

THE ROAD TO GOLGOTHA

When Jesus was led away to be crucified, it was early Passover morning as He traveled the road to Golgotha (Mark 15:15; John 19:14/ 6am).

The road to Golgotha is only covered in the synoptic gospels (Matt.27:26-32; Mark 15:15-21; Luke 23:26-32).

The synoptic gospels reveal the following four episodes on the road to Golgotha.

- Cruelty (15:16-20) – beating and berating of Jesus
- Cyrenean (Matt.27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26) – bearing the cross of Jesus
- Crying women (only Luke 23:27-31) – bereaving over Christ
- Criminals (Matt.27:26-32; Luke 23:26-32) – bearing their crosses

The episode of Simon the Cyrenean occurred while Jesus was coming out of Jerusalem and Simon was coming into Jerusalem (Matt.27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). When they met on the road to Golgotha, the Roman soldiers pressed Simon into service to carry the cross of Jesus to Golgotha (Matt.27:32).

The Greek word for pressed into service is (angareuo). It has a Persian root and refers to the Persian courtier (angaros) who had the authority to press into service anyone or thing necessary to complete the mission of the king (Matt.5:41).

We will study our lesson text by the following four homiletical points.

- Persecution of Jesus (15:16-20; Isa.50:6; 53:5)
- Passer-by of Jesus (15:21a)
- Pressed into roman service (15:21b)
- Parent of Alexander and Rufus (15:21c/ historical foot-note)

Today's lesson will study FIVE aspects of Simon the Cyrenean who carried the cross of Jesus to Golgotha.

1. Simon was a dispersed Jew from Cyrene of Libya in North Africa (modern Tripoli).

Cyrene was a Greek colony settled by the Dorian speaking people from Thera (History of the Ancient World, pg.219). Dorian architect has been found at Cyrene. It was a beautiful and wealthy city about 10 miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

During the time of Ptolemy ruling of Egypt (3rd century), many Jews were dispersed there. It was willed to Romans in 96Bc.

In the middle of the 7th century, the Saracen's conquered them. The Greeks and Romans referred to them as Saracen (wandering Arab tribes).

The famous Cyreniac School of philosophy founded by Aristippus taught that pleasure was the only rational aim of life. The present moment is the only reality and sensation is the only road to truth.

This city produced the famous mathematician, Eratosthenes, who discovered how to figure the size of the earth and how to identify prime numbers.

2. Simon was headed into Jerusalem from the county to attend Passover when he was pressed into Roman service to carry the cross of Jesus to Golgotha.

It was the 14th of Nisan and the day of preparation for Passover (John 19:14, 31, 41; Luke 23:44, 54).

3. The Cyrenean's attended the Synagogue of Freedmen when in Jerusalem (Acts 6:8-15).

This synagogue was for the dispersed Jews who returned to Israel for visits and special holidays.

There were Cyreneans present at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). They were part of the 15 different languages of foreign tongues spoken at Pentecost –“and the districts of Libya around Cyrene.” (2:10) *“We heard them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”* (2:11)

4. Simon became a convert to Christianity after being pressed into roman service of carrying the cross of Jesus.

Mark mentioned his two sons who were Christians (Mark 15:21; Rom.16:13).

We would like to believe that Simon carried the cross of Jesus to Golgotha and then carried his cross as a believer back to Cyrene. Church history records that Simon was martyred in North Africa.

5. Cyreneans were early converts to Christianity and became active in missionary evangelism. (Acts 1:8; 11:19-26).

Lucius of Cyrene was one of five ministers operating out of the church of Antioch (Acts 11:20-22, 26; 13:1).

6. Simon was a visual aid of the lesson that Jesus had taught His disciples regarding carrying His cross.

“And He was saying to them all, ‘if anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” (Luke 9:23)

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

“And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the CROSS TO CARRY BEHIND JESUS.” Luke 23:26)

“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal.6:14)