**Why Crucifixion?**

Mark 15:24 says of the Roman soldiers, “And they crucified Him.” Why did God choose crucifixion as the means by which to offer redemption and forgiveness of sins to mankind? The Roman philosopher Cicero wrote that crucifixion was “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.” Why not have Jesus merely hung, burned at the stake, or beheaded? Certainly, these forms of execution existed in Bible times (Esther 7:10; Mark 6:27). As gruesome as these deaths are to us, they seem so mild—even humane—when compared to crucifixion.

While we must not presume to know the mind of God and His sovereign reasons for doing all He does (Deut. 29:29), the excruciating torture that crucifixion brought to its victims, as well as the utter humiliation and shame which accompanied its physical pain, serve as a grave reminder of what sin really is.

We speak of sin so lightly sometimes, as if “missing the mark” is no big deal. Instead, we ought to think of sin in terms of selfish rebellion against our good Creator. “Sin is lawlessness,” John says (1 John 3:4). Paul put it this way: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Both of these descriptions lead us to one consequence: death (Romans 6:23). This is a death so serious it can best be described as “eternal destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:51), “outer darkness” (Matthew 22:13), and “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43). What Jesus endured on the cross is as close to “hell on earth” as anyone can possibly come.

Crucifixion is the picture God chose to give us of how ugly, shameful, and destructive sin is. I suppose we could safely say that any other kind of death would not have done justice to the message God was conveying to us. Only crucifixion—perfected and regularly practiced by the Romans—adequately fit God’s purpose. How, then, can we sin so thoughtlessly when God has spoken to us so loudly and clearly of how our rebellion will ultimately destroy us?

There is another side of this, though. While reminding us of the ugliness of sin, Jesus’ crucifixion also speaks of the beauty of God’s love. Jesus, “lifted up” from the earth and nailed to the cross, is God’s statement to the world of how deeply He longs for our salvation, if only we will believe (John 3:14-17). It is there that we see Jesus giving Himself entirely to doing the Father’s will, not His own (John 8:28-29). It is there that God chose to defeat Satan and draw all men to himself (John 12:31-33).

In one sense the thought of Jesus on the cross is repulsive, a horrific picture we may not even want our children to see for all its blood and gore. In another sense, though, this same thought has a strong magnetic attraction to the human soul, that God would care that much about me—a helpless sinner, a hostile enemy of God.

He cares that much for you too. Do you care enough about Him, and yourself, to do something about it?

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).