



**The DAILY JESUS NEWS #321**  
**Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement**

**Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice On the Cross**

**Jesus is Crucified, as He Prays, "Father, Forgive Them" (Saying #1)**  
**JN 19.18-24 (Parallel Texts: MT 27.35-38; MK 15.24-27; LK 23.33-34, 38)**

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18 <sup>L</sup>When they came to the place called The Skull, <sup>J</sup>there they crucified him, along with him two other <sup>L</sup>criminals--<sup>M</sup>bandits--one on the right side, and one on the left, <sup>J</sup>with Jesus in the middle.

<sup>M</sup>It was the third hour (about 9:00 AM) when they crucified him.

<sup>L</sup>Jesus kept on saying, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*"

19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. <sup>MT</sup>They placed the written charge against him above his head. <sup>J</sup>It stood written:

<sup>MT</sup>THIS IS <sup>J</sup>JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

22 Pilate answered, "What I have permanently written, I have permanently written."

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." <sup>M</sup>So they cast lots to see what each would get.

<sup>J</sup>This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

"THEY DIVIDED MY CLOTHES AMONG THEM  
AND CAST LOTS FOR MY GARMENT." (Ps. 22.18)

So this is what the soldiers did. <sup>MT</sup>And sitting down, they were keeping watch over him there.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible

book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Golgotha, Outside the Western City Gates of Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice on the Cross
Title	Jesus is Crucified, as He Prays, "Father, Forgive Them" (Saying #1)

Today's reading continues the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion. The four gospels contain seven sayings of Jesus on the cross. These words are the best explanation of what happened when Jesus died, for they are his own last words. Our comments regarding the cross will feature these seven precious sayings. This text contains the first one. We will consider it shortly, but first we need to make a few key observations.

The lack of sensationalism about the physical details of Jesus' crucifixion in the four gospels is striking. The four writers stated it simply: "...there they crucified Jesus." Everyone in the Roman Empire knew what a crucifixion involved. There was no need to describe it in detail. Beyond that, the important thing about Jesus' cross was not the physical torture involved. It was what his death accomplished that matters forever. This is what the gospel emphasizes.

The men who were crucified at the same time as Jesus were dangerous bandits. The word that describes them can mean mere thieves, or insurrectionists who stole and pillaged to support their rebellion against authority. The fact that Pilate judged them worthy of crucifixion shows they were a menace to the people as long as they were alive.

Jesus was "numbered with the sinners." He was crucified in the middle position because he was dying as the mediator between his Father and all sinners who are in rank rebellion against God's will and Word.

The charge against crucified enemies of Rome was written on their crosses so that the public could be aware of their specific offenses, and learn not to imitate them. The charge against Jesus was being the King of the Jews. Indeed, he was the King of Kings, the Son of David who reigns over all his creation as the One with absolute authority.

The Jewish leaders wanted the charge to be re-written, but Pilate absolutely refused to do so. He used the perfect tense twice in his reply so there would be no misunderstanding regarding his intentions. His charge would stand as written.

The irony was that Pilate was firm on not changing the written charge against Jesus, but he had no problem saying that Jesus was innocent, and not deserving of death five different times, and then capitulating to the will of the mob and ordering crucifixion for a man he declared innocent. He was a vacillating, man-fearing coward in the most important decisions thrust upon him, and a firm, determined man in relatively unimportant matters.

The casting of lots for Jesus' expensive, seamless woven tunic was important because it specifically fulfilled the Scripture of Ps. 22:18. As we will see in future readings about the cross, Psalm 22 has a critical role in understanding the Messiah's death, according to Jesus. This was the first of three specific references to this Psalm in the crucifixion story.

Now we come to the 1st saying of Jesus on the cross, which is one of the most famous words of Jesus in the gospel:

***"Father, Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** (LK 23:34)

The Greek makes it clear that Jesus was repeating this prayer constantly during his first hours on the cross. There is so much revelation contained in these words. What follows are but the highlights.

Jesus was dying as our High Priest, offering his own life in our place as they payment for our sins. Just as the High Priest under the Law would enter into the Holy of Holies with blood from a sacrifice to ask God for the forgiveness of all sins for that calendar year, Jesus was asking the Father for our forgiveness, for all the sins of mankind--for all time. This prayer sealed our forgiveness. The Father answered this prayer in full agreement.

When we ask God for the forgiveness of our specific sins, we are agreeing with this prayer of Jesus on our behalf. We therefore know that we have received what we ask for.

We see unconditional love in these words, like no other time or place in Jesus' life. These were his enemies. In the next reading we will see how viciously they were mocking, taunting, and blaspheming against him as he prayed for them. This scene of Jesus praying for the forgiveness of those who wrongfully murdered him is the greatest love this planet will ever see in action.

Who was Jesus really praying for? It was not just the people who were historically present at the crucifixion during the hours Jesus was crucified, and who were directly responsible for his death. Jesus died because we are all sinners. Whether you and I were the only people who ever lived-- the only sinners in all of creation-- Jesus would have still needed to die in our place, in order for us to be forgiven.

You and I were every bit as responsible for his death as the people who were in that crowd that day. So Jesus was praying for every sinner of all time when he asked for our forgiveness. He prayed for us, too!

The bottom line is that Jesus died to make the answer to this prayer certain for every person who needs forgiveness and asks God for it. One major purpose of the cross was to obtain our eternal, absolute forgiveness from all sin. Jesus was *"the Lamb of God, who really takes away the sins of the world."* This was how he accomplished it.

#### APPLICATION:

The New Testament speaks of "confessing" our sins to God. As we have seen in previous DJN readings, to "confess" means to "agree with" what someone else has said. We agree with God and his Word that we have sinned, just as HE has said we have. We agree with this prayer of Jesus, that he died praying for us to be forgiven on the basis of HIS payment for our sins when he died. We agree that we stand forgiven forever, because that is also the promise of the New Covenant that Jesus died to establish.

*This prayer of Jesus, coupled with his death in payment, sealed our forgiveness. More than any other single place in the Scriptures, this scene gives us our strongest confidence in our forgiveness. Hallelujah!*

*Do you have any sin you need to agree with Jesus about today, just as he prayed on the cross?*

*How will you praise, thank, and worship him today for praying this prayer, and dying this death so that you can be freely forgiven?*