

Luke 23 - Chapter Study

INTRO

Jesus has been arrested by the Jewish officials & tried by the Sanhedrin, their high court.

As we'll see, not all the members of the Sanhedrin were in attendance.

It seems those who were in sympathy with Jesus had been excluded from the trial.

The court that *was* convened couldn't find anything through the testimony of witnesses substantial enough to condemn Jesus to death, which was the rules desire.

So in desperation, the high priest put Jesus under an obligation to answer and asked Him whether or not He was the Son of God.

Jesus replied that He was, upon which the council pronounced the crime of *blasphemy*.

They no longer needed the testimony of witnesses since they all heard the claim.

The problem was, of course, while they *called* it blasphemy, it wasn't! *Jesus was God!*

Blasphemy was a crime punishable by death.

But the Jews had lost the right of capital punishment; only the Romans could execute.

So the Jewish rulers had to get permission from the Romans to execute Jesus.

VIII. The Judean Ministry 9:51-24:53

Q. Before Pilate 23:1-5

¹ Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.

For nearly 1,700 years people accepted the historical reliability of the Bible.

The people & events given in its pages were understood by most as *real*.

Unbelievers didn't doubt the *accuracy* of the Bible, they just refused to attach the *meaning* to it believers did.

It wasn't until the skepticism of the Enlightenment began to produce *agnostics* that people began to doubt the historical accuracy of the

Bible.

Because the Enlightenment *rejected* the reality of the spiritual realm & the possibility of miracles, skeptics began to suggest the Bible was a collection of myths & legends,

That is was supposed to be read like a fantasy or fairy tale; a collection of tales meant to teach *morality* to the young.

Such skeptics were able to swing many to this view because when they first suggested it, there was almost no external evidence to the Bible.

Archaeology hadn't begun as a scientific discipline.

But as archaeology has progressed in its investigations of the Middle East over the last 200 years, an increasing body of evidence of the reliability of the Bible's record as history has come to light & the skeptic's position that the Bible is myth has been deeply undermined.

One of the more dramatic discoveries that set the skeptics back was an inscription in the ruins of Caesarea bearing the name of Pontius Pilate.

For years they had said there was no record of Pilate as a governor of Judea at the time of Jesus.

This despite the fact that the Jewish historian Josephus mentioned Pilate at length.

The skeptics said that ancient Christian editors had *added* Pilate's name into Josephus' account to lend credibility to the Biblical story.

But in 1961, an Italian excavation at Caesarea unearthed an inscription naming both Pilate & the Roman emperor Tiberius. The inscription, found in the ruins of the theater, referred to a nearby temple Pilate had built in honor of Tiberius.

This is just one of dozens of examples of how archaeology has verified the historical veracity of the Scriptures.

When Herod the Great died in 4 BC, he left Israel to his 3 sons.

Antipas was given Galilee.

Philip was given the region northeast of therein what today is referred to as the Golan Heights.

Archelaus was given the most important region of Judea & Samaria in the south.

But Archelaus was a poor ruler and in 6 AD was deposed by the

Romans who took over the region through the rule of civil/military rulers called procurators.

Pilate was the 5th such procurator & reigned for 10 years, from 26-36 AD.

Normally found in the Roman capital of Caesarea on the coast, Pilate was in Jerusalem at this time to help maintain order during Passover.

With some 2 million pilgrims packed into a city that had a normal population of a half million, you can imagine how touchy things were.

The Romans brought extra troops from Caesarea just to make sure things didn't boil over.

The Jewish officials dragged Jesus to where Pilate was staying early in the morning to have him condemned.

First thing in the morning was when the Roman governor would hear such cases.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”

The Jewish rulers bring charges against Jesus that they themselves had not been able to convict him of.

Remember that in frustration at not being able to find witnesses who could give confirming testimony to Jesus' guilt, they had *demand*ed that He tell them who He was. They convicted Him of blasphemy – of claiming to be God.

But they knew such a charge would find no weight with Pilate.

Nothing in Roman law condemned a man for blasphemy.

So the Jewish rulers issued charges they knew would stir up Roman wrath against Jesus: They accused Jesus of being an *insurrectionist*, or to use a more common term, an *insurgent*.

3 Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered him and said, “It is as you say.”

While Jesus' reply may appear a bit “offish”, in point of fact, this was the *proper* way to reply to a person in a position of authority.

A simple “Yes” would have been too abrupt & disrespectful.

Politeness demanded that when addressing someone in a position of authority, you deflected attention off yourself onto that one

& this reply was the correct way to do that.
Jesus shows here that He recognized & honored Pilate's authority.
And it was this deference to Pilate's authority that made Pilate realize Jesus was no threat to Rome!

4 So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." **5 But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."**

This is a false charge! A blatant lie!

The only thing Jesus had stirred the people up to was to seek God.
What's doubly damning about the rulers' charge is that in just a while
IT IS THEY WHO WILL BE STIRRING UP THE PEOPLE!

They stir the crowd into a frenzy that borders on a riot, crying out for Jesus' blood.

And Pilate will capitulate just to quiet them.

R. Sent to Herod 23:6-12

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean.

Pilate was a politician & could see that what was taking place was nothing more than envy on the rulers' part toward Jesus.

He wanted no part of it, so he looked for a way out.

As soon as he heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he thought he saw an escape.

You see, while Judea & Samaria were under direct Romans control, Galilee was still ruled by Herod Antipas.

Pilate figured, if Jesus was a Galilean, & most of His time had been spent there, he fell under the jurisdiction of Antipas.

7 And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Because it was the Passover.

8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.

Herod Antipas is the same guy who had John the Baptist executed.

We read that earlier in Jesus' ministry Herod had received reports

about Jesus, and he thought he might be John risen from the dead. [Luke 13:31 9:7]

The miracles that Jesus had performed were so numerous & remarkable there was no denying them.

Word reached Herod & he hoped to witness one; not because he was ready to believe what Jesus' miracles meant or proved.

He just wanted to see a miracle; to witness the event, to experience something new & thrilling.

9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

Jesus' reputation had stirred up many questions in Antipas & now that Jesus is in front of him, he asks them all.

- Who was He exactly?
- Did he know John the Baptist?
- What was their relationship?
- Did Jesus work wonders? How?
- What was Jesus after?

But all of Herod's questions were only aimed at satisfying his curiosity.

He'd already decided what he would ultimately do with Jesus; send him back to Pilate.

Jesus knew Herod's motives & wasn't there to satisfy one man's petty curiosity & lust for the spectacular. So He remained silent.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

These guys had tagged along & leveled their charges all over again.

Herod heard them, & like Pilate knew they were politically motivated.

All Jesus had to do was speak for Himself & the charges they made would be answered.

Jesus' silence & refusal to defend Himself was seen by the power-hungry Herod as a sign of weakness. And to the power-hungry, weakness elicits nothing but contempt.

11 Then Herod, with his men of war,

Antipas' bodyguard . . .

treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. ¹² That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Though the 5th procurator of Judea, Pilate was an *outsider*, a foreign replacement who was sitting in a position of power Antipas believed belonged to him.

When his brother Archelaus was deposed, Antipas figured he'd be given the kingship of Judea & Samaria along with Galilee, making him the king of nearly all Israel as his father Herod the Great had been.

Instead, the Romans installed a foreigner, one of their own, as ruler of Judea.

This frosted Antipas! He *hated* Pilate, & Pilate returned the favor. But on *this* day, when both were faced with what to do with Jesus, their rejection of Him formed a bond between them.

And so it often is with those who hate God. They unite in their opposition to Him, & to those who follow Him.

The Book of Revelation portrays a time when those who look in faith to Jesus will be hated & hounded by the rest of the mankind.

The world, historically divided into warring factions, will unite in its opposition to God & will pour out their collective anger on those who come to faith during the Tribulation.

We see a subtle movement toward that day right now in the push toward multiculturalism, diversity, & tolerance – where any & every kind of lifestyle, belief, philosophy, & practice is acceptable *except* Biblical Christianity.

Theophylact, who lived in the late 11th Century, said this in his commentary on this passage: “It is a matter of shame to Christians that while the devil can persuade wicked men to lay aside their enmities in order to do harm, Christians cannot even keep up friendship in order to do good.”^[1]

S. Back to Pilate 23:13-25

¹³ Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, ¹⁴ said to them, “You

have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; ¹⁵ no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. ¹⁶ I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*” ¹⁷ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).

For some time, in order to pacify the Passover crowds, the Romans had been in the habit of releasing a Jewish political prisoner.

The act was meant to foster good will & to show that while Rome was often brutal with her enemies, she could be *benevolent* to her friends.

Pilate knew this whole thing with Jesus & the rulers was political & thought he could end the whole thing by giving Jesus a good beating, then releasing him.

He made it clear he'd found *nothing* in Jesus that proved the charges the Jewish rulers made against Him. He was innocent!

As a savvy politician, Pilate would be very upset with the Jewish rulers who would try to play him for such a sap as to buy their conspiracy.

At Pilate's verdict, those same rulers would realize they'd been discovered & that this whole thing was really their insult of Pilate's intelligence.

So, they had 2 ways to react to the verdict;

1) Get real apologetic & use huge “mea culpas.”

--or--

2) Cry out all the louder, demanding Pilate give them what they want.

The rulers knew that the ONE THING the Romans wanted to avoid AT ALL COSTS, was a riot. That was why Pilate & the extra soldiers were there.

So the gospels tell us the rulers “stirred up the crowd” that had gathered to become unruly.

¹⁸ And they all cried out at once, saying, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas”— ¹⁹ who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city,

and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them.

The Romans released a *political* prisoner at Passover, not a criminal.

But the crowd called out for the murderer, Barabbas.

Mark tells us Pilate knew the rulers were just jealous of Jesus' popularity. [15:10]

He tried to steer the upcoming release back to Jesus, but that just served to make the crowd turn uglier.

²¹ But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" ²² Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go." ²³ But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.

As the shouting continued, it grew louder & began to make Pilate & his guards uneasy.

They could see what would happen if they refused to capitulate to the rulers' demand.

Though Pilate knew it was a breach of justice, he consented to Jesus' death.

The decision was one of political expediency.

Better that one innocent man should die, than that a riot break out & kill many.

In other words – better one man die than many others might be saved.

Jesus' death would bring peace to Jerusalem.

While Pilate's decision was a violation of justice, it was also prophetic.

Jesus death WAS unjust – but through it comes peace;

Peace between God & man. / One died that many might be saved.

²⁴ So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. ²⁵ And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Their will was death.

So Jesus was given to the Roman soldiers who'd long borne the brunt of Jewish hostility.

It's hard for us to imagine the pent up hatred & fury of the soldiers as they took Jesus into the Antonia Fortress & beat Him.

Preliminary to crucifixion was the ordeal of the lash in which the condemned was whipped with a scourge, a cat-o'-nine tails that shredded the victim.

The movie *The Passion* is not at all exaggerated in its depiction of the scourging of Jesus.

Following the scourging, the condemned man's hands were tied to the cross beam of the cross, which could weigh as much as a hundred lbs..

He was then paraded on a circuitous route through the streets of the city, as a warning to all of what happens to those who run afoul of Rome.

T. To Calvary 23:26-32

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.

Jesus is at the end of His physical strength.

He's been all night without sleep.

He's suffered the extremity of emotional stress to the point where He's ruptured the capillaries of His forehead.

He's been cruelly abused at the hands of the temple police, Herod's men, & Pilate's soldiers.

It's no wonder that as He labors under the weight of the crossbeam, He stumbles.

Using a provision of Roman law, the soldiers press a nearby spectator into service, commanding that he carry the beam to the place of crucifixion.

Simon is just one of the many Passover pilgrims who'd arrived in the City to celebrate the feast.

Little did he know that he would play an important role in the greatest moment & drama of all history.

27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him.

Jesus had always been a champion & hero to the powerless & disenfranchised.

None were more so than Jewish women & widows who made up the crowd that followed Him as He walked toward Calvary.

28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ 30 Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!””

Jesus was looking ahead just a few decades to when the Romans, who were presiding over his execution, would be back with a vengeance to crush all of Jerusalem.

31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”

Pilate, as a Roman, had pronounced this fate over an innocent man.

If the Romans would do such to the innocent, how much more cruel and brutal would they be to the guilty?

And so His prophecy of what was to come in 70 AD was fulfilled.

32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

While the Romans released a prisoner at Passover as an act of goodwill and to pacify the people, they also made it clear that they would not tolerate those who defied Rome, and executed those found guilty of a capital crime.

There were supposed to be 3 executions that day; these 2 criminals & Barabbas.

But Jesus took Barabbas' place.

Barabbas means “Son of the father.”

He was a rebel who deserved to die, but whose life was spared because Jesus took his place.

Barabbas is a picture of you and I.

As sinners, we are spiritual rebels who deserve to die, to experience the fullness of the wrath of God.

But Jesus took *our* place on the cross – so that *we* might become sons & daughters of God.

U. The Crucifixion 23:33-49

33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

“Calvary” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew “Golgotha” which means “Place of the Skull.”

It isn't known for sure if it was called this because it's the place where many executions were carried out or if it was somehow reminiscent of a skull. The later is more likely.

There's a hill just north of the old city wall that looks like a skull.

It's an ancient quarry where the miners delved into the cliff face to make what look like 2 large eye sockets.

Remains of an ancient major Roman road lie right at the feet of the cliff.

Contrary to our traditional conception of the crucifixion taking place on the top of a hill overlooking Jerusalem, the Romans crucified people at eye level, alongside busy thoroughfares.

The whole idea was to *scare* people into submission.

Crucifixion was a bloody & cruel way to die—a truly terrifying spectacle.

The Romans wanted people to see it up close; so they put the crosses of the condemned at ground level, alongside major roads that saw a lot of traffic.

Jesus was crucified, not on *top* of the hill called Calvary, but in *front* of it, with the skull-like image of the cliff leering in the background.

34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

The crucified were in such agony, & speech so difficult, forgiveness is not the words they sent forth.

Jesus words would have arrested the attention of all who heard them.

Specially the Romans assigned to the execution detail.

They'd seen *many men* crucified & heard many remarks from the cross; a good number of them directed at them as the condemned's tormentors.

Never had they heard such mercy & generosity.

One of the perks the execution detail enjoyed was the spoils of the condemned men's clothing, which they would then draw straws for.

35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

Interesting that the rulers recognized Jesus' ability & power to save.

They knew He'd brought goodness & relief to others.

Why then did they hate Him so?

What had *they* done to help the needy?

Nothing compared to Jesus!

Maybe that's why they hated Him so. They were *Jealous*.

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." ³⁸ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

As the execution detail worked its way from the Antonio Fortress, the lead soldier carried a sign bearing the condemned man's crimes.

When they arrived at the site of execution, they attached the crossbeam to the upright, nailed the victim to the cross & attached the sign to the top of the cross so all could read the reason why the victim was being killed.

Jesus crime was this – He was the King of the Jews.

The Romans thought this was a hilarious joke.

You see, crucifixion was a death so pathetic, so terrible only the dregs of society were subjected to it.

Enemy kings defeated in battle were given the honor of beheading or they could take poison.

None were crucified because it was deemed too humiliating.

So this was a joke too rich for the Romans to pass up as they mocked not only Jesus but the Jews they loathed so intensely.

In John 19, we read that the Jewish rulers were incensed at this slight toward them and went to Pilate in protest, demanding that he change the words to, "He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

Pilate sent them away, saying, "Nope!" [20-22]

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed

Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”
⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?” ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” ⁴³ And Jesus said to him, “**Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.**”

This will be our text on Sunday.

⁴⁴ Now it was about the sixth hour,

6 AM was reckoned as the 1st hour, so the 6th was Noon, when the sun was at it’s apex in the sky.

and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

3 PM. This was the brightest 3 hour period of the day – yet *that* day it was dark.

It could not have been an eclipse because it was Passover, and Passover was calculated by the full moon. Eclipses can only occur when there’s a new moon.

The *cause* of this darkness is not given. Luke adds . . .

⁴⁵ Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

He links these 2 things because he wants the reader to make a connection between them.

The words “the sun was darkened” are literally – “the sun’s light failed.”

God was giving mankind a graphic demonstration via the creation of what was happening spiritually.

They had rejected the Light of the world, so the light was leaving. If mankind wanted to walk in darkness, so be it.

The Jews connected disturbances in the heavens to the Day of the Lord, when God would come, intervene in the affairs of Earth, & set up the Kingdom of God.

Though they didn’t realize it, the cross marked a significant step forward in the plan of God to bring the Day of the Lord & the Kingdom.

The dimming of the sun's power was a way to show all the Earth that a corner had been turned in history and that the God of Israel was the God of all the Earth.

Keep in mind how many ancient religions considered the Sun their chief deity.

It was while the light was dimmed that the veil in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

That veil separated the holy of holies from the rest of the temple. No one was allowed to pass through that curtain except the high priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, when he went in to renew the blood covering on the mercy seat over the ark of the covenant.

When the curtain was torn in two, it symbolized that the barrier between God & man had been removed.

No longer was access to God limited to the high priest of Israel once a year.

The sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God opened access to God to all who come by faith.

So, while the cross marks the loss in eternal darkness of those who *reject* Christ, it's the means by which those who believe in Christ come into the light of God's glory.

The torn veil is God's loud testimony to the fact that Jesus is the Final mediator between God & man.

There is no longer a need for a formal priesthood to mediate on man's behalf because Jesus has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law.

1 Timothy 2:5 says . . .

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

This is one of the things the Book of Hebrews tries to correct.

It was written to Jewish Christians who were being tempted to go back to the empty rituals of Judaism.

The author makes it clear that Jesus is the final sacrifice who does away with the need for a special priesthood to act as go between between people & God.

Now, in Christ, we are all priests who serve in the task of representing God to the world & the world to God.

One of the great legacies of the Christian faith is the equal access all

believers have to God through Christ.

There is no room for the insertion of special offices in the Church that puts layers of access between the believer & God.

I have no greater recourse to the Lord as a pastor than you do.

And there is no one I have to go to, to hear the divine word.

The veil was torn in two. We must make sure we never patch it up by putting others into the role of mediator between us & God.

46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.

The loud cry was “Tetelestai – Paid in full!”

The work of atonement had been accomplished.

So, there was just one last thing to do – lay down His life, which He did with these words.

This verse reminds us that no one *took* Jesus’ life – He *gave* it.

47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”

A centurion would have been in charge of the detail that presided at the execution.

Centurions were the heart & soul of the Roman military.

They were sharp guys, skilled in battle & leadership.

A centurion was a man of great experience & stability.

Such an announcement as this was remarkable in that this guy had been around and seen a lot.

He would not have been easily impressed or given to such expressions without careful consideration of the ramifications.

Everything he’d seen & heard that day had marked Jesus as unique, special; as someone unlike other men.

48 And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. 49 But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Since the crucifixion took hours before Jesus died, the rulers & enemies of Christ had gone home long before the end.

They'd only stayed long enough to hurl their insults and see what He might do or say.

Disappointed at the meek manner in which He endured the suffering of the cross, they grew tired of the spectacle and left. Many others stayed. As they waited and watched, it became clear that Jesus was more than just another victim of crucifixion. Something important was being played out on the cross they sensed it.

And when it was over, they went away with a deep sense of remorse.

The few disciples & women who'd traveled with Him stood at a distance, watching.

V. The Burial 23:50-56

50 Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God.

Arimathea was located about 20 miles NW of Jerusalem on the border between Judea & Samaria.

Joseph was one of the members of the Sanhedrin who'd conveniently not been summoned to the early morning trial of Jesus.

He'd not been called because his position was well known; he was a just man, and the rulers were not after justice, they wanted Jesus' blood!

When Joseph heard about what the rulers had done, he went to do what he could for Jesus in whom he had heard & seen the way of God.

52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before.

Though Joseph lived in Arimathea 20 miles away, his tomb was being built just outside Jerusalem.

Every good Jew wanted to be buried as close to the holy city as possible.

It was believed that when the Messiah came, He would come to

Jerusalem and all the dead Jews would be instantly resurrected, then travel to Jerusalem to meet the Messiah.

Since they didn't want to have to travel far, they sought to be buried as close to the city as possible.

Joseph was no exception.

He & Nicodemus secured permission from Pilate to bury Jesus.

Arriving at the cross, they received the body of Jesus from the soldiers, wrapped it in linen, stuffed in some burial spices, & hurriedly deposited it in the tomb which was not far away.

[John 19:39]

54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. 55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.

What Luke means is they observed how inept Nicodemus & Joseph were at preparing the body for burial. Such was women's work.

As wealthy rulers neither Nicodemus nor Joseph knew what they were doing.

The women watched from a discreet distance & saw that the men, while meaning good, were to unskilled and too hurried to do a proper job of burial.

They determined to return to the tomb at the earliest possible opportunity to do a more fitting job of taking care of the body.

56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

What's remarkable about the efforts of Joseph & Nicodemus is that by touching the dead body of Jesus, they were making themselves ritually unclean so that they were not able to partake of the Passover festival.

Though these two men represented the very center of the Judaism of their day, their commitment to Jesus meant a break with the practice of their religion.

It's fitting that it should, because Jesus came to *fulfill* the law.

In their devotion to Jesus, they ended up foreshadowing what the followers of Jesus would later realize – that following Him means freedom from empty religious rituals.

[1]

MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Lk 23:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.