

The Crucifixion

Following his trial, Jesus was taken to be crucified. Crucifixion was a slow, painful and much dreaded method of execution used by the Romans. Carried out in public, it involved the victim being nailed or tied to a cross by his wrists and feet and left to hang there until he died. Jesus was crucified at about 9am and died at 3pm, on the day after he was arrested.

The execution of a man believed by his followers to be God lies at the heart of Christianity. This raises many questions for Christians and non-Christians alike. Why did God allow Jesus to go through such suffering? Why was a man beloved as a wise teacher, who had helped so many people and who never used his power for his own benefit, subjected to a humiliating, agonising death?

To do...

The crown of thorns and the 'king of the Jews' sign were supposed to be a mockery of Jesus.

 Highlight them and the other ways in which Jesus is mocked.

Golgotha is a hill just outside Jerusalem, where executions were carried out.

The Soldiers Make Fun of Jesus

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace, and the whole company gathered around him. They stripped off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. Then they made a crown out of thorny branches and placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and mocked him. "Long live the King of the Jews!" they said. They spat on him, and took the stick and hit him over the head. When they had finished mocking him, they took the robe off and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Jesus Is Crucified

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. They came to a place called Golgotha, which means, "The Place of the Skull." There they offered Jesus wine mixed with a bitter substance; but after tasting it, he would not drink it.

They crucified him and then divided his clothes among them by throwing dice. After that they sat there and watched him. Above his head they put the written notice of the accusation against him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then they crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left.

To do...

 Christians may wear a cross or a crucifix as a symbol of their faith? Explain what it might mean to them.

To think about:

Jesus died on a Friday. Christians remember his death on 'Good Friday', which is in spring, two days before Easter Sunday. If Jesus died, what's so good about 'Good Friday'? You might want to come back to your answer after you have done the next topic as well.

People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "You were going to tear down the Temple and build it back up in three days! Save yourself if you are God's Son! Come on down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and the elders jeered at him: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Isn't he the king of Israel? If he comes down off the cross now, we will believe in him! He trusts in God and claims to be God's Son. Well, then, let us see if God wants to save him now!"

Even the bandits who had been crucified with him insulted him in the same way.

Matthew chapter 27 verses 39-44

To do...

 Jesus died in a terribly painful, drawn-out and humiliating way. Christians believe that Jesus was omnipotent. Why didn't he just come down from the cross as the people suggested?

Try to use some of these words in your answer: loving; necessary; salvation.

To do...

 A strange event occurs around Jesus' death. Highlight this in the text.

To do...

 Jesus speaks to God before he dies. Highlight his words.

The Death of Jesus

At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. At about three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

Some of the people standing there heard him and said, "He is calling for Elijah!" One of them ran up at once, took a sponge, soaked it in cheap wine, put it on the end of a stick, and tried to make him drink it.

But the others said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah is coming to save him!"

Jesus again gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Matthew chapter 27 verses 27-50