



The journey to Golgotha.

Matthew 27:31; Mark 15:20 – 22; Luke 23:26 – 32; John 19:16 – 17

- **Matt. 27: 31;** "And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified."

The Roman soldiers have done something that wasn't usual with the victims they punished. The Scriptures tell us that the soldiers took off the robe and put His own clothing back on Him. Keep in mind, the punishment doled out was not only to be painful, but also humiliating. Usually the victims were marched through the streets of Jerusalem to the Place of the Skull naked, while carrying the cross-bar across their shoulders. Because of Jewish laws and customs against public nudity, the Romans dressed Jesus for His walk to Golgotha.

Jesus has become a public spectacle. He has just received a severe beating and now has a heavy wooden cross tied to His shoulder. He must now carry it through the streets of the city, on the slow journey to Golgotha. Actually, there is discussion by various commentaries and scholars regarding whether Jesus actually carried the entire cross or just the cross bar section of the cross. It would make the most sense that those assigned to death by crucifixion, after flogging, would probably barely have the strength to carry the patibulum (cross bar), which was estimate to weigh somewhere between 80 and 110 pounds. Also, keep in mind that the cross was not a finished product. Its surface was rough and full of splinters, not sanded and smooth. Some sources have estimated that splinters could have been as big as an adult "pinky finger" and up to six inches in length. Considering the physical condition of someone who has just received the stripes of 40 – 1, this would be incredibly and immensely painful.

Depending upon the resource material, the most common estimate of the length of journey between the Roman palace and Golgotha is approximately 650 yards. Tradition has allowed us to think of Calvary as on a hill and has even influenced some great songs of the faith (for example, "The Old Rugged Cross"). Tradition is a difficult thing to overcome, even when it is wrong! In this case, tradition is not correct and that the following information will help to establish this point.

According to one source (<http://www.israeljerusalem.com/golgotha-israel.htm>):

"“Golgotha” referred to a cliff face whose rock protrusions and indentations gave it the distinct appearance of a human skull.”

“Golgotha is located just outside the Damascus Gate and faces the major east–west road that runs just north of Old Jerusalem. It is precisely the type of location where the Romans liked to crucify rebels so that their gruesome handiwork can scare passing masses and deter future rebels against Rome. This means that Jesus was crucified with the skull-faced cliff in the background – i.e., His cross was at the bottom of this cliff, at ground level, not on top of it. As explained above, the Romans crucified people on major roads, not on hard-to-reach hilltops, because they wanted the passersby to see the victims’ gory end up close, not from afar. Besides, access to the top of this cliff is difficult from Old Jerusalem and requires a prohibitively long detour.”

This would make sense, especially when compared to other sources and their estimates of the length of journey from the Roman palace to the place where Christ was crucified. In fact, there is a video on YouTube entitled:

“Old Jerusalem: Walking from Damascus Gate to the Western Wall,” by Glenn Campbell
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjlkd-iLOm8>)

This video runs from the time the author enters the Damascus Gate until he arrives at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount inside of Old Jerusalem. This video takes approximately 15 minutes, which is about the time it would take an average person to walk 650 yards. This video also serves as a reminder that the streets of Old Jerusalem are not like the streets of modern cities. They are very narrow and often sandwiched between two tall brick/block structures. If these streets were lined with people jeering at Jesus and the two thieves, they would have been in extremely close proximity, possibly within reaching distance. If the crowds were vocal, the passage way would have been extremely loud.

The Roman soldiers escorting Jesus and the two thieves, realized that Jesus was probably not going to make the journey. The account in **Mark 15** states that the soldiers forced a father of two boys (Simon of Cyrene), who was passing by on his way in from the country, to carry the cross of Jesus to Golgotha. Can you imagine the effect this must have had on these young boys as they witnessed the marred body of Jesus passing so closely by them and then collapsing? How much more distressing must it have been to see the Roman soldiers grab their father and command him to carry the cross bar for Christ. Some of these details get so easily lost in the simple reading of these Bible verses. But, as a parent, can you imagine dealing with the after–effects of what they witnessed?

- **Matt. 27: 32;** “Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.”
- **Luke 23: 26;** “Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear *it* after Jesus.