

Matthew Lesson 27

Matthew Chapter 27

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Memory verses for this week: *Mat 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Mat 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Introduction: In the last half of Chapter 26, we studied Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper there in the upper room with the disciples. At the end of the chapter, we saw Christ taken at night and brought before the High Priest and being tried in a trial of mockery. Peter denied the Lord three times after saying that he would never deny Christ. We ended the chapter with the cock crowing and the words of Jesus coming back to Peter. He went out and wept bitterly.

In Chapter 27, the unjust trial of our Lord continues with Jesus being delivered to Pilate and the Roman authorities. As a politician, Pilate was for the most part trying to appease the larger constituency. When he discerned Jesus had no backers, he washed his hands of Him and granted the desire of the Jewish leaders to crucify Him.

I. The Sanhedrin Deliver Jesus to Pilate

Mat 27:1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

Mat 27:2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Jesus was delivered to Pilate the governor for judgment. The Jewish authorities could not pass a final and binding death sentence. The early morning meeting evidently was a formality to cover the illegal trial during the night. The fact the proceedings had taken place during the night established the illegality of it all.

Hands which shed innocent blood are not only unlawful, but also something that God hates.

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Pro 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Pro 6:18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in

running to mischief,

Pro 6:19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Their bitter envy and hatred brought forth its cruel fruit. They took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. All they had done had been a farce for only Rome held the power of death.

They evidently had enjoyed their lording of authority over Jesus. Mention is again made of Jesus being *bound* as He was taken to Pilate. The Lord of Glory was treated as a base criminal, further humiliating Him.

It is worth noting that though the Sanhedrin was more than willing to be roused out of bed in the middle of the night, Pilate likely did not share that zeal. In all likelihood, the Jewish leadership showed up at Pilate's doorstep only as early as they dare. The Jews had no regard for Pilate. His affections for them were the same. As governor (procurator) of Judea, Pilate normally lived at Caesarea. However, when in Jerusalem, he resided at the fortress Antonia which was adjacent to the Temple complex.

The Jewish leadership evidently remained outside his residence in a public courtyard, not wanting to defile themselves at the beginning of the high holy season by entering into the precincts of a gentile.

The chief priests and elders take counsel together to try and put Jesus to death.

II. Judas Commits Suicide and is Buried in the Potter's Field

Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

Matthew now shifts his focus to Judas Iscariot. Apparently the gravity of what Judas had done began to sink in. He therefore repented himself. The word so translated (metamelomai *metamellomai*) has the sense of 'sorrow.' However, the sorrow of Judas was not godly sorrow as in II Corinthians 7:8.

2Co 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

Judas did not repent in the sense of turning from his sin and turning unto God in contrition and begging God's mercy. He was only sorry when he realized the jam he was in. Such repentance is not unto salvation. He did the only thing he could do. He returned the blood money which was the price of a slave.

Judas' confession of guilt was not to God nor to Jesus, but only to his coconspirators. Judas lamented, *"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."* They really did not care. Their reply, "What is that to us," might be similar to the modern phrase 'Big deal,' or, 'So what?'

The phrase "See thou to that" might find modern equivalent in the phrase 'That's your problem.'

Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Mat 27:6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

Judas' suicide showed the bitter emptiness and hopelessness of one betraying his Maker. He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and went and hanged himself.

The pompous and pious priests, who had no problem in murdering the innocent, once again begin to split hairs over the legality of where to deposit the money. The word used for **treasury** here is (korban) *korban*. It is the same word of which hypocritical religious leaders would deprive an elderly parent to curry political favor in giving to the treasury. See Mark 7:11. The thought likely was a rabbinical tradition based upon Deuteronomy 23:18. However, the focus there is not upon blood money, but upon other ill-gotten gain.

We know Judas was a lost man, but even if you know the Lord as Savior, sin has a price. When you commit sin there is regret, and Judas realizes how wrong he had been in doing what he had in betraying Christ. He had no rest for what he has done. He goes back and casts the silver back to the Chief Priest and elders there in the temple. He sought sympathy, but they could care less about Judas. They got what they wanted, and that was Christ arrested. Notice how that money can entice us to do things, but it never satisfies. Some of the people I know who are very unhappy in life are those with lots of money. Only Jesus brings peace and total satisfaction, and it does not take one penny to

come to Christ for salvation. It is a free gift to all who will come, repent of their sins, and ask Jesus to come into their heart.

Mat 27:7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Mat 27:8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

Mat 27:10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

These religious leaders bought this ground upon which to bury Judas and other indigents. It has come to be otherwise known as the field of blood. The implication of the "potters field" remains a great mystery to me.

It may have been a clay field not well suited for raising crops but suitable for making pottery. It may have been a place where a potter dumped his potsherds (broken pottery) making it of small value.

The Old Testament passages quoted here are Jeremiah 18-19 and Zechariah 11:12-13.

Judas commits suicide by hanging himself, and the chief priests decide it is not lawful for them to take back the money since it had the price of blood on it. So they decide to buy the potter's field to use for burying strangers. They thought this was wise use of the money, but what they didn't realize was that in doing so, they fulfilled a prophecy from the Old Testament by Jeremiah.

Jer 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

Jer 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Jer 18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

Jer 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Zec 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

Zec 11:13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and

cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

J. Vernon McGee said this about the potters field.

You will find this prophecy alluded to in Jeremiah 18:1–4 and evidently quoted from Zechariah 11:12–13. It is credited to Jeremiah simply because in Jesus' day Jeremiah was the first of the books of the prophets, and that section was identified by the name of the first book. The significant thing is that Jesus was present when Judas returned with his thirty pieces of silver. In fact, Jesus was on His way to die—even for Judas. Our Lord had given him an opportunity to come back to Him there in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He had said, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” And even at this eleventh hour, Judas could have turned to the Lord Jesus and would have been forgiven.

III. Jesus is Interrogated by Pilate

Mat 27:11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

Mat 27:12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

Mat 27:13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

Mat 27:14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Herein recorded is the account of Jesus before Pilate. Pilate here is called “the governor.” His actual title was *Legatus Ceasaris*, and specifically *procurator*. Minor Roman provinces such as Judea were ruled by a procurator. More significant provinces such as Syria were ruled by a *propraetor* and senatorial provinces such as Achaia by a *proconsul*.

In any event, Pilate, though the highest ranking Roman officer in Judea, was not a high-echelon Roman ruler in the greater scheme of Roman government. He evidently had some foreknowledge of Jesus for the first thing he asked Him was, “*Art thou the King of the Jews?*”

Such a question was serious in that it implied a potential threat to Roman rule. Moreover, the Romans knew they were not popular in that part of the world. Rebellions against Roman authority were not uncommon. Jesus' cryptic answer, “Thou sayest,” would be similar to answering, ‘You said it.’

When accused further in verse 12 by His Jewish antagonists, again He remained silent.

1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1Pe 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

As Pilate further questioned Him, Jesus maintained a silent dignity. Jesus patiently ignored their interrogation, looking silently to the cross directly ahead. Jesus' life was on the line. His serenity amazed Pilate. Jesus knew that.

Jesus was brought before Pilate, and they begin asking him questions. When asked if he was the King of the Jews, Christ simply states 'Thou sayest.'" The chief priests and elders accuse him before the governor, and he spoke not a word in his defense. This silence caused Pilate to marvel. It was not because he was guilty. It was because he was willingly going to the cross. The JUST dying for the unjust. For this hour and the upcoming hours on the cross was Jesus born.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Isa 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

IV. Barabbas Released, Rather than Christ

Mat 27:15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

Mat 27:16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

Mat 27:17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Mat 27:18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

There evidently had been a custom during that era for the Roman governor to release a prisoner to the Jews as a gesture of good will at the feast of Passover. Pilate, realizing that whoever Jesus was, He was no threat to Rome or otherwise guilty of death. He hoped to find an easy way out. Maybe they would opt for Jesus. He therefore asked, *“Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?”*

Luke’s account points out that Barabbas was in prison for murder and insurrection. He may have been part of a plot against Rome. He likely was popular amongst the Jews who otherwise hated the Romans. It is of note that Pilate here referred to Jesus as the Christ. He evidently understood the implications of the term and its political overtones.

Pilate also discerned the real reason Jesus was before him. It was the envy of the Jewish religious leaders toward Jesus that prompted their vehement hatred of Him. That was the unvarnished truth and Pilate saw right through their pretentious allegations. The hatred by official Israel of Jesus was motivated by nothing more base than envy and jealousy.

I think Pilate clearly knew that Jesus was innocent. And he comes up with a plan that will allow him to keep face and still free Jesus. It was a common practice during the passover season for the governor to release a favorite or notorious prisoner. This way, Pilate could free Christ and yet not offend the Jews. He was pretty sure that they would not want a murderer like Barabbas to be released. Pilate was wise in knowing that it was due to envy that they had delivered Christ unto him.

Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Pilate received word of a dream his wife had that night. She warned him to have nothing to do with Jesus. How or why she dreamed such a dream is not disclosed. It could be that God so warned her. It may have been the evil one.

She realized from her dream that Jesus was a “just man.” She perceived that to condemn Him would prove ill for her husband. Of further interest is that the word translated as **judgment seat** is (bhma) *bema* which literally means a raised platform whence a judge sits. It is the same word used referring to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Though Pilate was inclined to release Jesus, now his wife’s foreboding dream added superstitious fear to the mixture. Her advice apparently was, ‘steer clear of Him. Have nothing to do with Him. Avoid contact with Him.’

Pilate's wife comes and tells him to have nothing to do with Christ due to a dream she had. She knew Jesus was a good and just man, and asked Pilate to show him mercy. We need to put our confidence in the Word of God, not rely on dreams. Some good may come from dreams, but in this day, God speaks to his people by Christ and through the Word of God.

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Heb 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Mat 27:20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Mat 27:21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

Meanwhile, the chief priests and elders had stirred up the local populace to rail against Jesus. The city by now was coming to life. The official leadership of the nation, in a frenetic exercise of political grass-root efforts, convinced the common people to vote for Barabbas and against Jesus. When Pilate did his public opinion poll, simply asking the throngs below whom he should release, they roared back, *Barabbas*.

Behind the scenes, the chief priests and elders were busy encouraging the multitude to ask for the release of Barabbas. These may have been the religious leaders of the day, but they were FAR from being in God's Will and doing the things God would have desired. We all must be careful that we don't fall into the trap of playing church rather than serving God. Only by a pure heart can we worship the Lord the way that God would desire.

Mat 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

Mat 27:23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

No doubt many of the same people who had welcomed His triumphal entry into the city on Sunday of that same week now cried, "Let him be crucified." The leadership had done their political work well. Not only had they coached the people to clamor for Barabbas' release, they had been instructed to demand that Jesus be crucified.

It is apparent that Pilate was inclined to release Jesus. Though he certainly had few scruples, he seemed to have at least the common decency to not execute an innocent man. However, he was foremost a politician and a spineless one at that. His primary concern was to keep the majority of the local Jewish population pacified. Though he was an appointed Roman official, not liable to popular election, nevertheless, keeping the public happy was to his personal advantage.

As a career officer of Rome, Pilate undoubtedly aspired to a more substantial appointment than the backwater province of Judea. If there were political unrest and uproars during his watch, it would damage his future. Roman interests concerning its conquered territories were to maintain tranquility and political stability. A governor who kept his province stable and pacified would in due season be promoted to a more favorable position. All of this most likely were in the back of Pilate's mind as he deliberated over Jesus.

After this, Pilate asks a very important question. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called the Christ?" That day, Christ's life held in the balance of the decision. One day, our eternal destination will hinge on our answer of what we did with Jesus. If we don't come to know him in this life, we stand before God unprepared and face eternal damnation. All one day will confess that Jesus is Lord... the true son of God. When we decide makes all the difference.

The crowd calls out for Christ to be crucified. Pilate is beside himself and asks "What evil hath he done?" There was a reason Pilate could find no evil in Jesus. There was none. He is the one and only man who ever lived that never sinned. You and I will strive against sin every day while we remain alive. Jesus not only strove against it, but rose above it. None of us will reach perfection in the flesh, but by Christ's blood we can stand justified before God one day.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Phil 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Phil 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Phil 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Mat 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

In one of the greatest acts of cowardice of all time, rather than dealing justly, Pilate simply, literally, and visibly washed his hands of the whole affair. He gutlessly said, *"I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."* In so doing, he clearly admitted the innocence of Jesus. He acknowledged Him as *just* which was the Roman equivalent of innocent of charges.

He enjoined the Jewish nation to take note of his determination. Yet by the same token, he in effect told them to go ahead and do with Jesus as they wished. In the act of moral cowardice of the ages, Pilate washed his hands of Jesus.

In one of the most fateful statements of all time, the Jews called condemnation down upon their own heads. *"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us and on our children."*

Little did they realize what they had invoked upon themselves. A generation later, that condemnation fell beginning with the wrath of Titus against Jerusalem and the ensuing depopulation of Jews from their land—until the 20th century. During Titus' siege and invasion of Jerusalem, Josephus records the carnage that may have included as many as one million Jews being slaughtered, the temple destroyed, and the city obliterated.

Indeed, the guilt of their rejection of Christ fell certainly upon their children.

Pilate makes a noble gesture in washing his hands before the multitude, so as to say he had nothing to do with Jesus' crucifixion. But washing your hands before you do evil does not make you clean. One day Pilate will stand before God and give an account of his part in the trial and ultimate death of Christ. The Jews are fired up to see him killed, and they say 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' However, soon after this, they have a different position when accused of putting Christ to death. In reality, all of us, every man and woman who has ever lived put Jesus on that cross. Our sins were being paid there on Calvary.

Acts 5:28 *Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

Acts 5:30 *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.*

Acts 5:31 *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 5:32 *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

Mat 27:26 *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

The crucifixion here began. It was a common practice before a Roman crucifixion for the victim to be scourged. The victim was typically stripped naked.

A cat o' nine tails was procured which was a whip of nine leathern fingers whence sharp implements were embedded at the end of each finger. The Romans were not constrained by the Jew's limit of forty blows. The furry of the whip could literally disembowel a man as the fingers of it wrapped around his abdomen. It certainly flayed his back and left deep stripes of shredded flesh. (See Isaiah 53:5-6 and I Peter 2:24.)

It was not difficult for a Roman scourging to kill the victim. Therefore, some care was exercised so as to not finish the victim before the actual crucifixion. It was altogether a horrible prelude to what would soon follow.

So Pilate goes along with the demands of the crowd, and he frees Barabbas and condemns Christ to be crucified. Most of the time, whatever the crowd is doing

is never right. If you try to live by the prevailing standards of the day, you will never know what to do or how to act. The standards change every day, and they are so bad that following them would most assuredly lead you to a premature death. The only true freedom that can be found is found in Jesus Christ.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

John 8:35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Matthew Henry said this about the decision of Pilate.

Jesus was *scourged*; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as it was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings, above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die: the *rods* were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, *The ploughers ploughed upon my back* (Ps. 129:3), *I gave my back to the smiters* (Isa. 50:6), and, *By his stripes we are healed*, Isa. 53:5. He was *chastised with whips*, that we might not be for ever *chastised with scorpions*.

He was then delivered to be crucified; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the blood of his cross (Col. 1:20); therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be crucified; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is such, that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law, to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross.

Jesus was not mercifully crucified... he was alive for hours there on the cross of Calvary.

V. The Mocking of Christ

Mat 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

Mat 27:28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

Mat 27:29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his

head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

Thereafter, the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. The “common hall,” or *praetorium*, was a part of the greater fortress of Antonio adjacent to the Temple.

Evidently, the several soldiers who had custody of Jesus at His scourging now called for the entire military unit garrisoned at Jerusalem. To add insult to injury, the assembled Roman soldiers began to amuse themselves by mocking Him. As He stood there bleeding and naked, they placed upon Him a “scarlet robe.”

Scarlet or purple capes were common Roman garments that were reserved for those of high rank. They further fashioned a crown of Judean thorns and impressed it upon his skull, no doubt further wounding Him. There He stood partially naked, with perhaps a worn-out, regal cape hanging to his waist, and a fake crown upon His head. He stood and bled as they mocked on.

They were aware that the charge for which He would be officially crucified was that He was the King of the Jews. They laughed all the more, not only at the wretched spectacle they had made of Him, but also in mockery of the Jewish nation. The travesty of the ages was underway. Satan and his minions no doubt reveled in empathic glee as they influenced His tormentors to do even worse.

Mat 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Oh what Christ suffered for you and me. They played a game with his life. They put a crown of thorns on his head and mocked him, “Hail, King of the Jews.” He was beaten, spit upon, and smote by the reed. Here was the prince of heaven being belittled and condemned as the soldiers looked on.

Few gestures of human behavior are more insulting and despicable than to spit upon another. The *reed* mentioned was a standard wood rod with which they beat him on the head. By the time that Jesus got to the cross, “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14). He had been so abused and demonically tortured; He no longer appeared to have a human face. But He willingly suffered such torture for us.

Mat 27:31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Mat 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

After they mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*. He was clothed with His own garments and was led away to be crucified. Weakened by the ordeal of Gethsemane, a sleepless night, the recent scourging, and now the weight of the cross was upon Him.

None of the gospels actually mention Him faltering beneath its weight. However, that has been the traditional understanding. As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

The mention of 'coming out' likely refers to the crucifixion party exiting the gates of the city.

(1) They very well may have come through the Damascus gate in the northern wall of the city, not far from Golgotha.

(2) We know little more of Simon other than he was from Libya (Cyrene). He likely may have been a Jew visiting Jerusalem in as much as his name was Simon.

(3) We do know that he undertook the great privilege of bearing the cross of the King of Glory. What an eternal blessing.

Simon, a man of Cyrene, was compelled to carry the cross. Jesus was so beaten that there was no way he could carry the cross up that hill to the place of the skull.

Mat 27:33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

Mat 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Our former pastor has been there, and he says on that hill side you can see those eyes etched into the rock and the nose and mouth of a man. It was a place of death, and Christ goes there willingly, knowing the balance of mankind is in His ability to endure to the end. They come up with a crude anesthetic to lessen the pain. Jesus would not partake of the vinegar mingled with gall.

The word *Golgotha* is Aramaic which was a language quite similar to Hebrew and was the common tongue of the Middle East in the first century. The English word *Calvary* (which appears only once in the Bible in Luke's account) derives from the Latin word *calvariae* which was translated from the Greek word *kranion*. It is whence the English word *cranium* derives.

In each case, they all refer to the human skull. Golgotha, or Calvary, was evidently so called because the formation of the rock out-cropping resembled the form of a human skull. A human skull frequently being a symbol of death, Calvary was an ironic place for the death of the Creator of life. That rock outcropping exists to this day in Jerusalem.

Prior to Jesus being lifted up on the cross, an attempt was made to give him a drink of vinegar. Mark's account specifies myrrh rather than gall. In fact, both additives may have been involved. In any event, the myrrh gave the sour wine a better taste and, in addition to the alcohol probably present, had a narcotic effect intended to stupefy the victim. When Jesus realized what was being offered to him, He refused it. He no doubt desired to drink to the from the cup of His Father.

Joh 18:11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

The Romans may have offered this to their victims to temporarily stupefy them while they went about the grisly task of actually nailing them to the cross and setting it up thereafter. A doped victim would ease their ugly task.

Mat 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

Mat 27:36 And sitting down they watched him there;

Mat 27:37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The horrible act of the Roman crucifixion actually here began. It has been likened to dying a thousand deaths. In a typical Roman crucifixion, the victim died somewhere between 24 to 72 hours later. The cause of death usually was from suffocation exhaustion and exposure.

As the victim and cross was lifted up, it was then allowed to violently drop into its prepared hole before being shored up to a near-vertical position. The impact of the cross hitting the bottom of its hole usually caused the major bones of the body to be jerked out of joint and the tendons torn.

Psa 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

The victim thus was forced to breathe by forcing himself against his outstretched legs. The diaphragm muscles could not work properly due to the arm and shoulder dislocations. As the heat of the middle-eastern sun began to beat upon the victim, delirium would set in. Our Lord likely suffered much of this agony.

Meanwhile, the callous Roman soldiers gambled nearby over his clothing. (Implied is that Jesus was crucified if not totally naked, nearly so. What humiliation and embarrassment that added to the physical torture.) In so doing, the soldiers fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18 pertaining to Christ's death.

Psa 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

If torturing their victim and then casually gambling over His garments were not crass enough; they then sat down to watch their deed making it, in effect, a spectator event. It was a Roman custom to make public the name, address, and crimes of which the convicted had been charged.

This was written on a placard and was carried before the victim or hung around his neck. In this case, it was fastened above His sacred head upon the cross.

Matthew records how they set up over his head his accusation written, **"THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."**

Though no doubt sarcasm and mockery were intended, the statement was ironically precise and true. For indeed, Jesus is "the King of the Jews." Only John's account points out that the announcement was in three languages—Latin for legal purposes, Hebrew for the Jew, and Greek for anyone else.

All of this was not a surprise to Christ. The Old Testament had prophesied of how he would be crucified, and that they would part his garments and cast lots for them. It says many sat down and watched him. What do you suppose they were expecting? If some there knew Him as Lord and Savior, perhaps they expected God to come and save Jesus from this hour. But it was for this hour that He came into the world. The accusation written above him read "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Jesus was truly the King of the Jews. Oh how he loved them, and would

have taken them unto Him had they accepted him as Lord.

John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John 19:20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

John 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

John 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

VI. Two Thieves Revile Christ

Mat 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Mat 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

Mat 27:40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

There two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. The two thieves mentioned were by their own witness guilty. Truly, Jesus died as the Just in place of the unjust.

Matthew continues, *"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads."*

The word translated as **wagging** (kinew *kineo*) most likely was not a horizontal movement as we might think. It rather was the vertical nodding which was the custom of Jews in prayer. However, here it clearly was in mockery. This, no doubt, is a fulfillment of Psalm 22:7,8,11-13; 109:25.

It is ironic that orthodox Jews to this day still bob their heads while they pray. However, it here clearly was done in utter mockery of Jesus.

The mockery continued in verbal form. They said, *"Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself."*

His antagonists referred back to the incident of John 2:18-21. However, Jesus then described how He would arise from the dead in three days. They continued in their pleasure of mocking Him further by urging Him to save Himself. *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."*

There no doubt is parallel with Satan's temptation of Jesus early in His ministry (Matthew 4:3). This leaves no doubt in my mind who was behind all of this.

Human depravity influenced by the power of Satan is in full view here for all who deny such as a possibility.

He then sought to cause Jesus to doubt His identity. The devil egged on Jesus' antagonists as they threw this at Jesus. Their urging Him to come down from the cross clearly was intended as a taunt. It only revealed the depth of human depravity as the Savior of the world was at that moment dying for their very sins.

Mat 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

Mat 27:42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Mat 27:43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

Mat 27:44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

The varying members of the Sanhedrin present likewise took their turns taunting and mocking Him. What degenerate evil spewed forth from the mouths of these religious leaders! Truly, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. There is an evident depraved glee as they threw back at Him elements from His ministry. They were almost like demons dancing in glee beneath His cross.

No doubt the foul touches of sarcasm and mockery were inspired by Satan and found receptive minds in those Christ-hating Jewish leaders. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Their taunt was ironically true. If He had saved Himself, He would have saved no one.

To their claim, if He came down from the cross they would believe, they themselves showed their duplicity. For when Jesus in fact did come down in the form of His resurrection three days later, they refused to believe and did all they could to cover it up. They further mocked and sneered at Him by misquoting Psalm 22:8. Continuing, they added further invective by implying that even God would not have Him now.

It is noteworthy that it was primarily the Jewish religious leadership that so viciously taunted and mocked Him. Indeed, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. Official Israel had altogether and inexorably rejected their King.

Initially, the two thieves also, which were crucified with him spoke in the same manner as the others. The vehemence and intensity of their hatred is sensed in this phrase. However, one of them evidently repented and trusted Jesus as he watched the events unfold according to Luke's account.

What a horrible death.. hanging between two thieves who deserved their sentence. But Jesus had done nothing amiss. The people cry out and make fun of Jesus. They say that if he truly was the Son of God, then he should come down from the cross. It was a cruel scene as the chief priests mocked him as did the scribes and elders of the people. They claim that he saved others, but he could not save himself. He trusted in God, let God deliver him now. Even the thieves lash out with their tongues against the one who was willingly dying in their place. Eventually, one of the thieves came to his senses and was saved later.

VII. Darkness Covered the Land

Mat 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

Mat 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Matthew notes, *"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."* The sixth hour mentioned is a reference to Jewish time. Their day began at 6 a.m. (The Roman day, upon which our western time is based, began at midnight.)

The darkness referred to here began at noon and stretched to three o' clock in the afternoon. It is the opinion of this writer that the darkness was more than just a heavy overcast. No doubt, God the Father so showed mercy upon His Son in darkening the sun's heat that fateful afternoon. No natural element brought pain the Lord during this time, only man.

At about three in the afternoon that momentous day, Jesus cried out "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?" This was a quotation from Psalm 22:1. The translation thereof is provided at the end of the verse. The despair and anguish of our Lord clearly is revealed in its deep pathos. As our Savior became sin for us who knew no sin and the iniquity of us all was laid upon Him, God could no longer look upon Him.

The prophet Habakkuk had centuries earlier cried out, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13).

On that dreadful day and hour, God could no longer even look upon His only begotten Son. Indeed, for that short time, God in fact forsook Him. It broke the holy and tender heart of Jesus. He hung between heaven and earth, rejected by His own people and forsaken of His Heavenly Father. If that were not all, the

sin of the world had been placed upon Him and He bore that awful burden as He suffered and died.

Mat 27:47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

Mat 27:48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

Mat 27:49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

Mat 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Some misunderstood Him and thought he was calling for Elijah. One bystander offered Him vinegar upon a sponge for He had cried, "I thirst" (John 19:28). He evidently accepted this offer. The rest, however, still in mocking unbelief decided to see if Elijah would show up to save Him.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. We are not told in Matthew's account what Jesus said here. It may have been His quotation from Psalm 31:5 as given in Luke 23:46, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

It may have also been a loud cry of intense pain as His physical heart ruptured and broke from the intensity of the spiritual burden He suffered. It may have been and most likely is His cry, "It is finished," as recorded in John 19:30.

Psalm 69:20 seems to foretell that the Messiah's actual cause of death was that of a broken heart. All the forensic evidence which may be gleaned from the gospel accounts clearly points to the pathology of a heart ruptured by grief. If that be the case, His final cry on the cross may have been one of great pain as His heart ruptured and He expired.

It says that there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. Jesus was placed on the cross at the third hour of the day which would have made it 9 a.m. The Jewish day began at around 6pm, but this speaks of the third hour during the daylight hours. From the sixth hour (12:00 noon) until the night hour (3 p.m.), there was darkness over all the land. This was a saddest day since the creation of the world. What was the mob thinking now as this darkness gripped the land? Around the ninth hour, Christ cried out to the Father and gave up the ghost. Some are looking to see if Elijah was going to come and save Christ. The words Jesus cried were "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I believe for a short period of time, when all the sin of the world was placed upon Christ, God could not look upon it. God is righteous, and can not look upon sin. He turned his back on Christ in that moment. We know that David said that God NEVER

forsakes the righteous as recorded in Psalms 37:25.

Psa 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Jesus yielded up the ghost, and at that moment, it was finished. He died for you and I that we might live and have eternal life. There was one more promise that he would fulfill in three days when he would come out of the tomb as he had promised. But the debt of our sins was paid there by his blood which was shed on Mt. Calvary.

Mat 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

Mat 27:52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

Mat 27:53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Mat 27:54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

As the Son of God died, God sent forth a number of very graphic signs. Perhaps most indicative was the rending of the veil. In the Temple, as prescribed by the law of Moses, a heavy veil hung between the larger room called the holy place and the smaller holy of holies. The priests went into the holy place daily, but only once a year was the high priest allowed in the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement.

The veil was the barrier separating the priest from the Shekinah glory, the earthly presence of God upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies. The veil itself was a massive curtain thought to have been 60 feet high and thirty feet wide. It has been estimated to have been as much as four inches in thickness. Its weight was immense and the force necessary to rip it must likewise have been tremendous.

When it was rent, it was from the top indicating no human participation. The only other possibility is that God did it, which indeed He did. The significance of the rending of the veil was profound. Not only had the practical, internal workings of the Temple been rendered inoperative—the holy of holies was now exposed, God clearly indicated His blessing and work had been removed from the Temple.

No longer, even in theory, did the earthly presence of God, the Shekinah Glory, dwell amongst men. Therefore, all of the sacrifices of the Temple were now irrelevant. More importantly, as the book of Hebrews makes plain, God's entire plan and agenda for mankind had changed. The law had been fulfilled. The ultimate sacrifice for sin had been made.

The entire system of Old Testament sacrifices, along with its priesthood, Temple, and laws had been superseded. A new dispensation, a new ministry, a new body, and a new covenant were at hand. See Hebrews 10:19-20.

Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Such momentous events, the focal point of history, were accompanied by suitable signs in nature. "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent." The word translated as **rent** (scizw *schidzo*) has the sense of splitting. Probably what is referred to is that natural rock formations split from the powerful earthquake.

As the Creator died, the creation literally and physically shook. As the earth shook, not only were graves broken open, there was a resurrection of *saints* already deceased. The word translated as *saints* (agiov *hagios*) literally means 'holy ones.' These no doubt were redeemed people from Old Testament times whom God miraculously brought forth after Jesus' death.

Jesus indeed was the first of the resurrection. That these Old Testament saints were resurrected from Paradise and allowed to enter Jerusalem is clear. What is totally unclear is what happened to them thereafter. It may be, they went with Jesus into heaven when He ascended on high according to Ephesians 4:8-10. This is truly one of the mysteries in the New Testament. In any event, these resurrected saints "went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." God again provided visible indication of the momentous nature of what had just taken place.

The *centurion* mentioned evidently was a member of the Roman soldiers assigned to the crucifixion. Tradition says his name was *Petronius*. He was an eyewitness to the events at Calvary both prior to and after the crucifixion of Jesus. As they witnessed the earthquake, the darkening of the sun, and the related events; the confession was made, "Truly this was the Son of God."

It has been considered that this Roman may have in fact been saved, confessing with his mouth the Lord Jesus. If that be so, then not only the thief on the cross, but the soldier also came under the convicting power of the cross. We will know for sure come Resurrection Day.

Was there anything that happened that was special when Christ died there on Golgotha that day? Yes, there were many things. For one thing, there was an earthquake and the rocks rent and the graves were opened and many of the

saints of old arose. They were seen in the Holy city after Christ was resurrected. The centurion soldier, after seeing all that happened, declares that "Truly this was the Son of God." Truer words were never spoken. And at this time, a very important thing happened. In the temple, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. This veil separated the inner chamber from the inner most place called the Holiest of Holies. It was the chamber where only once per year the High Priest brought the offering of blood for the sins of the people. This was a very thick curtain, over 3" in thickness. It could not have been torn apart except by a great amount of strength. This tearing down of the veil signified that we no longer have to look to a human priest to take blood to an altar for us, but we can now come boldly to the throne of grace. We now have a GREAT High Priest seated at the right hand of God, and he is ever there making intercession for us.

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Heb 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Heb 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Heb 3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

Heb 3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

Heb 3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

Heb 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Heb 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Mat 27:55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

Mat 27:56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

As these climactic events came to their culmination, many of the believing women who had followed from Galilee beheld these events from a distance. It is noteworthy that the male disciples had largely forsaken Jesus and fled. However, a number of noble godly women stayed until the bitter end.

Those named are Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala), Mary the mother of James and Joses. (This very well may have been Jesus' mother for two of His brothers were named James and Joses. See Mark 6:3). Also, the mother of Zebedee's children (John and James) usually identified as Salome was present. See Mark 15:40.

These may have lingered to stand with Jesus' mother and mourn with her. This small loyal band of noble women stood as the saddest of tragedies was fulfilled. What an awful sight it must have been to see the Son of God hanging lifeless upon the cross.

So many gathered there to witness the death of Christ. Some of those standing afar off were those that loved Christ, Mary Magdalene and Christ's mother Mary, and the Mother of James and John.

VIII. The Burial of Christ

Mat 27:57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

Mat 27:58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

Mat 27:59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Mat 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Mat 27:61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

The evening of the crucifixion, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin named Joseph of Arimathaea begged Pilate for the body of Jesus. We are told that he was a disciple of Jesus, but according to John, a secret one. He, along with Nicodemus, proceeded to bury the body according to Jewish custom.

The Jews of the day would typically wrap a body in linen and then tightly wind cloth strips around the linen-clad body almost in a mummy-like fashion. This is significant. It would be impossible for even a healthy man to escape from such confinement. Yet, when Jesus arose, His departure was so magnificent that even the confining grave linens were left intact like a cocoon.

The stone rolled against the door of the tomb, no doubt, was massive. The design of Jewish tombs was such that a circular gravestone was placed in an carved track which inclined downward. To remove the stone door would require rolling it uphill, a very difficult feat designed to prevent grave tampering.

Once again, it was the godly women who sat to watch the tomb. Significant is the fact that they clearly saw the dead body of Jesus prepared for burial as well as exactly where He was buried.

The validity of the resurrection is predicated upon the verified death of Jesus. These women provided multiple witnesses to the death and precise burial place of Jesus. On the resurrection day, they also knew the right tomb for they had witnessed Jesus' burial.

This rich man from Arimathaea called Joseph who was a disciple of the Lord, comes and begs for the body of Jesus from Pilate. Pilate tells them to let him have the body, and he takes Jesus and wraps the body in a clean linen cloth and laid him in his own new tomb. There was a great stone on the front of the grave, and they roll the stone in place closing the tomb.

IX. The Sepulchre is Sealed and Guarded

Mat 27:62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Mat 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

Mat 27:64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

The day after the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate. The day of preparation evidently was in preparation for the feast of Unleavened Bread. That day, members of the Sanhedrin approached Pilate. Every detail here proves a Friday crucifixion is impossible.

These Jewish religious leaders were meticulous about observing the Sabbath (especially the Pharisees) and would not undertake such an odious task as approaching the pagan, gentile ruler, Pilate, on the Sabbath day.

Curiously, the disciples did not remember that Jesus had repeatedly spoken of His resurrection, yet His unbelieving enemies did. However, the disciples were grief-stricken. Their Lord, leader and friend was dead. It must have proven to be most difficult to recall such.

His enemies were still afraid of the influence of Jesus, even in death, and therefore took steps to preclude any grave tampering. They sought the assistance of Rome in guarding the grave.

The Chief Priests come to Pilate and say that Christ had said that after three days he would rise again. They want guards placed at the grave to prevent the disciples coming and stealing the body away.

Mat 27:65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

Mat 27:66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Pilate ordered the grave have the seal of Rome placed upon it. The seal probably amounted to a cord being placed across the tomb with a Roman wax seal placed at each end. A Roman seal carried the authority and force of Rome. To tamper with it could be a capital offense. Moreover, soldiers were posted to further secure the site. The word translated as **watch** (*koustwdia koustodia*) implied a minimum of at least four soldiers and as many as sixteen. The likelihood was that four were on duty during any one watch.

The power and authority of Rome, the most powerful government on earth to that time, now secured the tomb of Jesus. Any departure or grave robbing became humanly impossible.

Pilate told them they could have the watch, so they sent guards to watch the grave and sealed the stone. But no matter how many guards they were to send, they could never hold Jesus in the grave. Just as he said, he would rise after three days and three nights. Next week we discuss that great resurrection day.

J. Vernon McGee points out how setting this guard actually made Jesus Resurrection even more certain.

The zeal of the enemy actually gives a confirmation of Jesus' resurrection! If they had gone off and left that tomb as it was, their later explanation for the tomb's being empty might be plausible. But, my friend, when you've got a tomb that is sealed and a Roman guard around it watching it, their claim that the apostles stole away the body of Jesus sounds pretty silly. The enemies of Jesus went to a lot of trouble to make the sepulchre sure, and that fact furnishes a marvelous confirmation of His resurrection.

Another interesting point is that when our Lord had told His disciples that He would rise again the third day, they had told a great many people, and the religious rulers got word of it. As soon as they could get another audience with Pilate, they said, "Look, Jesus made the statement that He would rise again the third day, and we want to make sure His body stays in that tomb." Of course, they did not believe He would be resurrected, but neither did the apostles believe that He would come out of that tomb alive.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.