I became further concerned with the issue of human
suffering through my Clinical Pastoral Education internship this past summer in a local hospital. As fate would have it, I was assigned to the intensive care units where I witnessed acute suffering in a variety of forms.

It was in my role as a chaplain and member of the pastoral care team that I began to ask questions such as: "What genuine comfort, that is unique to my faith, can I bring as a Christian minister to a suffering patient?" "How does this person's suffering affect God?" "Where is God in the midst of suffering?" "What practical implications can be gleaned from the suffering of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels?"

The focus of my thesis began to take shape as I sat in another of my Seminary classes, "The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ." During a unit on the Cross, the professor challenged us to "preach the Cross as the Christian response to the problem of suffering." I was intrigued. I thought to myself, "Perhaps this is the opening in the dark cloud of confusion I have been waiting for!"

Twelve months and hundreds of pages later, I find myself still affected by the hurting people around me. Even as I complete this paper, a parishioner agonizes over his seventy-four year old father who has been struck with Parkinson's disease as well as being diagnosed with Alzheimer's. During a Sunday School class the son and his wife break down and weep over the pain of watching a father and loved one turn into a helpless invalid. The class members reach out to comfort and encourage the couple in their distress.

Yes, this is the reality of the world we live in. Even if one does not personally experience the magnitude of agony and distress endured by Job, we are all acquainted with

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1Stephen Seamands, class lecture, April 11, 1991.
suffering in some form. As one fallen world leader has reminded us, "People are born. People suffer. People die."²

Therefore, as one who has received the call of the pastoral ministry, and who will be dealing with this issue in the lives of those around me on a daily basis, I sincerely desire to bring sound biblical comfort and encouragement to those who are suffering.

I believe the good news of the Gospel reveals that God has spoken to the issue of human suffering, most clearly through the suffering of his own Son, Jesus Christ. Perhaps the words of John R. W. Stott best convey my heart on this difficult issue: "In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?"³

²Mikhail Gorbachev speaking to Ted Koppel of ABC News on the eve of his resignation as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

It has been called the "Achilles' heel" of the pastoral ministry. Thomas Oden claims no other profession directly faces the question of the meaning of this dilemma more frequently than Christian ministry. Douglas Brown asserts this topic even shatters one's "confidence in a God of love and justice." John R. W Stott believes this issue "constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith." What is this serious dilemma that seems to shake the foundation of the Christian faith? Considerable gallons of ink have been expended over the centuries upon the perplexing issue of human suffering. When one adds the existence of a loving God into the matter, it seems only to increase one's dilemma. Douglas Hall even suggests that "God and human suffering [are] perhaps the most difficult combination of words in the human vocabulary!" When asked why he left his fundamental Christian upbringing, multimillionaire Ted Turner explained that he "couldn't reconcile the concept of an all-powerful God with so much suffering on earth." Possibly

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Archibald MacLeish's words through his character J.B. convey the struggle: "If God is God He is not good. If God is good He is not God."\(^9\)

Through the years, seemingly more questions have been raised about suffering than answers furnished.\(^{10}\) Why is there suffering in the world? If God is loving, why does He allow suffering? Where is God in the midst of my pain? Does God know what it's like to suffer? Can God indeed feel my pain?\(^{11}\)

Suffering is no respecter of persons. This menace crosses over every conceivable division of the human race: sex, race, color, language, religion, economic status, level of literacy, education, and industrial development. No one on this planet is immune to its uninvited companionship at some time in their life. Suffering is a universal theme that coexists with humankind at every point throughout one's existence upon the earth.\(^{12}\)

Because this issue is universal in scope and so violently attacks the Christian faith and its ministry throughout the world, this writer has desired to search the


\(^{10}\)While Scripture does not completely satisfy our question of the "why" of suffering, it does contain many insights and principles. See: Appendix A, Suffering: A Biblical Survey, and Appendix B, "A Summary of Reasons For Suffering," for biblical principles which give sound answers to many of our questions related to human suffering.


Scriptures to gain insight which would be of help especially in the area of pastoral care. Due to the vast ranges of topics and concerns related to suffering, this thesis will be limited to one major area of concern: "What does the passion of Jesus Christ reveal to humanity about God's concern and regard for those who experience suffering?"

Therefore, this thesis will not look into the vital subjects of theodicy, the problem of evil, God's goodness, God's fairness, nor the essential doctrines of the Deity of Christ and the Incarnation. These areas have been addressed and are essential ingredients to the issue of human suffering. This paper, however, will focus on the sub-problems of: God's passibility, the passion of Jesus Christ, Jesus' compassion for those who suffer, and the possibility of God's presence in human suffering. To accomplish this task within the limits of a thesis, the primary focus will be directed upon the passion account as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

The Thesis Statement

The passion of Jesus Christ reveals God's intimate identification and full participation in the reality of human suffering. As Immanuel, Jesus has experienced the most extreme of all human sufferings. One can be assured of his empathy, understanding, and identification with one's sufferings. Through his death on the cross, Christ has not only borne the sins of humanity, but also their sufferings. Moreover, as a result of his glorious resurrection, the risen Christ abides with his people, bringing them comfort and strength in the midst of their suffering. His death and resurrection also gives the assurance that one day, for all those who trust in Christ by faith, Jesus will remove for eternity all forms of suffering.
Definition of Terms

Suffering. For the purpose of this thesis, suffering will include any and all human experiences of pain, agony, or distress. This may be in the form of physical pain or abuse, emotional distress such as grief or bereavement, rejection, humiliation, abandonment, or mental anguish.13

The scope of these experiences include all of humankind. The suffering spoken of in this thesis is not to be confused with suffering for one's faith or cause. That is entirely another issue which needs to be addressed in other research.

Passion of Jesus Christ. The agony, suffering, and subsequent death of the Lord Jesus Christ as foretold by the Old Testament prophets and as described by the New Testament witnesses, primarily the Gospel writers.

Passibility and Impassibility. The ability or the inability to experience suffering. In other words, "not capable of being affected or acted upon."14

The Deity of Christ. The biblical doctrine accepted by orthodox Christianity that attributes the divine nature to Jesus Christ as the second person of the Godhead.

Messiah. Literally, "the Anointed One." The term was rooted in the Jewish practice of "anointing" prophets, priests and kings to their respective offices. The one ruler of Israel appointed by God to carry out the special mission

13Cf. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love Rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977). Hick defines suffering as "that state of mind in which we wish violently or obsessively that our situation were otherwise," 318. Also cf. Warren McWilliams, When You Walk Through the Fire (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 17-19. McWilliams classifies suffering under two categories: moral suffering (basically people's inhumanity to other people), and natural suffering (which the forces of nature cause upon persons).

of redemption and liberation. The true Messiah would be the one whom God would uniquely identify beforehand (Acts 3:18).15

The Incarnation. The biblical doctrine accepted by orthodox Christianity that the second person of the Godhead became a human being without giving up his deity.
God's Impassibility. One of the major sub-problems of this enigma is the issue of God's impassibility. For centuries, writers from both within the church and outside of the church have concluded that God was unable to experience feeling or suffering. The basic thesis of impassibility is that "God does not undergo sensory experience including suffering and pain."\(^1\)\(^6\) It seems that the ancient Greek philosophers declared God was above pain, since this would disrupt His serenity.\(^1\)\(^7\) Epicurus believed the gods could not experience human pain and suffering as he was taught that the divine was unable to suffer.\(^1\)\(^8\) The Greeks simply believed that if the divine was capable of suffering, it would cease to be divine. Since the divine substance is the eternal creator and sustainer of the world, it cannot be subject to the world's misfortune.\(^1\)\(^9\)

One of the more recent defenses of God's impassibility comes from Richard Creel. Creel claims the passibility issue stands upon a wrong understanding of "creation, freedom, sorrow, and worship."\(^2\)\(^0\) However, Taliaferro believes there


\(^{1}\)\(^7\) Stott, The Cross of Christ, 330.


\(^{1}\)\(^9\) Jurgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 21. Moltmann notes that J.K. Mozley's classic The Impassibility of God, is perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of this crucial subject.

\(^{2}\)\(^0\) Taliaferro, 217.
are sound reasons to believe God indeed suffers. He builds his case upon the unchanging love of God for his world. This divine love includes sorrow as well as joy.

Archbishop William Temple observes, "There is a highly technical sense in which God, as Christ revealed him, is 'without passions'; for he is Creator and supreme, and never 'passive' in the sense of having things happen to him with his consent." However, Temple goes on to say when theologians applied the term impassible to God, meaning he is incapable of suffering, they were "wholly false." One has even referred to the doctrine of impassibility as "the greatest heresy that ever smirched Christianity; it is not only false, it is the antipodes of truth."

Ronald Goetz reveals the "age-old dogma that God is impassible . . . incapable of suffering, is for many no longer tenable." A number of modern theologians who hold to God's passibility have come on the scene in recent years. Names like Barth, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Kung, Moltmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Oden, Pannenber, and Temple are among those most prominent.

Stott claims the best way to confront the traditional

\[\textit{Ibid.}\]

\[\textit{Ibid.}, 223-24.\]


\[\textit{Ibid.}\]

\[\textit{Charles Ohlrich, The Suffering God (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1982), 40-41.}\]

view of the impassibility of God is to ask, "What meaning can there be in a love which is not costly to the lover?"\(^{27}\) He reasons that if love is self-giving, it will be vulnerable to pain, since it risks the possibility of rejection.\(^ {28}\)

Jurgen Moltmann, who is one of the prominent voices on the passibility of God, attacks the impassibility argument by offering a different view of God's suffering. Moltmann sides with the option of "active suffering - the voluntary laying oneself open to another and allowing oneself to be intimately affected by him; that is to say, the suffering of passionate love."\(^ {29}\) Moltmann reminds us that the foundational Christian charge is that God is love. If God were incapable of suffering, then he would also be unable to experience genuine love.\(^ {30}\)

How has God most clearly experienced suffering? Thomas Oden claims the clearest evidence is through the passion of Jesus Christ (Mt 26-27).\(^ {31}\) Michael J. Dodds would agree with Oden as he believes the suffering of Jesus Christ is God's most intimate contact to the reality of suffering.\(^ {32}\)

\(^{27}\) Stott, The Cross of Christ, 332.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.


\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Oden, Pastoral Theology, 225.

\(^{32}\) Dodds, 334.
The Passion of Jesus Christ. A second major sub-problem of human suffering is the issue of the suffering or passion of Jesus Christ. For hundreds of years, Christians have affirmed their faith by reciting two of the historic creeds of the early Church, The Apostle's and The Nicene Creeds. Hall reveals an interesting fact contained in the very heart of these creeds that many Christians tend to overlook. The only word that describes the life of Jesus as distinct from his conception, birth, death, and resurrection, is the word suffered: "... suffered [italics mine] under Pontius Pilate."

Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God, experienced suffering in a way which God the Father could not, since the Father is separated in distance from the world. Phillip Yancey, who does not claim to be a theologian, but has interviewed countless persons in the midst of intense suffering and has written extensively on the subject, gives further insight. He makes the point that, until the Incarnation, God had a limited understanding of passion. It wasn't until God himself, as Jesus, came to earth and experienced poverty, social rejection, verbal abuse, and betrayal, did He learn about pain. He learned what it felt like to "have an accuser leave the red imprint of his fingers" upon his face; to "have a whip studded with metal" lashed across his back; and to "have a crude iron spike pounded through muscle tendon, and skin. On earth, God learned all that."

33 Hall, 33.


Dr. Paul Brand reveals that until God put on the soft tissue of human flesh "along with all its pain cells just as accurate and subject to abuse as ours, he had not truly experienced pain. By sending His Son to earth, God learned to feel pain in the same way we feel pain." 36

In his scourging and subsequent crucifixion, Jesus experienced perhaps the most intense physical pain any one human being could encounter. One of the most extensive studies of the physical pain that Jesus must have endured was undertaken by a team of medical doctors from Mayo Clinic. In their article, the authors go into graphic detail concerning the medical aspects of Jesus' suffering. 37

In describing how the passion of Jesus affected God, Karl Barth alleged that "God's own heart suffered on the cross." 38 Allen claims that Jesus experienced the worst possible type of suffering, that of affliction. The suffering of one who is afflicted goes beyond the trauma of physical pain. Their suffering includes the emotional distress of being the object of society's contempt and disgust. 39

Oden warns against limiting Jesus's suffering to the realm of merely physical pain. "Jesus absorbed the full force of human anger and aggression." 40 His sufferings "embraced the

36 Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, In His Image (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 286.

37 See Appendix C for the article "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ."


full range of human agonies—physical and emotive. . . . In
Judas's betrayal, Peter's denial, the Sanhedrin's trial, the
mockery of soldiers and insults by onlookers, the suffering
he endured involved the full range of human rejection, hatred, abuse, deception, and vindictiveness.\textsuperscript{41}

The New Testament vividly reveals how Jesus was socially
disgraced by the mocking soldiers and crowd. He was
condemned to die a criminals' death on a Roman cross between
two thieves.\textsuperscript{42} As Brown describes it, "In Jesus, the
Christian believes that God uniquely waded into time,
exposing the divine nature to the experience of human
suffering."\textsuperscript{43}

The intensity of Jesus' human suffering was no more
dramatically expressed than in his cry from the cross, "My
God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"\textsuperscript{44} Through this
excruciating experience of human suffering on the cross,
Jesus bore the extremes of persecution, affliction, and
abandonment.\textsuperscript{45}

In summarizing the passion of Jesus, Dr. Frank Lake
believes the cross portrays every variety of human suffering.
"God in Christ His Son, shares man's passive and innocent
identification with injustice, loss of rights, mockery,
shame, ruthless cruelty, the curse, rejection by the beloved
source, thirst, hunger, emptiness, exhaustion, weakness, the

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42}Matthew 26-27.

\textsuperscript{43}Douglas Brown, 96.

\textsuperscript{44}Matthew 27:46.

\textsuperscript{45}Frank Lake, Clinical Theology (London: Darton, Longman
& Todd, 1966), 28.
taste of death . . . and the suffering of the serpent's curse." 46

**God's Presence in Our Suffering.** Given the evidence of the passibility of God and the passion of Jesus Christ, another sub-problem is the question of how this gives insight to God's concern and regard for those who experience suffering. In his chapter "God Suffers with Us," Charles Ohlrich sets forth the thesis that, due to the passion of Jesus Christ, God somehow suffers with humanity. 47 Ohlrich believes that just as Jesus hurt with those people who came to him during his earthly ministry, so he continues to hurt with those who are hurting today. "Every loss, every cancer, every agony is part of the burden God carries. No one suffers alone. He suffers with us." 48

It is this belief that has given strength to the suffering Church in Korea over the last century. Dr. Chung-Hyun Ro writes, "Through all this struggling, it has been our conviction that God never stood aloof, that He has never turned His back, that always He was suffering with us, as Christ demonstrated." 49

From the above testimonies, one might raise the question, "Is God's involvement with the suffering of humanity somehow limited to his covenant people?" In referring to Matthew's Gospel, Stott believes there is evidence that God's presence is with all of suffering

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46 Ibid.

47 Ohlrich, 88.

48 Ibid., 91-92.

49 Ibid., 94.
humanity. Stott cites the words of Jesus from Matthew 25:35-45 to validate that Jesus "identified himself with all needy and suffering people." 50 Using this same passage, Thomsen declares God is so intimately involved with the various sufferings and struggles of humanity, that he experiences the pains of hunger, thirst, nakedness, and loneliness. 51

Moltmann concurs that God in Jesus is not only accessible, but is present to the "humanity of every man." 52 Therefore, Moltmann also believes God is with us and participates in the suffering of humanity. 53 Yancey adds that "by joining us on earth, God gave visible, historical proof that he hears our groans, and even groans them with us." 54

New Testament scholar Donald Senior interprets the passion narratives as portraying Jesus experiencing the full range of human suffering. Senior sees Jesus as the "representative human being," who, through his suffering,


51 Thomsen, 250-51.


53 Ibid., 15, 18.

54 Yancey, "Distress Signals," 35.
experiences "the suffering of every human being."  

Driven by the reality that the majority of the world's population is suffering in one way or another, noted leader of British Methodism, Donald English proclaims:

At the heart of our good news is the cry "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We need a doctrine of atonement which grows out of that single point and demonstrates to the world that God knows what the sufferers suffer and is able to meet their suffering because he has suffered that way himself!  

While many questions remain unanswered regarding the issue of human suffering, in recent years there has emerged weighty biblical and theological scholarship to reveal that, in the midst of human suffering, God is with us. The passion of Christ appears to be the foundation of this belief. As P.T. Forsyth has charged, "The cross of Christ . . . is God's only self-justification" in a world that experiences suffering.  

For reasons yet unrevealed to humankind, God has allowed suffering to enter the world and touch his creation. However, God is not immune to its pain. Through the passion of Jesus, God has experienced suffering. As Immanuel, he now participates with all of humanity in their suffering.  

The above assertions would seem to give hope and encouragement to any suffering human being. To know that God voluntarily surrendered himself, in Jesus Christ, to bear the full weight of human suffering, would most assuredly be a


58Ibid., 335.
source of comfort. And to be assured that God is somehow participating with those who suffer, would seemingly be a source of strength to the afflicted. However, the question must be asked, "Does the Bible indeed affirm these claims?" "Can a Christian go out into this hurting world and proclaim such a message with full confidence of biblical support?"

To verify these claims, one must go to the Scriptures themselves. Because the passion of Christ is the foundation of these assertions, it would be of greatest importance to research the Gospel accounts. However, it may be helpful to first take a brief look at the Old Testament for allusions to the suffering of God before turning to the passion narrative itself.
CHAPTER 2
The God of Passion

Old Testament Examples

As one investigates the Scriptures in search of God revealing his capacity to feel or experience suffering as defined above, one may find it is a principal issue throughout the Bible. There is a sense of God agonizing over the loss of intimacy God had enjoyed with Adam and his wife as early as Genesis 3 (3:8-24). Years later, when God saw the wide-spread wickedness and evil throughout the earth, the Scripture records God as being "sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (6:5-6). While some scholars may discard these kinds of statements as anthropopathisms (attributing human feelings and passions to God), it alerts us to the deep capacity of God to suffer emotional pain and remorse.

As the children of Israel were under the cruel bondage of the king of Egypt and his merciless taskmaskers, God seems to feel their pain and distress (Exodus 2:23-25; 6:5). Therefore, God remembers his covenant with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob and delivers his people from their bondage. Years later, as the Lord passed by in front of his servant Moses on Mount Sinai, he describes his character and nature to Moses,

59 McWilliams, 11. McWilliams looks at the issue of suffering through the Scriptures within the historical context of six biblical divisions: Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings, Gospels and Acts, Paul's letters, and the General letters and Revelation. His thesis is that God identifies with human suffering and strengthens persons in their suffering.

"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin . . .".\(^{61}\)

The Old Testament prophets portray God as one who can indeed experience suffering. As Isaiah recounts the suffering of the children of Israel, he describes God as a "joint-sufferer" who was closely involved with their agony. "In all their affliction He was afflicted . . . In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them" (63:9). In a vivid description of God's intense love for Israel, Isaiah uses the most powerful figure of speech used by any prophet. "I have kept silent for a long time, I have kept still and restrained Myself. Now like a woman in labor I will groan, I will both gasp and pant (42:14).

Jeremiah records the intense desire God has to be restored to his people."My heart yearns for him [Ephraim]; I will surely have mercy on him" (31:20).

Perhaps one of the most passionate examples of God revealing his capability to experience deep anguish is found in Hosea. Through the prophet, God expresses his painful lament over his wayward children. "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? . . . My heart is turned over within Me, all my compassions are kindled" (11:8). Hosea reveals to his audience God's intense desire to be restored to his covenant people.

Building upon these brief, but enlightening, Old Testament examples for insight into divine and human suffering, one may now look at the life and ministry of Jesus Christ for further clarity of this issue.

\(^{61}\)Exodus 34:6-7a
The Passion of Jesus Christ

As one comes to the New Testament in search of an eye-witness report of the passion of Jesus Christ, one may go to Matthew's Gospel and find numerous examples of Jesus' ability to experience suffering. In fact, the Gospel narratives have been described as "a Passion story with an extended introduction." Matthew gives approximately two-fifths of his Gospel to the sufferings of Christ. In the narrow sense, Jesus' Passion is characterized as the last week of his life culminating with his death on the cross. In Matthew's Gospel, this last week is recorded in chapters 21-27, with the very heart of Jesus' suffering being found in Matthew 26-27. However, in its broader definition, Jesus' Passion includes any and every affliction he experienced throughout his entire earthly ministry.

In order to clearly understand what Matthew has to say to his readers concerning the passion of Christ, one must first look briefly at the book's structure as a whole.

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62 As one looks at Matthew's account of Jesus' passion, it will be essential to keep in mind Matthew's purpose and theme. Matthew is announcing the Good News that Jesus is in fact the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Jews, who has come to inaugurate the Kingdom of Heaven. It is through the very presence of Christ, that God has come to dwell among his people. Kingsbury recognizes that all of humanity benefits from the life and ministry of Jesus, not merely the Jews. The central theme is that the "abiding presence of God with his people in the person of Jesus Messiah, his Son, . . . has ultimate meaning for people of every age, Israelite and Gentile alike," Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 96.


64 Senior's Part II, "The Passion of Jesus," 47-162, focuses exclusively on these two chapters.

65 Ibid., 319.
Matthew has arranged his gospel with literary preciseness. As W.D. Davies attests, because Matthew has structured his work so carefully, one can not adequately understand a particular section unless one sees its relationship to the whole of the book. Matthew's account seems best to be divided by three major divisions: 1:1-4:16; 4:17-16:20; and 16:21-28:20. These divisions are based upon the phrase "From that time on Jesus began (Απο τοτε ημερων ['o] Ἰησου) . . . .".

As one assigns titles according the the above divisions, the following outline becomes visible: (I) The Preparation for Jesus Christ, Son of God (1:1-4:16); (II) The Proclamation of Jesus Christ, Son of God (4:17-16:20); and (III) The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God (16:21-28:20). This last major division will be the focus of attention as it concerns the vivid suffering of Jesus.

Within the structure of Matthew's Gospel, 16:21-28:20 serves as the climax of the entire book. Moreover, 16:21 is particularized throughout the remainder of the Gospel account by means of the climaxing death and resurrection of Jesus.

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67 For excellent surveys on the variety of structural divisions, cf. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 1-11; and David R. Bauer, The Structure of Matthew's Gospel, 21-45. The division titles for the remainder of this thesis will be based upon Bauer's text listed above.

68 Cf. David R. Bauer, 96-104.
Jesus. 69

While 16:21 is the first explicit introduction by Matthew of Jesus' passion, one finds the theme of Jesus' suffering and death is like a scarlet thread which is woven throughout the tapestry of Matthew. 70 One finds the death of Jesus clearly a recurring theme. As early as chapter two, Matthew reveals a man who is enraged at the prospect of the Messiah being born. When the magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, they went to Herod for directions in search of "He who has been born King of the Jews" (2:1-2).

Matthew tells his readers that Herod "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (2:3). Herod, who is concerned someone will take over his rule and authority, calls together all the chief priests and scribes and begins to inquire exactly where the Christ was to be born (2:4). Upon learning that the prophet Micah has pinpointed the babe's birthplace to be in Bethlehem just five miles south of Herod's home, Herod's wicked mind begins to work. He secretly meets with the magi and inquires as to when the star had appeared to them (2:7). With his scheme in mind, Herod sends the magi to Bethlehem. He requests that once they find the child, they are to report back to Herod so "that I too may come and worship Him" (2:8).

Matthew reveals that after the magi find the child and worship him, they are warned by God in a dream not to go back to Herod as he had requested of them. Therefore, the magi return home via another route so they do not have to be confronted by Herod (2:12). In another dream, this time to Joseph, an angel of the Lord commands Joseph to take Mary and

69 Ibid., 96.

70 Jack Dean Kingsbury, The Cross in the Gospel of Matthew, audiocassette (Wilmore, Ky.: Asbury Theological Seminary, 5 Mar. 1987). I am indebted to Dr. Kingsbury's scholarship and insight regarding the significance of the passion of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel.
her child and flee to Egypt. Why should God make such an unusual request of Joseph? "Herod is going to search for the child to destroy Him" (2:13b).

When Herod finds out he has been tricked by the magi, Matthew records "he became enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi" (2:16). Here, at the beginning of Jesus' life, Matthew gives a direct reference to the fact that Jesus had enemies who wanted him dead, and perhaps this is also an allusion to the suffering and death Jesus will experience at the climax of Matthew's Gospel.

In 4:12 Matthew mentions that when Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been "delivered up" and taken into custody, Jesus departed to Galilee. The word translated "delivered" is the word παραδώσωμι which literally means "to hand over, give over, deliver up." Although this is a rather common term throughout the New Testament, Matthew uses this term primarily to speak of the passion of Christ (20:18-19; 26:2; 27:2, 18, 26) and the specific betrayal of Judas (26:15-16, 21, 23-25, 45-46, 48; 27:3). This occurrence is especially significant because, in Matthew's Gospel, John is the forerunner of Jesus (cf. 3:1-3, 11-12). Therefore, just as John had gone before Jesus in the ministry of preaching, so he now has preceded Jesus in his upcoming passion.

Just as John experienced suffering throughout his brief ministry, Matthew reveals throughout his Gospel that Jesus also had the capacity to experience emotional agony and distress. In 9:2-6, one finds Jesus is the target of rejection and ridicule by the scribes and Pharisees as a result of Jesus' great compassion for a paralytic who was

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brought to him for healing.

Jesus himself alludes to his capture and passion when he answers the disciples of John who come to him and ask, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (9:14). Matthew records Jesus' alarming response. "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (9:15). Jesus makes known that, in the days ahead, he will be taken away from his disciples.

As Jesus gathers his disciples to commission them on their missionary venture, Matthew lists the twelve disciples (10:1-4). At the conclusion of the list, Matthew's readers discover not only that Jesus will be betrayed, but also the very name of the one who will deliver Jesus up. "... and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him."

During Jesus' instructions to the twelve, he makes yet another allusion to his passion. Jesus tells his disciples in 10:25, "It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher." A few moments later, Jesus claims "he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (10:38). As one integrates these two teachings of Jesus, he comes to the conclusion that Jesus is disclosing that he will be taking up his own cross!

In 12:9-14, Matthew alerts his readers to a controversy between the Pharisees and Jesus. As Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath, he encounters a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees question Jesus in order that they might be able to accuse him. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" After his penetrating response, Jesus brings healing and restoration to the man's hand. Matthew is quick to report that upon Jesus' act of compassion and healing of the man's hand, "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (12:14). Matthew's readers now conclude that the plot to expunge Jesus has begun.
Later in 12:38, Matthew records a request by the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus. "Teacher, we want to see a sign (σημεῖον) from You." In his response, Jesus makes another allusion to his upcoming passion and burial, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12:39-40).

As stated above, it is important to keep in mind that, in Matthew's gospel, John the Baptist is the precursor of Jesus. John has preceded Jesus in his preaching ministry, but also in his suffering (cf. 4:12). Now Matthew's readers learn of John's murder, as a vengeful Herodias schemes to have John's head on a platter (14:1-12). One can only anticipate that soon Jesus himself will receive a similar fate at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders.

The thread of Jesus' passion now jumps to 16:21 where, upon the heels of Peter's great confession of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matthew records that Jesus began to reveal to his disciples that he must (δεῖ) go "to Jerusalem, and suffer from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, . . . " Here, for the first time, Jesus is seen as instructing his disciples of his compelling drive and the necessity of his subsequent passion.

The word translated "suffer" is the word πασχω. Kittel reveals that in the Greek and Hellenistic world, πασχω had the basic meaning of "experiencing something that encounters or comes upon me." While one could certainly experience

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72 While Matthew uses only πασχω to describe Jesus' suffering, the New Testament offers three synonyms which refer to the passion of Jesus: παθημα (2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10; Heb 2:9-10; 1 Pet 1:11, 4:13, 5:1); παθητος (Acts 26:23); and σωματοθεω (Heb 4:14).

73 Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W.
something good, the primary usage of the term is to suffer evil, misfortune, or disfavor.

In the New Testament, πασχω occurs 42 times, with the majority of its references to the sufferings of Jesus Christ and his followers. Matthew only uses πασχω twice in reference to the sufferings of Jesus. In addition to the passage given above, Jesus uses the term in 17:12 when speaking to his disciples about the Son of Man suffering at the hands of the Jewish leaders: "... but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

Peter, perhaps like many of Matthew's readers, cannot comprehend why Jesus would have to undergo suffering. As he takes Jesus aside, Peter rebukes him for such a thought and says, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You" (16:22).

Revealing the intensity of his mission toward the cross, Jesus returns the rebuke to Peter and addresses him as Satan. "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (16:23). Jesus reveals that the way of suffering is a "stumbling block" to man. However, Jesus must continue on the course set for him and follow in obedience, even though he knows the painful results. As he revealed earlier in


74 Ibid., 912.

75 Cf. Floyd V. Finson, A Commentary on The Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 188. Finson notes that Peter's rebuke expressed the common Jewish understanding of the Messiah's role. Suffering or defeat was not synonymous with a victorious Christ. Finson translates Peter's rebuke as: "God forgive you for saying so mistaken and shocking a thing."
10:38, Jesus once again declares that he is headed for the cross, and any who wish to follow him must be willing to take up his own cross with all its passion implications (16:24-26).

Just six days later, Matthew records yet another of Jesus' passion predictions. As Peter, James, and John descend from the Mount of Transfiguration, they inquire of Jesus as to why the scribes say that Elijah must come before the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Messiah (17:9-10; cf. Mal 3:1; 4:5-6). In his response, Jesus draws an analogy between Elijah and John the Baptist's ministry of preparation. "... Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished" (17:12a). Jesus continues by reminding his disciples that just as John preceded him in his suffering, likewise Jesus himself will soon suffer (17:12b-13). When he arrives at the bottom of the mountain, Jesus again makes an allusion to his death. In responding to his faithless disciples, Jesus asks "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (17:17).

The repetition of the passion theme continues in 17:22-23 when Jesus and his disciples were gathered together in Galilee before ascending to Jerusalem. Jesus reminds them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered (παραδοθεσται) into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised up on the third day."

As their journey brought Jesus and his disciples near to Jerusalem, Matthew records Jesus taking the twelve aside privately to give them the most explicit prediction of his passion thus far. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered (παραδοθεσται) to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver (παραδωσουσιν) Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up" (20:17-19).

As Bauer attests, this passage gives the reader an
outline of the upcoming events which will be realized in Jerusalem: (1) The Son of Man will be betrayed and delivered over to the chief priests and scribes (cf. 26:14-25, 47-55); (2) These religious leaders will condemn Jesus to death (cf. 26:47-68); (3) The chief priests and scribes will also deliver Jesus to the Gentiles who will mock, scourge, and ultimately crucify him (cf. ch. 27); and (4) Jesus will triumphantly be raised up on the third day (cf. ch. 28).

Later, in chapter 20, Matthew continues the passion theme when he records Jesus' response to the request of James and John for exalted positions in the kingdom. Jesus makes a clear reference to his anguish in Gethsemane when he asks them: "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" (20:22; cf. 26:39, 42).

Matthew seems to draw these passion references made throughout the journey to Jerusalem to a climax in 20:28. Just before arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus proclaims the purpose of his coming to earth. "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to give His life a ransom for many." 77

Upon his arrival to Jerusalem, Jesus begins to teach in the temple where his enemies come to question his authority (21:23-27). Once again Matthew reveals the analogy of the ministry, rejection, and suffering of John the Baptist to Jesus as Jesus responds to their question.

The chief priests and Pharisees are Jesus' target as he speaks to them about the parable of the landowner and his vineyard (21:33-46). Jesus likens God to the landowner who

76 David R. Bauer, 97.

77 Cf. D.A. Carson, "Matthew," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, Frank E. Gaebelein ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 432-34. Carson notes the importance of this verse for understanding Jesus' view of his death. He gives a sound discussion regarding the verse's authenticity, meaning, and significance of Isaiah 53 upon this verse.
rented his vineyard out to tenant farmers (the religious leaders). When the harvest time approached, the landowner sent his slaves back to the vineyard to receive the produce from the tenant farmers. However, the tenants beat the first slave who came, killed another, and stoned the third. After the wicked tenants received a larger second group in the same manner as they had the first group, the landowner sent his son believing they would respect him. But, as Matthew records, when the wicked tenants saw the landowner's son, "they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him" (21:38-39).

Bauer maintains this parable accomplishes two functions in Matthew's climactic structure. First, through the parable, Jesus continues to point to his suffering and death, thereby extending the preceding passion theme. Second, this parable also intensifies the hatred and rage which the chief priests and Pharisees feel toward Jesus, consequently causing them to become even more determined to destroy him.  

After this clear reference to his own reception by the Jewish religious leaders and his ensuing crucifixion, Jesus reminds his audience of the stone which the builders rejected that became the chief cornerstone (21:42; cf. Ps 118:22-23). Matthew adds that when the enemies of Jesus heard his parables, they clearly understood that he was speaking about them (21:45). Jesus continues to reveal their guilt and subsequent condemnation in chapters 22-24.

After Jesus stresses to his disciples the compelling significance of their faithfulness to follow him in the heat of tribulation (chs. 24-25), Matthew takes his readers to the passion events themselves.

In chapter 26, Matthew begins with Jesus telling his disciples that in forty-eight hours the Passover will be

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78 David R. Bauer, 100.
observed and then he will be crucified. "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion" (26:2). The countdown had begun for the "Passover Lamb" to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. On this historic feast commemorating the great deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the Son of Man would be delivered up for others. It is important here to note that Jesus' suffering was voluntary. Even though Matthew has revealed it is the will of God that Jesus must suffer and be crucified (cf. 16:21), he willingly accepts his mission to go to the cross on behalf of all humanity.  

Even while Jesus announces God's plan, Matthew records the careful plotting of the chief priests and elders to seize Jesus and kill him (26:3-5). As early as 12:14 Jesus' opponents had been scrupulously planning his execution. This no doubt added to the grief and pain which Jesus bore throughout his ministry.

After watching a woman pour expensive perfume over the head of Jesus, Judas goes straight to the chief priests and offers to deliver him into their hands for thirty pieces of silver (26:14-16). While Matthew's audience was told that Judas would betray Jesus (cf. 10:4), this is the first account of specific details of the betrayal. The Passover has arrived and Jesus reveals to his disciples that one of them will indeed betray him (26:21). Judas addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" when he asks if he will be the one. This is significant as Judas is no longer acknowledging Jesus' true identity as Lord, but is addressing him as Jesus' other enemies have throughout Matthew (20-25).

During the Passover meal, Jesus inserts new liturgy into

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80 Cf. Zechariah 11:12. Also, Exodus 21:32 reveals this amount was merely the value of a slave who was accidentally gored to death by an ox.
the ritual of the meal. He takes the unleavened bread and after a blessing, Jesus breaks it apart and gives it to each of the disciples and says, "Take, eat; this is My body" (26:26). Next, Jesus takes the cup, also giving thanks, and again distributes it to the disciples saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (26:27-28).

After singing a hymn at the close of the meal, Jesus and his disciples (now without Judas Iscariot) begin the short journey to the Mount of Olives (26:30). As they make their descent from Jerusalem into the darkness of the Kidron Valley, Jesus announces that, before the night is over, they will all desert him. "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered'" (26:31).

Once again Jesus reveals his mission as Messiah. However, Jesus uses Zechariah's image of the shepherd who will be struck down. Matthew uses the word παταξω meaning "to strike" or "slay someone," as Peter did to the ear of the high priest's slave in 26:51. Matthew's imagery vividly describes the subsequent scourging, beating, and crucifixion of Jesus (26:27; 27:26-50). Throughout his gospel, Matthew has portrayed Jesus as a loving and caring shepherd over the

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81 Cf. Carson, 536. Carson notes that Jesus' words "this is my body" were not in the Passover ritual. Therefore, this must have had a stunning effect upon the disciples. Cf. Ceil and Moishe Rosen Christ in the Passover (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 53-59.


83 Walter Bauer, 634.
suffering sheep, even though he knew he would be struck down by those for whom he showed compassion.  

Apart from the actual scourging and crucifixion, the scene at Gethsemane as Jesus wrestles in agony over fulfilling his Father's plan is perhaps the most intense example of Jesus' passion in Matthew's account. After requesting eight of his disciples to stay near the entrance of Gethsemane, Jesus continues deeper into the garden with Peter, James, and John (26:36-37). Matthew comments that Jesus began to be grieved and distressed (26:37b). Both of these words picture one who is undergoing intense suffering. The infinitive "to grieve" is the word λυπεῖν which means to experience grief or sorrow, to be in distress or greatly pained. Matthew uses λυπεῖν on six occasions (14:9; 17:23; 18:31; 19:22; 26:22 and here in 26:37) with at least five referring to emotional grief and distress. The present passive form illuminates the enduring grief that Jesus suffered from the Garden to the Cross. Matthew chose not to use Mark's stronger word to describe Jesus' suffering, εκθαμβέω. In his study "On the Emotional Life of Our Lord," B. B. Warfield describes Mark's term as one "which more narrowly defines the distress as consternation - if not exactly dread, yet alarmed dismay."  

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84 Cf. Chapter 3 "The God of Compassion: Jesus' Attitude Toward Those Who Suffer" for examples of how Jesus showed compassion for those who suffered.

85 Walter Bauer, 481. Cf. Colin Brown, 419, 20. Brown notes that during the Hellenistic period, the noun λυπη described both physical pain and emotional suffering. The LXX translates 13 different Hebrew verbs by using λυπεῖν to express "physical hardship, pain, sorrow, grief, mourning, fear, displeasure, and anger." In the NT λυπεῖν connotes both the physical and the emotional characteristics of suffering. Mark uses even a stronger word to describe Jesus' suffering, εκθαμβέω.

86 B. B. Warfield, The Person and Word of Christ, ed.
Matthew goes on to record the intensive form περιλυμπος in 26:38 as Jesus reveals to Peter, James, and John just how intense his suffering has become. The word literally means "to be greatly grieved" or "exceedingly sorrowful." Jesus reveals his very soul, ψυχη, is overwhelmed with distress unto death, θανατος. Jesus is not implying his sorrow is so intense that he would rather be dead, but rather his grief is so acute that it almost kills.

Matthew follows λυποω in 26:37b with another present infinitive, 'αδημονεω. Used on only two other occasions in the NT (Mk 14:33; Phil 2:26), 'αδημονεω expresses one who is depressed, dejected, full of anguish, anxiety, or sorrow, or one who is deeply troubled.

After Jesus exhorts the trio to remain and keep watch with him, Jesus moves a brief distance away, falls on his face and begins to pray. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (26:39; cf.26:42). Here in the dark of Gethsemane's garden, the Son of Man cries out to his Father in vivid agony and distress. The focal point of the prayer is that God might remove "the cup," ποτηριον.

There is dispute as to what specifically Jesus is referring to here. Senior claims the cup clearly represents Jesus' subsequent suffering and death (cf. 20:22-23; Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1950), 130-31.

\[87\] Walter Bauer, 648. Cf. Warfield, 130. Warfield claims περιλυμπος "expresses a sorrow . . . a mental pain, a distress, which hem him in on every side, from which there is therefore no escape." The phrase "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death" is quite similar to the refrain of Psalms 42 and 43 (LXX). Cf. Carson, 543.

\[88\] Carson, 543. The phrase "εως θανατου is quite common in the LXX (e.g., Isaiah 38:1).

\[89\] Ibid., 16.
Carson suggests in addition to Jesus' suffering and death, the cup also refers to God's wrath. Stott concurs that the cup involved "the spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the world . . . of enduring the divine judgment which those sins deserved." Whatever the cup contained for Jesus, it was painful enough to drive him to cry out in agony to God for the possibility of its removal; and, according to Luke's account, "His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (22:44). However, before Jesus rises to meet his betrayer and the blood-thirsty mob, he maintains faithful obedience to his mission (26:42-46. Cf.20:28; Heb 5:7-8).

As Judas and his armed mob enter the dark recesses of the garden, he identifies Jesus, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kisses him (26:49; cf. 26:25). Here Judas uses one of the most intimate expressions of his day as a sign of betrayal. One can only imagine the distress Jesus must have felt as his own disciple turns him over to the hungry mob. However, Jesus went willingly with the chief priests and elders of the people, once again revealing his voluntary suffering for the fulfillment of the Scriptures (26:56a). Here one finds the realization of Jesus' repeated predictions of being delivered

90 Senior, 80.


92 Stott, 74-77. Stott notes that Jesus would have been quite familiar with the Old Testament imagery of "the cup" as a frequent symbol of God's wrath. Stott makes an important insight into the intensity of Christ's suffering in the garden. The agony of Gethsemane sheds light onto the even greater agony of Golgotha. "If to bear man's sin and God's wrath was so terrible in anticipation, what must the reality have been like?" (77).

over to the chief priests, elders, and scribes. (Cf. 16:21; 20:18).

Matthew closes the section noting that "all the disciples left Him and fled" (26:56b). Not only was Jesus betrayed into the hands of his enemies by one of his closest friends, in his deepest, darkest hour of need all the remaining disciples abandon him.

As the events unfold during the dark hours of the night and early morning, Jesus is led away to an illegal Jewish trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. It is here, while in the presence of his hostile accusers, that Jesus is ridiculed (26:59-66), spat upon, beaten, slapped (26:67), and mocked (26:68; cf. Isa 53:7). Now, for the first time, Matthew's readers receive details concerning the physical passion Jesus experienced. By these abhorrent actions directed squarely at his messianic claims, the Sanhedrin is declaring Jesus has no authority which they should respect, no special power to defend himself, and no messianic gift of prophecy which would give him discernment as to who struck him.

Matthew brings the chapter to a close with Peter's three denials of being associated with Jesus (26:69-75). Luke alone records the scene of Jesus looking at Peter after his third denial of his discipleship (22:61). Matthew never mentions Peter again.

Matthew opens chapter 27 with Jesus being delivered up to Pilate for a State or Political trial, after the chief priests and the elders counseled to put Jesus to death (27:1-2). Once again this scene is a fulfillment or particularization of Jesus' predictions of being delivered up to the chief priests and scribes who, after condemning him to

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95 Patte, 374.
death, will also deliver (παρεδωκαν) him to the Gentiles (cf. 20:18-19). It is significant to note that, until 27:2, the verb "to deliver" (παραδωκαμι) has been used by Matthew to speak of Judas and of his act of betraying or delivering up Jesus (10:4; 26:15. 25). Now Matthew uses it to describe the actions of the Jewish leaders. Patte asks the question of this event, "Does this mean that the Jewish leaders become betrayers of Jesus and are themselves under the curse that Jesus pronounced against whoever delivers the Son of man?" 

Next, in the form of a tragic interlude, Matthew inserts for his readers the turn-about of Judas, the betrayer (27:3-10). During the Passover meal Jesus revealed the devastating consequences for the one who would betray him. "It would have been good for that man [the betrayer - Judas] if he had not been born" (26:24b). Now the dreadful outcome of Judas is disclosed. He realizes that he has sinned by betraying (παραδοουσ) innocent blood. When the chief priests and elders show no mercy toward their accomplice, Judas throws the betrayal money on the floor of the temple (27:5a). Matthew's last mention of Judas is simply, "and he went away and hanged himself" (27:5b).

In Matthew's next segment (27:11-26), Jesus is examined by Pilate and delivered up to be crucified. It is significant to note the comparison Matthew makes between Judas and Pilate. As mentioned above, Judas had realized that he had betrayed "innocent blood" and wanted to have his guilt removed by returning the thirty pieces of silver (27:3-4). Now Pilate, after examining Jesus personally, also receives some desperate counsel from his wife, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered

96 Daniel Patte, The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress), 376-77. Patte goes on to suggest that due to the response of "all the people" in 27:25, to receive Jesus' blood upon them, they also become betrayers of Jesus and fall under the same condemnation and curse as Judas.
greatly in a dream because of Him" (27:19). Therefore, in front of the blood-thirsty multitude, Pilate washes his hands and pronounces, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that [Jesus' crucifixion] yourselves" (27:24; cf. Deut 21:6-7). Before Jesus is taken to bear the cross and journey toward Golgotha, Matthew reports Pilate releases Barabbas and has Jesus scourged. Matthew does not elaborate on the event. However, the reader imagines the Son of Man receiving one of the most horrid forms of punishment and torture at the hands of the Roman soldiers. 97

The Law limited the number of lashes upon the bare body of the guilty one to forty (Deut 25:2-3; cf. 2 Cor 11:24). However, the Romans who were scourging Jesus had no such restrictions. The whip, called a "flagellum," was made by inserting pieces of bone, lead, or metal into the ends of leather thongs. The stripped victim was tied to a flogging post to receive his punishment. Severe scourging could easily turn one's flesh into a bloody pulp and even expose muscles, bones, and entrails. 98

As the passion account intensifies, Matthew begins to expose the theme of the mockery of Jesus which will continue until Jesus yields up his spirit. In the first section of mockery (27:27-31), Pilate's soldiers take Jesus into the Praetorium and gather their battalion around him. First, the Roman soldiers strip Jesus and then place a scarlet robe upon his bleeding body (27:28). What Matthew does not reveal is the excruciating pain Jesus experienced as the soldiers rip

97 Senior, 123. He notes this is an example of the "notable restraint" of the Gospel writers concerning the horrid details of Christ's physical agony. In stark contrast to some of the classical vivid accounts of martyrdom of early Christianity, the passion narratives focus on the theological significance of Jesus' suffering.

98 Carson, 571-2. For a closer examination of the physical and medical implications of scourging, see Appendix C, "On The Physical Death of Jesus Christ."
the garment off his body, the one that was placed upon him after his scourging, and place the scarlet robe on him. The robe (χαλαμόδα) was most likely the short red cloak worn by a Roman soldier.

Next, the soldiers reveal their mockery by placing a crown of thorns (from palm spines or acanthus) upon the head of Jesus in imitation of the circlet seen upon the coins of Caesar. They complete Jesus' wardrobe by putting a reed or staff in his right hand as a royal scepter (27:29a). The soldiers then kneeled before Jesus and began their verbal ridicule by shouting "Hail, King of the Jews!" (27:29b). Carson alleges their mocking corresponded to the Roman salutation, "Ave, Caesar!" Not satisfied with verbal ridicule, the soldiers further deny Jesus' authority by spitting on Jesus and taking the staff and beating him repeatedly (cf. the imperfect tense of the verb ἐπυτόν) upon the head (27:30). After the soldiers have had their fun with their bleeding, humiliated prisoner, Matthew discloses they remove the robe of mockery and put Jesus' garments back on him and lead him away to his crucifixion (27:31). With the trial concluded and the fate of Jesus determined, the passion now hastens to its climax.

In the form of an interlude, Matthew mentions in 27:32 that, as they marched to the site of the crucifixion, the soldiers chose a man of Cyrene named Simon to carry the crossbar for the exhausted Jesus. Since executions were normally performed outside the city walls, this may symbolize


100 Carson, 573.

101 Carson notes that normally a prisoner would have been led to his execution naked and scourged along the way. Possibly, this was not done with Jesus because his first scourging left him so weak that further scourging would have killed him!
even further humiliation and rejection of Jesus. 102

Matthew picks up the passion theme of mockery in his next segment 27:33-37. Patte suggests even the name Golgotha as "the place of a skull" adds to Matthew's theme of humiliation and lack of authority. 103 When the soldiers arrive at Golgotha with Jesus, they give Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. Matthew's description of the drink is a definite reference to Ps 69:22, "They gave me poison (χολήνς in LXX) for food, ... ." However, after tasting it, Jesus refused the drink (27:34).

As Senior points out, this entire Psalm is one of the prayers of lament. 104 One can feel the intense passion as the psalmist cries out to God in the midst of his anguish and mockery:

Save me, O God, For the waters have threatened my life. I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God. . . .Thou dost know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor; All my adversaries are before Thee. Reproach has broken my heart, and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (Ps 69:1-3, 19-21).

There are two explanations of the meaning of the soldiers' actions. The most common is that this mixture given to Jesus was a type of narcotic which would ease one's pain. Since Jesus refused the drink after his initial taste, he is cited as determined not to diminish in any way the full force of his suffering. The other view of this event is that gall was used with wine to strengthen the drink without


103 Patte, 383.

104 Senior, 127.
any effect on one's pain. Apparently the drink was so bitter that Jesus, after tasting it, immediately refused it. Therefore, pretending to give Jesus a soothing, tasteful drink, the soldiers give him a disgusting mixture. This would have brought great amusement to the soldiers. 105

To add further humiliation to the now crucified Jesus, Matthew cites the soldiers as dividing up Jesus' garments (27:35). Once again the passion story alludes to another Old Testament lament, Psalm 22.

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots (Ps 22:16-18). 106

It was the custom of the Romans to crucify their victims completely naked. Whether in the case of Jesus they permitted a loin cloth to avoid the encroachment of Jewish stipulations is unknown. 107 Matthew does not give his readers the specific details of the actual crucifixion event. As mentioned above, the Gospel writers withheld the gory details of Jesus' sufferings from their audience. They chose instead to focus upon the significance of his passion.

As the passion narrative nears its climax in 27:38-54, Kingsbury proposes two divisions, each with a setting followed by three scenes. 108 The first segment (27:38-44)

105 Carson, 575.

106 Senior notes this prayer plays a significant role in Matthew's passion narrative. Such references as the soldiers sitting beneath the cross "to keep watch over Him" (27:36), the passers-by "wagging their heads" as they hurled abuse at Jesus (27:39), and the mockery of his trust upon God (27:41-43), all find their roots in this prayer of dereliction and trust. 129-30.

107 Carson, 576.

begins with the setting in 27:38, followed by three scenes of mockery (27:39-40; 41-43; and 44). In this first setting, Matthew's theme of mockery and humiliation continues as Jesus is crucified between two robbers ("insurrectionists" or "rebel guerrillas").

In the first scene of mockery, it is the "passers-by" who are "hurling abuse," (εβλασφημοῦν, literally "blasphemed him," cf. 9:3; 12:31; 26:65). As they wag their heads, Matthew's readers recall the ridicule in Psalms 22:7; 109:25; and Lam 2:15. The mocking of the crowd is also a reference to Jesus' words in 26:61 concerning the destruction of the temple (his body). Therefore, these persons either were present at the Sanhedrin trial or had learned of Jesus' claim. Through their taunting dare, "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross," Matthew's readers are reminded of another such temptation by Satan himself (4:3, 6). At the outset of his ministry, and now as he is approaching the cross, Jesus is the target of the enemy's attack. This blood-thirsty crowd has now sided with Satan to lure Jesus to evade his Father's will.

The next group of mockers is the Sanhedrin: the chief priests, scribes and elders, who tried Jesus during the night (26:57-68). As the passers-by had just attempted to do through their remarks, these religious leaders try to get Jesus to save himself. "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. He trusts in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God!'" (27:42-43). Through their malicious scoff aimed at Jesus' apparent helplessness, they taunt Jesus to demonstrate his divine Sonship through a miraculous sign. Moreover, the vengeful leaders plant seeds of doubt in the tormented soul of Jesus as to his Father's

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love.

Senior cites the great significance of the word "save" (σωτήρ) in this segment and throughout Matthew's Gospel. This word summarizes Jesus' mission: to "save" people from their sins (1:21). It refers to "the total transformation and redemption of the human person, body and spirit." However, the mockers must conclude that since Jesus does not save himself, he is not the Son of God and unable to save anyone. Conversely, Matthew's purpose is to show his readers that Jesus as the Son of God does have the power to save himself. Nevertheless, he chooses not to use his resources and willingly endures the suffering.

Matthew closes this segment with yet a third scene of mockery, this time coming from the two robbers who had been crucified with Jesus (27:44). Here, Matthew simply summarizes their reproach as they "were casting the same insult at Him." Indeed the spirit of darkness comes over Jesus from the most prominent of his countrymen to the lowest criminal and soon falls upon all the land (27:45).

In Matthew's next segment (27:45-54), one finds the passion of Christ reaching its pinnacle. Again, Matthew has arranged the segment with a setting (27:45), and three scenes (27:46-50; 51-53; and 54). Matthew describes the gloomy atmosphere which surrounds the final hours of Jesus' Passion: "Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour" (27:45). Most commentators believe this is yet another reference in Matthew's Gospel to the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophesy. In Amos 8:9-10, the prophet speaks of a day in which the Lord "shall make the sun do down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight. . . .and I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, and the end of it will be like a bitter day."

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110 Senior, 133. He notes σωτήρ is used fourteen times in Matthew, with each occurrence implying deliverance from harm.
An earlier reference which may also be alluded to here by Matthew is found in Exodus 10:22 where Moses stretches out his hand toward the sky and darkness remained in the land for three days. Whatever the case, Matthew paints a somber setting of judgment before the Christ cries out to God in agony and distress.

The first scene is Jesus' cry of desolation in which Jesus experiences perhaps the ultimate in suffering as he shouts, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (27:46). Once again the reader of Matthew's Gospel is taken back to the lament of Psalm 22. In his last few moments upon the cross, Jesus, overcome with the cup of God's wrath which he has swallowed, cries out in agony. Jesus only quotes the first line of the Psalm, but the thread of suffering is woven throughout the Psalmist's cry.

Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer; and by night, but I have no rest....I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people....Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and Thou dost lay me in the dust of death....But Thou, O Lord, be not far off; O Thou my help hasten to my assistance... (22:1-2, 6, 11-15, 19).

While much could be said regarding Jesus' cry, it is important to note the full context of Psalm 22. While it is truly a Psalm of lament and suffering which graphically reveals God's apparent abandonment, the Psalmist also speaks of a steadfast trust in God. As Kingsbury notes, the Lament Psalms contain two emphases, the abandonment of the righteous

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111 Carson, 577-78. Carson asserts both Old Testament passages portray darkness as a sign of judgment. For Matthew's purposes, the judgment is upon the land, its people, and upon Jesus.
and the trust which the righteous person has in God. This accent is seen in the following affirmations from Psalm 22:

Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried out, and were delivered; in Thee they trusted, and were not disappointed....I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee. You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him for help, he heard (22:3-5. 22-24).

Therefore, in the midst of Jesus' suffering, He completely trusts in God to save him. Instead of yielding to the temptations of those who taunted Jesus to save himself (27:39-44), Jesus reveals his unwavering trust in God for his deliverance. Matthew's readers find that after three days, God does indeed save Jesus through his subsequent resurrection (28:1ff).

Matthew records that even in the last moments of Jesus' suffering on the cross, his mockery continues. The crowd around the cross understood Jesus' cry to be not for God, but for Elijah (27:47). Therefore, in hopes of prolonging his agony until Elijah would swoop down and save him, they take a sponge filled with sour wine and raise it up to his parched lips for him to drink (27:48-49; cf. Ps 69:21). However, Matthew reveals that in response to this final display of humiliation, "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit" (27:50).

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113 Ibid. Kingsbury interprets Jesus' cry to proclaim: "My God, My God, even though you abandon me into death, nevertheless, I will continue to trust in you. I will trust in You until death."

114 Cf. Senior, 137-39.
Here, at the climax of Jesus' suffering, Matthew reveals Jesus was completely in charge of even his death. The word Matthew uses for "yielded up" is 'ἀφίημι, which means to "send away, let go," or "give up."¹¹⁵ This verse would remind Matthew's readers of Jesus' remark to his disciples regarding his mission in 20:28: "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew reveals Jesus as the perfectly obedient Son of God, even unto death (Cf. 26:42).¹¹⁶

In Matthew's last two scenes surrounding Jesus' passion (27:51-54), he records the occurrence of supernatural portents (Matthew's use of the passive voice in the description of these events implies that God is the author). First, in 27:51, the veil of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom. While Matthew does not stop and comment upon the significance of this event before continuing with the other portents, many scholars see this as the end of the Temple era of sacrifice, and the open access to God.¹¹⁷

Matthew's Jewish audience would be aware of the high priest's ministry on their behalf on the Day of Atonement. Once a year he would go beyond the veil to the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat to atone for the sins of Israel. If indeed this was the veil in front of the Holy of Holies, then God is putting an end to this sacrificial system. The high priest will never again have to sprinkle the blood of an animal upon the mercy seat because the perfectly trusting and obedient Son of God has spilled his blood once and for all upon the cross for the forgiveness of

¹¹⁵Walter Bauer, 125. The active voice used here identifies Jesus as the agent of the sending away.

¹¹⁶David R. Bauer, 102; Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 76.

¹¹⁷Cf. Senior, 142-43; Carson, 580-81; Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 90-91; and Patte, 389-90.
After witnessing the other portents, the Roman centurion and his guards standing watch on Golgotha profess with one voice: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (27:54). First the Jews near the Temple, and now the Gentiles near the cross sense something very different about this Jesus. As the passion narrative comes to its close, the Roman soldiers confess Jesus as the Son of God just as God had declared earlier in Matthew's Gospel (Cf. 3:17; 17:5).

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A very significant question to ask for acquiring insight into God's concern for human suffering is "How did Jesus as the Son of God react toward those who were suffering?" "How did Emmanuel respond to those who struggled with various degrees of human suffering?" Matthew reveals that a concurrent thread to the passion of Jesus woven throughout Matthew's Gospel is the compassionate response of God's Son toward those who are in distress. One definitely finds within Matthew's structure the recurrence of Jesus' compassion for the suffering.

As Jesus goes throughout Galilee teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, he heals every kind of disease and sickness among the people. When the word spread into Syria about this Man of compassion who was healing the suffering masses, Matthew records the people brought to Jesus all who were ill with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and Jesus healed them (4:23-24; cf. 9:35).119

At the conclusion of Jesus' teaching to the multitudes upon the mountain, Matthew reveals that many of the people follow Jesus (8:1). Out of the crowd comes a brave leper who kneels (προσεκουνετ) before Jesus and asks "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean" (8:2). In response to this humble social outcast, Jesus reaches out his hand to touch the unclean leper "and immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (8:3).

119Cf. Senior, 66. Senior notes that the driving force behind Jesus' ministry to those who were suffering was his great compassion. For the significance of these summary passages of Matthew as it deals with the "Gospel of the Kingdom, see Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 5, 20-25, 163-65.
As Jesus enters the city limits of Capernaum, a believing centurion comes to him begging for Jesus to heal his servant: "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain" (8:5-6). The severity of the slave's condition is expressed by the adverb δεινώσω (terribly), and the perfect participle βασανίζομενος (being tortured). Near the end of Matthew's Gospel, when the passion narrative reaches its climax, Matthew's readers will watch Jesus being tortured by Roman soldiers as they beat him, spit upon him, scourge and ultimately crucify him (27:26-50). Even though Jesus knows his destiny at the hands of Pilate and his soldiers, he simply speaks the command "Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed," and the servant of the faithful Gentile centurion was healed that very hour (8:13).

Upon the arrival of Jesus at Peter's house in Capernaum, Jesus finds Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever (8:14). Matthew records that Jesus "touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him" (8:15).

When evening had come, Matthew reports that people were bringing to Jesus many "who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill..." (8:16). Matthew interprets Jesus' ministry of deliverance and healing as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases" (8:17; cf. Isa. 53:4).120 It is important to note here that


The context of the prophecy is the fourth "Servant Song" (52:13-53:12), which portrays the Servant suffering on behalf of others. McWilliams claims this song anticipates the ministry of Jesus, 73. It is definitely a significant passage in the issue of God's concern for those who suffer.

Matthew is placing Jesus in the role of the Suffering Servant, who according to Isaiah has bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. קד בריה ואא קמדביו מברל. The root of the word "לוי" has the basic meaning "to be(come) sick" or "faint." Cf. R. Laird Harris, ed., The
Matthew is not speaking of Jesus' removing one's sins, but rather the suffering which is the consequence of sin's presence in the world. 121

After Jesus had calmed the storm and landed upon the shore near Gadara, he is met by two demon-possessed men (8:28). Matthew records the men crying out to Jesus, "What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time" (8:29). As a result of the demons begging Jesus to send them into the nearby swine, Jesus grants their request and delivers these Gentile men of their torment (8:31-32).

When Jesus returns to Capernaum the people bring a

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 286-87. It is also translated "grief" as in Isaiah 53:3, 4. Wilson also mentions "דוע" is applied to the "weakness of mind from great concern and grief." Cf. William Wilson, Old Testament Word Studies (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 202. Isaiah uses another word for pain, מלח, which means sorrow, grief, affliction, or pain. Cf. Harris, 425. Harris notes that of the sixteen uses of מלח, at least eleven have to do with mental suffering (Ex 3:7; 2 Chron 6:29; Job 33:19; Ps 32:10; 38:17; 69:26; Eccl 1:18; 2:23; Isa 53:3, 4; Jer 30:15; 45:3; 51:8; Lam 1:12, 18). He claims it is near impossible to distinguish between the mental and physical anguish which this word conveys.

In contrast to מנו, which means to lift, bear up, carry, take, sustain, or endure, מנן lays stress on the process of bearing or transporting a load (Isa 46:7). Cf. Harris, 600, 616. Harris adds "the root is also found in contexts which deal with the bearing of punishments or penalties (Isa 53:4-11). Here the coming servant, Messiah, lifts up and takes upon Himself man's sicknesses and bears the weight of his worrisome sorrows." Ibid.

121 Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, Vol.II, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 315-17. "The meaning is not merely that the Servant of God entered into the fellowship of our sufferings, but that He took upon Himself the sufferings which we had to bear and deserved to bear, and therefore not only took them away (as Matt. viii. 17 might make it appear), but bore them in His own person, that He might deliver us from them." 316. Also cf. Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 345-46.
paralytic to him for healing (9:1-2a). Seeing their faith, Jesus is moved with compassion and addresses the ailing man, "Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven" (9:2). The scribes who are watching this encounter are shocked at Jesus' claim and call Jesus a blasphemer. Matthew records Jesus' response to their charge, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...Rise, take up your bed, and go home" (9:4-6). Here Matthew's readers see the healing ministry of Jesus as evidence that, as the Son of God, Jesus indeed has the ability to forgive sins (cf. 1:21).

In a dinner scene which could very well be at Matthew's house (cf. 9:9; Luke 5:29), Jesus is recorded as dining with "many tax-gatherers and sinners" (9:10). When his actions are questioned by the Pharisees, Jesus reveals his great compassion for those who are in need of his ministry."It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (9:12-13; cf. 12:7).

While he is speaking to the disciples of John, Jesus is approached by a synagogue official in grief over the suffering of his daughter. Jesus responds to his desperate cry, "come and lay Your hand on her and she will live" (9:18). Jesus follows the grieving father to his daughter's bedroom, takes the limp girl by the hand, and raises her from the dead (9:25).

As Jesus leaves the home of the resurrected girl, two blind men follow him and cry out "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (9:27). After entering their house Jesus touched their eyes and "their eyes were opened" (9:29-30).

Just moments after the two men begin spreading the news of their sight being restored, a dumb, demon-possessed man was brought to Jesus (9:32). Although Matthew does not
record the specifics, Jesus casts out the demon and restores the man's speech (9:33).

Matthew's summary of Jesus' ministry throughout Galilee reveals his great concern for all those who are in need. "And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (9:35; cf. 4:23).

Matthew describes Jesus' deep anguish over the multitudes and all the needs they represent. "And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

The word translated "felt compassion" comes from the word ἀναθώσομαι. The noun form literally meant one's inward parts (of the sacrificial animal), entrails, or bowels, especially the most valuable parts such as the heart, lungs or kidneys. It was used as a figure of speech referring to the seat of one's emotions. Matthew uses the verb five times with the common thread of compassion, mercy, and sympathy. Esser notes that the full meaning of ἀναθώσομαι goes beyond the literal image that Jesus' "heart contracted convulsively" in seeing the multitude of human suffering and "characterizes the messianic compassion of Jesus." 123

The very heart of God is revealed as Jesus looks out at the multitudes and feels deep within himself a compassion for the needs of the people (9:36; cf. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). Whether it resulted in casting out demons, healing diseases, feeding their hungry appetites, or restoring sight to the


123 Ibid.
blind, Jesus had compassion upon the reality of human suffering and he did everything within his power to bring about healing and restoration.

The tender mercy of God is also revealed in the parable of the unforgiving servant as the king felt compassion for his slave who begged for patience in repaying his debt. Matthew records Jesus saying the lord was filled with pity and forgave the slave his entire debt (18:27).

This vivid characteristic of Jesus described as compassion comes through clearly in our own English language. Webster points out that compassion comes from the two Latin words com-, with, and passus, a past participle of pati, to suffer.\(^{124}\) As one reads the Gospel account of Matthew, he truly sees Jesus as one who suffers with those around him.

Jesus' compassion for those who are suffering is further revealed as Jesus enters a synagogue on the Sabbath day (12:9). Matthew records there was a man inside the synagogue with a withered hand. The cold-hearted Pharisees question Jesus about healing on the sacred Sabbath, in hopes that they might accuse him (12:10). Knowing their hardness of heart, Jesus contrasts the value of an animal to that of the man who is made in God's image (12:11-12). Revealing his desire to "do good" to the suffering man, Jesus restores his hand to normal (12:13). Matthew concludes the segment with another insightful contrast. While Jesus had compassion upon the man and brought healing to his body, "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (12:14).

Once again the people bring a demon-possessed man to Jesus for deliverance and healing (12:22a). Matthew records the man was also "blind and dumb," apparently as a result of his demonic possession. With brevity of words, Matthew

\(^{124}\)"Compassion," Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd ed.
simply reports that Jesus healed the man completely. He who
was once possessed by the enemy, regained his sight and began
to speak (12:22b).

As noted above in 9:36-37, the tender heart of God is
revealed through Jesus as he saw the great multitude and
"felt compassion for them" and as a result healed their sick
(14:15). However, Matthew records that Jesus was also
careful concerned with their lack of nourishment and therefore
proceeded to satisfy their hunger by feeding the multitudes
with the five loaves and two fish (14:18-21).

As Jesus withdrew from Galilee into the district of Tyre
and Sidon, a Canaanite woman comes out to meet him crying,
"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is
cruelly demon-possessed" (15:21-22). After the woman's great
display of her wisdom and faith (15:24-27), Jesus delivers
this Gentile woman's daughter and Matthew records she "was
healed at once" (15:28).

Upon returning from Tyre and Sidon, Jesus goes up to the
mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Matthew describes
multitudes coming to Jesus bringing the lame, crippled,
blind, dumb, and many others who were suffering (15:29-30a).
Jesus reveals his great compassion upon the afflicted by
restoring speech to the dumb, strength to the crippled and
lame, and sight to the blind (15:30b-31; cf. 4:23; 9:35).

Once again (cf. 9:36-37;14:14-21) upon seeing the
multitudes Matthew reveals Jesus passibility upon seeing the
needs of the multitudes: "I feel compassion for the
multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days
and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away
hungry, lest they faint on the way" (15:32). Therefore, as
he did for the five thousand, Jesus takes a handful of bread
and fish and satisfies the hunger of the crowd (15:34-38).

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Carson reminds us that these healings and the
subsequent feeding of the four thousand take place in
predominantly Gentile territory, 356-57.
As Jesus comes down off the mountain of the transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, he is approached by a man who desperately seeks his help (17:14). The man, kneeling before him, begs Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son. "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water" (17:15). After hearing that his disciples had failed at the same request, Jesus rebukes the demon and the boy is completely healed (17:16-18).

Through his discourse on the future judgment of the nations, Jesus reveals his great compassion for those who are "the least" of his "brothers:" the hungry and thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoners (25:31-46). 126

One may say the two greatest expressions of Jesus' concern for those who suffer came both at the beginning and the end of Matthew's account. Initially, as a helpless infant, born to Mary and Joseph (1:20-25), susceptible to every human struggle and pain, Jesus revealed his great love and regard for the reality of human suffering. He obeyed his Father's will and surrendered himself to suffer along with his creation (1:18-25). Jesus also revealed God's concern for those who suffer by bringing healing and wholeness to those who were in his midst.

The second expression of Jesus' concern was his own suffering and passion, as detailed above, culminating in his crucifixion. For months Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed (16:21; 17:12, 22; 20:18). The cross clearly reveals Jesus, not only as the perfectly obedient Son who died to "save his people from their sins" (1:21; 26:28) but also as one who has compassion for all those who experience the agonies of human suffering.

126 Cf. Gray, 331-59.
CHAPTER 4
Summary and Implications

Even though much more could be mentioned regarding the limitless issue of human suffering, what may be culled from the above research and the analysis of the biblical record? What does the passion of Jesus Christ reveal to humanity about God's concern and regard for those who experience suffering? What practical good news does the Christian have, based upon the passion narrative, to bring to those in agony and distress?

In this concluding chapter the discoveries of the previous chapters will be considered in light of the biblical evidence. This will be accomplished by gleaning principles from the biblical text and then drawing practical implications for ministry.

From the analysis it seems clear that God has revealed himself as one who has the capacity to experience suffering. Based upon the examples in chapter two, the God of the Old Testament has revealed himself, particularly through the prophets, as being able to experience such emotions as grief, sorrow, compassion, affliction, and anguish (cf. Gen 6:5-6; Ex 2:23-25; 6:5; 34:6-7; Isa 42:14; 63:9; Jer 31:20; Hos 11:8). In dealing with humanity, and especially with his wayward chosen people, God has suffered.

However, not until God came to dwell among his people in the person of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:18-25), does one see first-hand the depth of God's suffering. In Matthew's Gospel, one discovers the severity of God's suffering in Christ. Jesus experienced the most extreme forms of mental, 

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127 Cf. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 96. As noted earlier, Kingsbury notes the critical significance of Matthew's term "Immanuel" for Jesus as the Son of God. "... in the person of Jesus Messiah, the Son of God, God has drawn near to dwell with his people ... ."
emotional and physical suffering that any human being could ever endure. Jesus revealed to his three closest friends that his soul was "deeply grieved, to the point of death" (26:38). He was subsequently betrayed by one of his very own disciples into the hands of his enemies (26:49). Moments later, Jesus was deserted by all of his disciples (26:56b). Next, Jesus also received one of the most excruciating beatings ever experienced by a human being (27:26). Ultimately, Jesus was crucified between two criminals while being relentlessly mocked (27:35-44). Moreover, just before Jesus dies on the cross he cries out in anguish as he realizes his inevitable separation and abandonment from his Father (27:46, 50). Yes, it seems clear that Matthew purposely reveals the extreme suffering to the readers of his Gospel.

It is also clear from the structure of Matthew's Gospel that one of his main objectives is to expose the reality of Christ's suffering to his readers. Not only are the passion and resurrection accounts located as the climax to the entire Gospel, but the theme of Jesus' suffering and death is a recurring theme woven from the second chapter to his crucifixion in chapter twenty-seven.

Furthermore, Matthew reveals that Jesus lived with the unceasing trauma of his impending betrayal, abandonment, and crucifixion (cf. 9:15; 10:38; 12:39-40; 16:21, 24-26; 17:12, 22-23; 20:17-19, 22, 28: 21:33-46; 26:2-75; 27:1-50). Also, one may surmise from Matthew that Christ voluntarily surrendered to all of his suffering as the perfectly obedient Son of God (cf. 16:21; 26:39-42).

Through his passion, Jesus has not only revealed his abundant love for his Father, but also for his people. Matthew records early in his Gospel that Mary shall call her son "Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (1:21). Jesus himself, revealed to his disciples that he, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (20:28). Even when
being mocked by the crowds, the religious leaders, and the two robbers that he should save himself, Jesus displayed his steadfast love for those he came to save by staying on the cross until death.

As revealed in chapter three, Jesus exhibited his great compassion for suffering humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, by bringing healing and wholeness to all who came to him (cf. 4:23; 9:35). Just as Matthew chose to emphasize the theme of Jesus' passion through the structural law of recurrence, in the same fashion, he highlights the compassion of Jesus toward those in distress. Perhaps Matthew most clearly reveals this attribute of Jesus when he records Jesus "felt compassion" for the multitudes (9:36). As indicated earlier, the word ἑλπισμός vividly reveals the deep compassion within the person of Jesus as he is nearly overwhelmed with the needs of the multitudes (cf. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34).

Therefore, from the above principles one may conclude that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Immanuel, can identify with the suffering of humanity as he has personally participated in the most extremes of human suffering. He can empathize with those who suffer and fully understands the weight of human passion.

However, there are some today who believe that Jesus not only identifies and empathizes with our sufferings, but he also suffers with us to strengthen and comfort us. Is there any evidence in Matthew to support such a claim? There seem to be two passages which may speak to this issue. First, as noted in earlier discussions, Matthew reveals that in Jesus, God has come to dwell among his people (1:23). During the earthly ministry of Jesus, God indeed was among suffering humanity. God revealed his great compassion for those in need through healing and restoration. Jesus was also greatly affected by the sufferings of humanity as outlined above. But now that Jesus is no longer walking among us, how can God truly participate in our sufferings?
Matthew closes out his Gospel with an incredible pronouncement of the risen Christ. Just before Jesus returns to his exalted position with the Father (cf. 26:64), he commissions his disciples by saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (28:18-20). While it is true that Jesus' claim of unsurpassed authority and continual abiding presence is given to the disciples as comfort and assurance in their task of discipling the nations, perhaps other inferences could be made. If Jesus promised to be continually (present tense of the verb εἰμί) with his disciples until the end of the age, does not that imply he would be with all of his disciples throughout the ages? Moreover, would not Jesus' claim also indicate that he would be with his disciples as they experienced suffering?

There seems to be ample evidence within Matthew of the compassionate Christ reaching out to strengthen and comfort his people in the midst of their suffering. Therefore, one could say that now, through the risen Christ, God does participate in the suffering of his people. But what about those in the world who are not Jesus' disciples? Where is God as they suffer?

Within the limits of Matthew's Gospel, there is no clear evidence that God is with all of humanity in their suffering. Those who propose this view either go outside of Matthew's Gospel or tend to cite Matthew 25:35-45 as evidence. Matthew does reveal that Christ himself is somehow among those, "the least of these my brothers," who are suffering in the world: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner (25:31-46). However, as mentioned earlier, the history of interpretation tends to view this passage as dealing exclusively with the community of faith. If this difficult passage does indeed mean that "the least of these"
includes all of suffering humanity, then one may say that Christ does somehow suffer with the whole of suffering humanity.

Nevertheless, Matthew makes it clear that during his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ did indeed meet the needs of all those who came to him. His compassion went out to all those who experienced the agony of human suffering. Therefore, one may conclude from Matthew that the risen Christ is able to comfort and strengthen all who call upon his name and in faith believe that he will meet them in their suffering.

As one involved in the lives of suffering persons, this writer believes the passion of Christ does reveal that God in Christ has borne not only the sins of the world, but its consequential suffering as well. God can identify with those who suffer, and through Christ, God can truly understand the immense weight of human suffering. As Immanuel, the risen Christ is with his people in the very midst of their passion, desiring to bring strength and comfort to all in need.

No, God has not eliminated suffering from the world and does not always bring the deliverance one would desire. However, the hope of all humanity is that through his glorious resurrection, Christ has guaranteed that one day suffering will be no more and those who have trusted in Christ by faith will enter into an eternal existence completely void of suffering.
A. Biblical Principles Related To Suffering

After each principle there are letters to indicate to whom it applies: G-general/B-believers/U-unbelievers.

1. Suffering cannot always be said to be caused by sin or to indicate lack of spirituality (1 Corinthians 4:9-14; John 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:22-31). G

2. The source of suffering is linked with sin, evil, and the curse of God (Genesis 3:14-19; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Romans 8:20-23). G

3. Removal of suffering is linked with redemption (Genesis 3:21 - c.f. context of curse prior to this verse) and the ultimate triumph of righteousness (2 Peter 3:5-7,10; Revelation 21:1,4 and 22:2,3). G

4. Suffering and evil occur in the broader context of God's providence (Genesis 50:20; Job 1:12; 2:6). It is not fate or bad luck. G

5. Suffering can be negative or positive, depending on how you respond (Genesis 50:20; book of Job). Satan wants to turn us aside (1 Peter 5:8,9); God wants sufferings to strengthen us (Job). G

6. Suffering is to be anticipated in the light of God's character (1 Peter 4:19; Job 23:10-13,14; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Isaiah 55:9, Ecclesiastes 11:5) so that we should not fall prey to despair (2 Corinthians 4:8, Romans 8:28-32, 37-39). G

128 Suffering: A Biblical Survey (World Wide Pictures, 1980). Used with permission. This was the original resource material used in the promotion of the movie Joni.
7. Suffering indicates the vulnerability of our present state and the need for redemption (2 Corinthians 5:1-5; Philippians 3:21). This points out that man's greatest need is not just salvation of the body, but of the soul which continues past the grave (1 Peter 1:6,9,24). G

8. Suffering tests where our real point of hope is (1 Peter 1:6,13) and reveals the intent of our hearts (Job's wife, Job 2:9; Psalm 11:5, 17:1-5) because it makes us reflect on the real meaning of life (see the Psalms). G

9. Suffering is used to increase our awareness of the sustaining power of God and to whom we owe our sustenance (Psalm 68:19; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10), and draws us closer to Him (Job 23:5,7,10) because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). G

10. God uses suffering to gain the praises of men both good and evil (1 Peter 1:6,7; John 9:1-3, 11:4; Revelation 11:13). G

11. God uses suffering to refine, perfect, strengthen and keep us from falling (Ps 66:8,9; Hebrews 2:10, 12:10). B

12. Suffering allows the life of Christ to be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:7-11) bankrupting us, making us dependent on God (2 Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 14:6). B

13. Suffering teaches us humility (2 Corinthians 12:7), imparting the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11), for God is more concerned with character than comfort (Romans 5:3,4; Hebrews 12:10,11). Thus, the greatest good of the Christian life is not absence of pain but Christ-likeness (2 Corinthians 4:8-10; Romans 8:28,29). B

14. Suffering can be a chastisement from God for sin and rebellion (Psalm 107:17; Isaiah 24:5,6; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:29,30). G

15. Suffering is the only means in which moral evil enters into the consciousness of God (God - Isaiah 63:9; Christ - Luke 9:22, 17:25, 24:26,46; Matthew 16:21; Hebrews 2:10). G
16. Voluntary suffering is one way to demonstrate the love of God (2 Corinthians 8:1,2,9). B

17. Obedience and self-control is learned from suffering (Hebrews 5:8) along with patience (Romans 5:1-5) and refinement (James 1:2-8; Proverbs 17:3), conforming us to His death (Philippians 3:10, 2:1-11). B

18. Suffering may be due to a failure of ourselves, or failure to employ our God-given resources in accord with wisdom (Proverbs 19:16, 13:20, 11:24, 22:3, 27:12; Job 21). G

19. Temporary suffering may be due to those over us who are negligent (Numbers 14:31-33), but on an ultimate basis we stand as individuals (Ezekiel 18:10 and broad context.) G

20. Suffering or pain is an indicator or deterrent to continual bodily harm (Psalm 139). G

21. Suffering is part of the righteousness struggle against sin (Hebrews 12:4-13) and evil men (Psalm 27:12 and 37:14, 15; 1 Peter 2:18, 2 Timothy 3:1-13; Hebrews 11:36-40). See – suffering for righteousness sake, 1 Peter 3:14; for His sake, Philippians 1:29; for the kingdom of God, 2 Thessalonians 1:5; for the Gospel, 2 Timothy 2:9; for unjustness, 1 Peter 2:19; as Christians, 1 Peter 4:16; for the name, Acts 5:41. This indicates how the righteous become sharers in Christ's suffering (2 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Peter 4:13) as sons (1 Peter 5:8; Hebrews 11:36-38). B

22. Satan uses suffering to cast aspersion on the character of God and His saints (Job 1,2). G

23. Suffering serves as a preliminary warning of the judgment to come to unbelievers (Luke 16; Revelation 20:15-15; 2 Kings 15:5). U

24. Satan uses suffering as an obstacle to evangelizing (Ephesians 6:16-20; 2 Timothy 4:1-8, 15-17; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18). B

25. Endurance of suffering is given as a cause for reward (2 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:12). B
26. Suffering demonstrates the total commitment to Christ that we need in all that we do or say (2 Corinthians 4) and demonstrates the need for the grace of God to sustain us. B

27. Suffering forces community and the administration of our gifts for the common good (1 Peter 4:12; 1 Corinthians 12; Philippians 4:12-15). B

28. Suffering indicates that real faith can survive both calamity and prosperity (Job 42:7-17). B

29. Suffering teaches us that sustenance for our lives is not found totally in our physical life but in the inworking of God upon the heart. B

30. Suffering binds Christians together into a common or joint purpose (Revelation 1:9). B

31. Suffering produces discernment and knowledge and teaches us His statutes (Psalm 119:66,67,71). B

32. Through suffering God is able to obtain a broken and contrite spirit which He desires (Psalm 51:16,17; Ps 32). G

33. Suffering causes us to gird our minds by making us fix our hope on the grace to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6,13 and 2:5). G

34. Suffering can be used as a nullifier to the counsel of the nations and the frustration of their plans (Revelation 17,18; Psalm 33:10). U

35. God uses suffering to humble us that He might exalt us at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6,7 and broad context). B

36. Suffering teaches us to number our days that we might present to God a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:7-12). B

37. Because ultimate judgment is not yet final, current suffering must be viewed as a necessary complement to this life (1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 3:20,21). G

38. Suffering, as a complement to evil, will be the wages of the ungodly for their rebellion (2 Peter 2:13 and 3:7). Therefore, suffering serves as a warning to the ungodly. U
39. Suffering is valuable to godliness when coupled with contentment (1 Timothy 6:6). B

40. Suffering is sometimes necessary to win the lost (2 Timothy 2:8-10 and 4:5,6; 2 Corinthians 1:1-11). B

41. Sufferings of the righteous strengthen and allow one to comfort those who are weak or suffering (Philippians 1:12-14,20 and 2:17; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 and 7:6,7; Hebrews 2:18). B

42. Suffering is only temporary and in light of its momentary affliction is nothing as compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8). B

43. Since righteousness does not exempt us from suffering, this should teach us that there is a warfare going on, on a much higher plane, which, until complete, will allow suffering to continue. G

44. God desires truth in our innermost being and one way He does it is through suffering (Psalm 51:6 and 119:17). B

45. The equity for suffering will be found in the next life (Psalm 58:10,11; Luke 16:19-31, especially verse 25; 1 Peter 2:12). B

46. Suffering is always coupled with a greater source of grace (2 Timothy 1:7,8 and 4:16-18; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 10:13). B

47. Suffering can lead to the repentance of sin (Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 7:5-11). G

48. Suffering teaches us as men that we are frail and weak, dependent for hope on someone greater (Psalm 14:6 and 11:1). G

49. Suffering of the righteous (vengeance) will be a main cause for the judgment of the wicked (Psalm 12:5; Revelation 6:9-11). U

50. Suffering teaches us to give thanks in times of sorrow (2 Corinthians 1:11). B

51. Suffering increases faith (Abraham - Genesis 22; Psalm 46:10; Jeremiah 29:11). B
52. Suffering allows God to manifest His care (Psalm 56:8). B

53. Suffering stretches our hope (Job 13:14-15). B

54. When suffering seems to have no meaning in the physical realm it does have meaning in the spiritual realm (Job 1-3. Remember, Job knew not the cause or reason for his sufferings). G

55. Suffering is used to break the will of the rebellious (Revelation 11:13). Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of a rebel heart. C.S. Lewis, "God whispers in our pleasure but shouts in our pain."

56. When there is no answer for the suffering, it does not mean God has forgotten, only that resolution is destined for the life to come (Psalm 9:12,18). G

57. Suffering indicates that true hope changes sorrow but does not obliterate it. G

58. Suffering is not cause for being ashamed (2 Timothy 1:12). B

B. The Principles Logically Applied

As one approaches the subject of suffering within the Scriptures, he finds that the complete "why" of suffering is never found. He must rather rest in the character of God (Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 55:8,9) and that all suffering takes place within the appointed boundaries of God. This does not mean that we are not to pursue the subject, only that we are to bow to the truth which God has given us, with the amount of explanation He has revealed.

As we enter the realm of suffering, we are immediately caught by a foundation principle that human suffering cannot be understood in a purely human or naturalistic context, but must encompass the heavenly counterpart, the spiritual realm. From the physical plane, man finds God trapped in inconsistency; how can a holy God allow evil and any complement of it? Here we must bow to mystery, but not to mystery without direction. For in the question of evil, which poses the greatest threat to God and His character, especially His holiness, we find that He has given us some guidelines to allow us to rest in His revealed character.
1. God's ultimate glory is found with His triumph over all evil and sin and any of its counterparts, such as suffering and wickedness (Revelation 21:1-5).

2. In His triumph, He reveals that suffering is intricately linked with Satan, evil, and the fall (death), and the curse of God upon the earth (Revelation 20:10-15, 21:1-5, 22:1-5; Genesis 3:14-19, 21; 2 Peter 3:5-7, 10; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Romans 8:20-23).

3. He allows evil and suffering only to occur within the broad context of His providence, for God never relinquishes control of His omnipotent rule, which gives hope to those who suffer.

4. That with the entrance of sin and suffering, not all further suffering is due to immediate sin or wrongdoing or serves as an act of punishment, for in the book of Job, the dialogue in heaven has established Job's innocence before God (Job 1:7, 8).

5. This means that suffering is a natural counterpart to life within a fallen world. In the end, God will create a new heaven and earth where there are no tears, death, mourning, crying, or pain; for the first heaven and earth have passed away with the removal of all the ungodly, including Satan and his demon host, and upon the new heaven and earth we will find the godly.

6. This enlightens us as to five facts:
   a. That God's ultimate justice transcends the earthly and temporal.
   b. That God is using that which opposes His character to glorify Himself (Proverbs 16:4).
   c. That time, which allows for the existence of sin and evil, poses no threat to God's character as long as victory and equity are assured.
   d. That the ultimate answer to suffering rests in the justice, wisdom, and knowledge of a transcendent God.
e. That suffering remains because mortality has not put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

This means that suffering stands as a neutral test because two opposing personalities are using it for their own ends, one for good and one for evil.

Satan uses it to glorify himself by:
1. Impugning God's character
2. Opposing the saints
3. Hindering the work of redemption
4. Verifying his own power
5. Causing disunity - the contradiction to a harmonious God
6. Furthering his own kingdom
7. Nullifying sanctification

God uses it to glorify Himself by:
1. Using it as a warning device in the physical makeup of a man
2. Bringing joy out of despair
3. Building character in men
4. Breaking the will of the ungodly
5. Sanctifying the inner man
6. Judging sin with its own product
7. Eliminating it
8. Warning man of His ultimate judgment
9. Testing the character of faith in His saints
10. Foiling the counsel of the ungodly
11. Bringing the praise of the wicked in His day of visitation
12. Winning the lost
13. Imparting knowledge of Himself
14. Teaching man dependence on Him
15. Bringing reward
16. Giving us the knowledge of Christ
17. Teaching us to give thanks in all things
18. Disciplining His saints
19. Allowing us to experience more of God's comfort
20. Perceiving the outcome of wrong moral and natural choices

Man may face it by:
1. Wanting to remake the world
2. Anticipating it
3. Crying in self-pity
4. Rebelling against it
5. Resigning oneself to it
6. Looking for God in it
7. Waiting on God even if He's not perceived
APPENDIX B

A Summary of Reasons for Suffering

For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men. (Lam 3:31-33, RSV)

WE MAY GROUP SOME OF GOD'S reasons into four categories. The list of references is by no means exhaustive.

First, we suffer for our own sake:

that we may learn who God is
Ps 46:1,10; Dn 4:24-37; the Book of Job,
that we may learn to trust
2 Cor 1:8-9,
that we may learn to obey
Ps 119:67, 71,
discipline is proof of the
Father's love and of the validity of our sonship
Heb 12:5-11
it is the condition of discipleship
Acts 14:22; Lk 14:26-27,33,
it is required of soldiers
2 Tm 2:4,
we are being "pruned" that we may bear fruit
Jn 15:2,
that we may be shaped to the image of Christ
Rom 8:29,
to qualify us to be fellow-heirs with Christ
Rom 8:17
to qualify us for the kingdom of God
2 Thes 1:4-5.

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to qualify us to reign with Christ 2 Tm 2:12, 
that our faith may be strengthened  
that faith may be tested and refined Is 43:2; Dn 11:35; Mal 3:2; 1 Cor 3:13, 1 Pt 1:7, 
that we may reach spiritual maturity Jas 1:4, 
power comes to its full strength in weakness 2 Cor 12:9. 
to produce in us endurance, character, hope Rom 5:3-4, 
to produce in us joy and generosity 2 Cor 8:2. 

Second, we suffer for the sake of God's people:
that they may obtain salvation 2 Tim 2:10. 
to give them courage Phil 1:14, 
that because of death working in us, 2 Cor 4:12; Gal 4:13;  
life may work in them 1 Jn 3:16, 
that grace may extend to more 2 Cor 4:15, 
that our generosity may bless others 2 Cor 8:2. 

Third, we suffer for the world's sake:
that it may be shown what love and obedience mean the Book of Job; Jn 14:31; Mt. 27:40-43,
that the life of Jesus may be visible in ordinary human flesh 2 Cor 4:10.

Fourth, we suffer for Christ's sake:
that we may be identified with Him in His crucifixion
suffering is the corollary of faith Gal 2:20,
that we may share His suffering Ps 44:22; Acts 9:16 and 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12;
Jn 15:18-21; 1 Thes 1:6 and 3:4,
that we may share His glory 1 Pt 4:12-13; Phil 1:29, 2:17 and 3:8, 10;
Col 1:24; 2 Tm 1:8;
Heb 13:13,
Rom 8:17-18; Heb 2:9-10;
2 Cor 4:17.
On The Physical Death of Jesus Christ

The following material on scourging and crucifixion practices and the medical insight into these two instruments of suffering is extracted from the complete article published in JAMA.

Scourging

Scourging Practices. The usual instrument was a short whip (flagrum or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals. Occasionally, staves also were used. For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post. The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers (lictors) or by one who alternated positions. The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

Medical Aspects of Scourging. As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set

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130 William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," The Journal of the American Medical Association 255, (March 21, 1986), 1455-63. My sincere appreciation to Dr. Edwards for permission to include this unique article in reference to the passion of Jesus.
the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.

Scourging of Jesus. At the Praetorium, Jesus was severely whipped. (Although the severity of the scourging is not discussed in the four gospel accounts, it is implied in one of the epistles [1 Peter 2:24]. A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh.) It is not known whether the number of lashes was limited to 39, in accordance with Jewish law.

The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.

Crucifixion

Crucifixion Practices. Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls. He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs. Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 lb (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried. The patibulum, weighing 75 to 125 lb (34 to 57 kg), was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the
outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar.

The hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans. . . . After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, together, were lifted onto the stipes. . . . Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. . .

Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes.

The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging. However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees.

Medical Aspects of Crucifixion. With a knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution. Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce orthostatic hypotension and even hypovolemic shock. When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of the hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt. Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes. As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

With arms outstretched but not taut, the wrists were nailed to the patibulum. It has been shown that the ligaments and bones of the wrist can support the weight of a
body hanging from them, but the palms cannot. Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius and the carpals or between the two rows of carpal bones, either proximal to or through the strong bandlike flexor retinaculum and the various intercarpal ligaments.

Although a nail in either location in the wrist might pass between the bony elements and thereby produce no fractures, the likelihood of painful periosteal injury would seem great. Furthermore, the driven nail would crush or sever the rather large sensorimotor median nerve. The stimulated nerve would produce excruciation bolts of fiery pain in both arms. Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, ischemic contractures and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike might produce a clawlike grasp.

Most commonly, the feet were fixed to the front of the stipes by means of an iron spike driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint. It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the medial and lateral plantar nerves would have been injured by the nails.

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the
shouders. However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain. Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves. Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scoured back against the rough wooden stipes. Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia.

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Other possible contributing factors included dehydration, stress-induced arrhythmias, and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions. . . . Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating (Latin, excruciatus, or "out of the cross").

Death of Jesus

Jesus' death after only three to six hours on the cross surprised even Pontius Pilate. The fact that Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggests the possibility of a catastrophic terminal event. One popular explanation has been that Jesus died of cardiac rupture.

However, another explanation may be more likely. Jesus' death may have been hastened simply by his state of exhaustion and by the severity of the scourging, with its resultant blood loss and preshock state. The fact that he could not carry his patibulum supports this interpretation. The actual cause of Jesus' death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure. A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may
have accounted for the apparent catastrophic terminal event.

Thus, it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not how he died but rather whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.
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