

INTRO: How quickly the mood can change. In just a matter of minutes you can go from a dimly lit tavern to the glaring lights of an emergency room. One minute it is the raucous jeering, taunting, daring of a kegger, and next it's the hush of a funeral home. At Pilate's palace and at Calvary the Roman soldiers were mocking Jesus, and a few hours later they are confessing Him as God's Son. (*read texts here*)

## I. WHY WERE SOLDIERS MOCKING JESUS (God knows, we guess)

### A. Sinning seems like fun (...good to eat...)

1. perverse nature enjoying other's discomfort; lick frost off steel post, pull chair away, Wiley Coyote flattened by anvil off cliff
2. v.27f. - then the soldiers of the governor...whole band...stripped...scarlet robe...crown of thorns...reed in His hand...bowed the knee before Him....mocked Him saying "Hail king of the Jews..." spit...reed and smote Him on the head; come down from the cross...
3. these are professional soldiers! point no fingers, every thought or word of mockery to 'least of these My brethren...'

### B. Sinning is contagious

1. it is 'inherited' as original sin since Adam and Eve
2. it often snowballs in a specific situation, esp. among others like-minded (everybody else.)
3. that does not excuse any sinner, of course
4. every sin deserves divine punishment
- 5 every sinner faces a Day of Reckoning
  - a. when he realizes consequences on self and others
  - b. ultimately facing God on unknown Day of Judgment
  - c. everybody needs an attitude adjustment

## II. WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE CHANGE IN THESE SOLDIERS?

### A. Many moving events in a short time

1. v.51 'behold' intimates something extraordinary, startling
2. soldiers may have thought that Judgment Day had come
3. supernatural darkness since noon; long eclipse!
4. earthquake shook them up, literally

(continued)

5. caves/tombs opened & *some* saints' bodily arose
6. appeared to many; intriguing, but unexplained!
7. curtain in temple torn in two from top to bottom
  - a. separated Holy place from Holy of Holies (holiest)
  - b. 2" thick; 80' high x 24' wide; embroidered with symbols in blue, purple, and scarlet
  - c. earthquakes usually don't tear curtains
  - d. happened at 3 PM, hour of evening sacrifice
  - e impressed 'a great number of priests ' (Acts 6:7) who knew symbolism; became Christians
  - f. but what about these soldiers of that first Good Friday

B. Perhaps caused a personal conviction of sin, faith

1. what does it take to impress a Centurion, Roman soldier
2. fear of God, not battles or natural disasters
3. "Truly this was the Son of God" - right on!
4. v.54 centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch
5. we cannot know how well they knew Jesus; Old Testament
6. had heard trial, charges, claim to be Messiah
7. prayers to Father to forgive; commending His spirit
8. Jesus can do that: can change peoples' attitudes if they will listen to Him; check the evidence; think on Him
9. the forgiveness He earned can be very moving to the penitent sinner, changing attitudes and lives

CONCLUSION: So, what about these soldiers; Can a Roman soldier become a Christian? Clearly, yes! Just read chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles and learn of Cornelius of the Italian Regiment at Caesarea. Peter learned of him with the help of the Holy Spirit. Is it possible that the very ones crucifying Jesus could have been moved to repentance, be forgiven, and be found in heaven? Were they changed from mocking unbelievers into confessing believers? The centurion said quite correctly, "Truly, this was the Son of God." That sounds like more than a passing comment. There is a tradition outside the Bible that says this centurion's name was Longinus, and that he became a staunch defender of the Christian faith. We have no way of knowing whether or not this legend is true. On the other hand, we do know that watching and listening to Jesus can change one's attitude, and one's eternal destiny, then, and now. Amen.