

Matthew 27-28 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

I. JESUS' EARLY YEARS	1-2
II. JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY	3-18
III. JESUS' JUDEAN MINISTRY	19-20
IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK	21-27
V. THE RESURRECTION	28

IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK	21-27
----------------------	-------

Jesus has been arrested by the Jewish leaders and tried in a sham trial at the high priest's house.

Though many witnesses had come forward to provide damaging evidence against Jesus, none of their testimony held up under examination.

Finally, in frustration, because the priests had already determined to get rid of Jesus, and not finding any legal grounds to carry out their desire to kill Him, the high priest rose from his seat, and against the principle of justice in which an accused man cannot be compelled to testify against himself, he used his office to put Jesus under a sacred bond to confess whether or not He was the Messiah.

Jesus deferred to the authority of the high priest's office and answered that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of the Living God

The high priest then turned to all there and said they were all witnesses to what he called blasphemy – a crime punishable by death under Jewish law.

But, here's the rub – the Jews had lost the power of exercising capital punishment. The Romans had taken this from them early in the First Century.

K. Pilate "Before" Jesus 27:1-26

1. Jesus is turned over to Pilate 27:1-2

1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.

They conspired as to how they could execute Him.

While blasphemy was a capital crime for the Jews, the Romans would laugh at the idea of killing a man for such a charge.

So they had to come up with a charge that would get the Romans to condemn Him.

They settled on accusing Jesus of being a radical revolutionary – a pretender to the throne of David; the man who would be king.

This was something the Romans would not take lightly, especially not from the Jews since they already dealt with several such insurrections.

2 And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Now, there's an interesting little historical sidelight here that's brought out in Mark

Eastman's book, *The Search for the Messiah*. [\[1\]](#)

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that early in the first century, around 6-7 AD, the Jews lost the right to carry out executions themselves.

Herod's son, Archelaus, had done a poor job of ruling Judea & a couple bloody insurrections had resulted in many Romans losses.

Archelaus was removed from his office and banished to the fringes of the empire.

In his place the Romans installed a Roman governor, and severely limited the power of the Sanhedrin.

Most importantly, they removed the right to exercise capital punishment. The Jewish rabbis had a meltdown because they saw this as an event which literally **broke** the Word of God!

You see, in Gen. 49:10, the great patriarch Jacob had given a prophecy that the scepter, meaning the right to rule and to exercise the full scope of the Law, would not depart from the tribe of Judah until the Messiah came.

Think of a scepter in the hand of a king.

In the ancient world, when a king wished to show favor and acceptance to someone, he would extend the scepter toward them.

But if he wanted to show his disfavor, he held the scepter **upright, away** from them.

The person from whom the scepter was withheld was led away to the place of execution. We see this in the book of Esther.

Jacob's prophecy meant that there would always be a king from the tribe of Judah to sit on the throne of Israel, and that the civil government of Israel would possess the power to enforce the Mosaic law, even the rule of capital punishment.

This would be the case until the Messiah came, who would take up all rule under His authority.

So, when the Romans took the right of capital punishment away from Israel, and Messiah hadn't yet come, the Jewish rabbis freaked because for them, it meant the Word of God had **not** come to pass, and such a thing was unthinkable!

What they didn't realize, is that **the Messiah had come!**

And this is why Luke tells us in his gospel about the 12 year old Jesus who visited the temple to reason with the scribes. [Luke 2:41-50]

That was **the same year** Archelaus was replaced by the Roman governor.

You see, the prophecy of Jacob in Gen. 49:10 ought to have been another time-marker, alerting the people to the fact they lived in the time when the Messiah would appear.

What we need to realize is that there's a very important reason **why** God allowed the exercise of capital punishment to move from the Jews to the Romans – We'll see why in a bit; and it will answer this goofy idea that's been renewed lately that **the Jews** are guilty for killing Christ.

2. Judas commits suicide 27:3-10

3 Then Judas, [Jesus'] betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!"

When Judas realized that his actions were leading to the death of a really good man, his conscience hammered him.

As we saw Sunday, he was *filled with regret* and tried to undo his sin of betrayal by giving back the money.
But the priests couldn't accept it! It was blood money and so tainted by Judas' sin.

Interesting isn't it that the priests could PAY the money to gain a betrayal – but wouldn't take it back?

When they paid the money, their attitude was, “Hey, what Judas chooses to do with the money is his business and none of ours. We can't be held responsible for his actions!”

That may be technically correct, but it was neither morally nor ethically right. These guys were co-conspirators with Judas though they tried to hold themselves above him; they were just as guilty as he.

These 30 pieces of silver had come been paid by the priests out of the temple treasury – a fund that was used to purchase the sacrifices offered in the temple! On one hand, the priests used sacred funds to commit a crime. On the other hand, what they didn't realize is that they were buying the One Sacrifice all previous sacrifices had pointed to – **JESUS!**

5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

When Judas first agreed to betray Jesus, he was motivated by greed!

But after the betrayal, he realized money could never buy-off or ease his sense of *guilt*.

There are some things money *cannot* buy – ever; and one of them is *peace!*

Greed killed Judas!

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 -

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I like the way *The Message* renders it -

Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

There are hundreds of people today who will tell you that money does not buy happiness; it cannot buy love.

Money can buy *things*, luxury, physical comfort; but those do not *equal* happiness.

Happiness is not a thing that can be bought.

It's the result of a life lived right! It's the fruit of knowing that you've *done the right thing*, that you are *in the right place*.

Judas held out no hope for forgiveness. His sense of guilt was so great, he could see only one way out – suicide. So he hung himself.

6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.”

What hypocrisy!!! They couldn't put them *back into* the temple treasury because

it was blood money, but they could take it *out of* the treasury to *make* it into blood money!

These men have a twisted sense of ethics; of what is right and wrong.

7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

They used the money Judas threw back to purchase a field to bury foreigners in.

⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."

Okay – this passage is one skeptics love to point to as an error in scripture.

And they do appear to have a point.

You see, Matthew attributes this to *Jeremiah*, but the passage is found in *Zechariah* 11:12-13. What's going on here? Did Matthew goof?

No – actually, what Matthew says here is drawn from two sources, Zechariah and Jeremiah 19 [1,4,6,11].

It was a regular practice in that time when quoting multiple sources, to only name the most important among them.

Jeremiah was esteemed by the Jews of that period as the premier prophet, so Matthew only gives his name.

We see the same thing in Mark 1:2-3 where Mark quotes both Isaiah and Malachi, but mentions only Isaiah.

3. Pilate "examines" Jesus 27:11-14

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*"

This was the polite way of saying "Yes" to a person of authority.

Today we encourage young children to speak respectfully to adults and say, "Yes Ma'am" or "No, Sir" – what Jesus says here was the polite way to reply to a person in Pilate's position - "*It is as you say.*"

A curt "Yes" would have appeared dismissive & disrespectful of Pilate.

Pilate asked Jesus, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" because this was the charge that had been leveled at Him by the Jewish leaders who'd hauled Him there.

As the Messiah, the Son of David and the rightful king of Israel, He was indeed king of the Jews.

Even more, as the Son of God, He was the King of the Universe, but Pilate hadn't asked about that.

12 And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Get the scene; Pilate is sitting on his formal judgment seat as the judge to whom the power of life and death had been given.

In front of him to one side stand the chief priests and rulers of Israel.

Across from them stands Jesus.

The priests & elders are giving a list of charges against Jesus.

Luke 23:2 tells us they leveled 3 charges against Him;

- 1) They charged Jesus first with being a revolutionary,
- 2) Second, with inciting the people not to pay their taxes,
- 3) And third, with claiming to be a king.

They fabricated 3 *political* charges, all of them conscious lies, because they

knew that only on such charges would Pilate act. [2]

As would be the case, they would file a specific charge, & Jesus would answer it.

Then they would give *another* charge, and Jesus would answer *it*.

But after they give their first charge, Pilate's head swings to Jesus & Jesus *doesn't say a word*. Pilate says, "Well???" Silence!

So the priests give the 2nd charge & again Pilate's head swings to Jesus.
"Well???" Silence.

This happens a 3rd time & Pilate is amazed Jesus has nothing to say in defense of Himself, because as b. 18 makes clear, he knows that the priests are motivated out of envy; they have not real charges against Jesus.

Of course, Jesus knew all of this was a formality. They weren't killing Him, He was laying down His life.

At this trial before Pilate, He wasn't being condemned by them, their actions against Him were condemning themselves.

Jesus wasn't on trial, they were! Jesus didn't stand *for judgment before Pilate*, Pilate was sitting *in judgment before* Jesus.

We need to take this idea that's popular among many people today that "they can *choose* Jesus" and turn it around.

We don't *choose Jesus*, **He chooses us!**

Jesus doesn't stand like some *reality show contestant* hoping people will pick Him.

He's not just a religious leader among many other viable candidates.

Jesus stands in no line up with Buddah, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, & Moses hoping people will pick Him.

Jesus is the sovereign, **ONLY** Lord of heaven & earth.

And a man or woman's eternal destiny is determined, not by which religious box they check, but by whether or not they bow themselves before the name which is above every name – Jesus!

This whole scene, from the Garden of Gethsemane to the cross is the most ironic and backward in all history.

Jesus – the Lord of Righteousness, the One who defines what holiness IS, condemned to death as a vile, sinful criminal!

The Judge of the Ages, being judged by a petty Roman governor.

And the Lord of Life whose eternal throne is a glory so bright eyes cannot behold it, dying a despicable death on a rough, blood-stained piece of wood.

The irony of it all is too great for words!

4. Pilate releases Barabbas 27:15-26

15 Now at the feast [of the Passover] the governor was accustomed to

releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

The Passover was the highest annual holiday and celebration of the Jews.

The Romans tried to be on as good of terms as possible with the people they ruled, so while they ruled with an iron fist, they also practiced acts of mercy which were meant to ease the tensions between themselves & those they ruled.

One of the rituals they had developed was to use the Passover, when the City was packed with visitors from all over the world, to release a prisoner, someone the people considered a hero, even though the Romans might see him as a criminal.

At that time, they were holding a dangerous political reactionary named *Barabbas*.

Pilate gave them an option – he would release either Barabbas, a known criminal; or Jesus, whom Pilate knew the common people were acclaiming as the Christ, the Messiah.

Pilate had good reason to believe that when the choice was put to the crowd and not the leaders, they would pick Jesus over Barabbas.

In this way, he hoped to get out of the predicament he found himself in.

You see, we need to know a little bit about Pilate.

Pilate had become procurator/governor of Judea in 26 AD.

Where previous governors had followed a *kid glove* approach to ruling the temperamental Jews, Pilate used the *mailed fist*.

The Jews allowed no graven images in compliance with the 2 Commandment.

The Roman standard was a pole with the eagle on it, or a bust of the reigning emperor.

When Romans troops marched into Jerusalem, in deference to Jewish sensibilities, Roman commanders had always removed the figures.

When Pilate assumed his office and marched into the City, he refused to remove the images and this created a stir so great it got him in trouble with Rome.

You see, procurators were directly responsible, not to the Roman Senate but to the Emperor. The Emperor’s displeasure meant the removal of the governor.

At any time, the people being ruled under a Roman governor could appeal to the Emperor.

The Jews had done this with Pilate and word had been sent to him that he was being watched.

When Jesus appeared before him, he was in a difficult place.

On one hand, he would have loved to stick it to the Jewish leaders as these were the guys who’d complained to Caesar about him.

On the other hand, if he just overlooked a charge of sedition against Jesus, then this could look to Rome like a gross dereliction of his duty to keep order.

By presenting Jesus and Barabbas to the people, his hope was that they would pick

Jesus and the matter would be settled.

Matthew adds another little insight that further added to Pilate's predicament.

19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, . . .

Meaning before he presented Jesus & Barabbas to the crowd – while the charges were being leveled by the leaders.

. . . his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

To Pilate's own sense of Jesus' innocence was added his wife's warning.

She too called him a *just man* – he was not guilty of anything worthy of execution.

When Pilate asked if Jesus was the King of the Jews, Jesus had acknowledge it in v.11.

On the surface, this was a claim that could have condemned Jesus for it could be construed as a claim to political power in opposition to Rome.

But it could also simply mean He was the rightful king who accepted the Roman presence and authority, as so many other conquered people had.

As Pilate looked at Jesus, he saw *nothing* that would indicate He would lead a revolution. If Jesus was a king, his kingdom was no threat to Rome.

Jesus was an innocent man & Pilate knew it.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" ²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" ²³ Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" ²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*." ²⁵ And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children." ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

By some arm-twisting, the leaders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas' release.

When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, they cried out for his death.

When he asked on what basis He should be crucified, the crowd just got all the more vocal and started jostling.

Seeing that a riot might break out, Pilate complied with the crowd's request.

He knew Jesus was innocent, but for the sake of political expediency and maintaining his own position, he consented to the evil of putting Jesus to death.

By washing his hands before the multitude like this, he was saying that while he was using his *official authority* to *condemn* Jesus, personally, he accepted no *moral responsibility* for this.

As Jesus was innocent, so he claimed innocence of any wrong-doing here.
But Pilate's act of washing his hands did not in any way relieve him of his guilt.

An ancient tradition says Pilate became obsessed with washing his hands. That he would wash them again and again, always seeing them covered with blood and trying to wash it away.

Pilate is a classic example of a man who is in the office of a leader without being a leader.

A true leader makes decisions that he/she believes are *right, regardless* of whether or not anyone agrees with him/her.

A true leader is a person of conviction who lives and dies by his/her convictions.

A mere office holder has one goal, to hold on to the office.

Their decisions are made to stay in place – not by what's right or wrong.

Pilate was an *office holder*, not a leader; a *politician*, not a ruler.

This is something to keep in mind as we go to the poles & vote for our civil leaders.

Are the candidates *political* or *principled*?

Are they *leaders* or merely *seeking office*?

In v. 26 Matthew tells us that before Jesus was led out to be crucified, the Roman soldiers scourged Him.

Crucifixion was a grueling and terribly painful way to die.

It also took a long time, sometimes, days for the condemned to finally expire.

So the Romans had started scourging the condemned as a way to hurry the process of death along.

Scourging was a severe beating with *flagellum*, a leather whip with bits of metal, glass or bone knotted into its thongs.

The condemned would have his hands tied and then secured to either an upright post, or stretched over a lateral post.

This whipping bloodied the victim's back, leaving strips of flesh hanging from the wounds. [\[3\]](#)

The scourging was so brutal, some prisoners never survived it.

Though I haven't seen the movie yet, I've heard that the scourging scene in "*The Passion of the Christ*" goes on & on and for many becomes hard to watch because it seems like just too much.

Well, how long did it take the soldiers to scourge Jesus? They could have gone at it for 10 minutes or more.

Let's look again at vs. 24-25

24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." 25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

The charges of some that "*The Passion*" is anti-Semitic lie in what we find here.

You see, throughout church history, there has been a stream of thought that sees the Jews a "Christ-killers."

They use v. 25 as justification for persecuting the Jews – “After all,” the reasoning goes, “they called down the guilt for Jesus’ death on their heads for all succeeding generations.”

Jewish groups were concerned Gibson’s movie would inflame a new round of anti-Semitism and outbreaks of violence against Jews.

So the reports I’ve heard is that while the crowds shouts this in Hebrew or Aramaic, it’s not translated into English sub-titles.

This is all rather silly – but yet another example of people who mis-interpret and mis-apply scripture.

No one killed Jesus! He laid down His life of His own accord and choice.

In John 10:17-18 Jesus said,

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

In the Garden when the mob came to arrest Jesus, He demonstrated His power over them by causing them all to fall to the ground with nothing more than a word!

[John 18:4-6]

When standing before Pilate, the governor asked Jesus, “Why won’t you answer? Don’t you now I have the power to release or condemn you?”

Jesus replied, “You have no power but what My father gave you.”

Jesus was no *victim* of a plot or conspiracy by the Jews, the Romans, the Illuminati, the Bilderbergers, or anyone else!

He was and is Master of every situation Who went to the cross of His own volition; to die for our sins; your sins, my sins.

My Sin + God’s Love = The Cross!

1 John 1:7 says that **the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.**

So, when in v. 25 we read that the crowd said, **“His blood be on us and on our children”** we shouldn’t read this as the basis for condemning the Jews, but as the basis for a hope that they will be saved!

In John 11 we read something provocative –

49And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.

John turns the malicious words of the high priest into a prophecy that means the very opposite of what the high priest intended.

Caiaphas meant that Jesus should be executed just so they could keep their positions.

But John spins it as actually prophetic, for Jesus did come to die for the nation, for all nations!

By His death, others are saved from perishing.

The same is true for the cry of the crowd – they said, **“His blood be on us and on our children”** as a statement accepting responsibility for Jesus death.

But the fact of the matter is, WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEATH!

Now, may His blood which secures salvation, be applied to all!

To be honest, what they said that day before Pilate, I say as well - **“His blood be on me and my house; on each & every one of my children, & their children, forever. AMEN!”**

L. The Romans Abuse Jesus 27:27-31

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸ And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand.

The reed was a mock scepter. They were mocking His claim to being a king.

And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ³⁰ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

John tells us Pilate brought Jesus out one more time for the crowd to behold, thinking his desperate appearance would draw forth some mercy, but they cried all the louder for His crucifixion.

Why did the common people turn so quickly against Jesus?

Just days before they’d been heralding Him as the Messiah; why now the hatred and angry cries calling for His death?

Simple – in their minds, if He was the Messiah, He would not look like this! He’d have done this to each and every Roman in Jerusalem!

They felt cheated, disappointed & angry that Jesus had not met their expectations & desires for a conquering King.

There’s a lesson in that for us – for you see, Jesus WAS THE MESSIAH.

It was they who were wrong in their expectations and desires.

Some people are disappointed in God because He doesn’t meet their expectations or answer their prayers the way they want them answered.

Their attitude is, “Why follow God when He doesn’t do what I like?”

The answer to that is, Follow God because He is God and you are NOT!

He knows far better what is best for you than you do.

When God doesn’t meet your expectations, it’s the expectations that are wrong, not God.

M. The Crucifixion 27:32-56

32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.

This was necessary because the ordeal Jesus has endured so far has weakened Him to the point He cannot carry the cross.

Cyrene was in North Africa. Simon had probably come as one of the many Passover pilgrims and just happened to be on the street with the Roman detail walked past.

It was the rule that when a Roman soldier place the flat head of his spear on a

person's shoulder, the person was immediately conscripted to carry out the soldier's order.

Simon was the poor guy they picked to carry Jesus' cross.

This was the kind of humiliating thing a person would absolutely dread.

But for Simon, this exercise in humility became the means of his salvation.

When Mark tells this story, he refers to Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus, which can only mean they were believers who were well known to the church. [Mark 15:21]

More than likely, they were led to faith by their father.

That which to Simon had seemed his day of shame became his day of glory. ^[4]

33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull,

The Latin word for Golgotha is "Calvary."

34 they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink.

Ancient writings inform us the women of Jerusalem prepare a mixture of wine & herbs that would deaden the pain & offer it to the condemned as an act of mercy.

Jesus refused the drink; He wanted to be fully alert & aware, tasting the last bitter dregs, not of wine, but of death.

It was for this moment He'd come, and He was not going to be taken out of it by being drugged.

35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "*They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.*"

This is from Psalm 22:18, which is in itself an incredibly accurate picture of the crucifixion, written some 1,000 years before Jesus, before the Romans and their hideous practice.

Matthew spares us the gory details of crucifixion because he knew his readers were well acquainted with it.

We aren't. What we're used to seeing are sanitized & romanticized versions of the cross. "*The Passion*" is an attempt at stark realism.

The Roman statesman Cicero said of crucifixion: "It is . . . an act so abominable it is impossible to find any word adequately to express."

One of the great humiliations for the Jews would be that the condemned were stripped naked by the Romans.

This is why they were getting rid of His clothes.

36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. 37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The list of crimes the condemned were being executed for were always attached to the cross so those passing by could be warned.

38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and

another on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴²“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ” ⁴⁴Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

In the midst of all the physical pain came the soul pain as these guys mocked the Lord of Glory!

Talk about a trial! For at any moment, Jesus could have burst off the cross and smoked them!

They taunted and told Him to come down from the cross!

But it was for the Cross he’d come!

There’s not a person here who could have endured this scorn without answering back, without some exercise of raw power that would have caused infinite agony to the mockers.

45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

The darkness was supernatural; it was as if the creation was drawing a veil over the scene of the cross.

As Jesus was made the sin of the world for all time, the agony He bore may have simply been too great for human eyes to witness, so God mercifully pulled a screen over the sight by dimming the light.

Two early church fathers, Origen & Eusebius, both quote from *Phlegon*, a Roman historian, who wrote, "In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake."^[5]

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

This was the opening line of Psalm 22, which Jesus cried out here both as a true cry of His heart, and as a way to alert those standing by to consider the scriptures.

If they had, they would have realized what they were witnessing had all been foretold.

Psalm 22:1-18

1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?

2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the

- night season, and am not silent.
- 3 But You *are* holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.
- 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.
- 6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
- 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
- 8 “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”
- 9 But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother’s breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You *have been* My God.
- 11 Be not far from Me, For trouble *is* near; For *there is* none to help.
- 12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.
- 13 They gape at Me *with* their mouths, *Like* a raging and roaring lion.
- 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.
- 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;
- 17 I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me.
- 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

Remember, this was written about a thousands years before Jesus & the Romans.

47Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!” **48**Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. **49**The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.”

Whereas Jesus refused the drink earlier, John tells us He took it here. [John 19:30]

The reason He took it here was because He needed the moisture to be able to frame His final words – “It is finished.”

50And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **51**Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, **52**and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen

asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

When the Creator died, creation shuddered.

And the devil, in his greedy grasp to take hold of Jesus, let loose of some of his other prisoners.

He was like the dog with a bone in his mouth, who sees his own reflection in a pool of water and in trying to take the bone out of his reflection's mouth, loses the one he has.

Matthew tells us that at the instant of Jesus' death, the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, not bottom to top, which is the direction it would have torn if a man had done it.

It was torn from top to bottom because God did the tearing.

He was saying that the final sacrifice had been offered.

There was no longer any need for sacrifices or a special priesthood, or even a temple – because through the death of Christ, all can come directly to God *themselves*, on an equal basis.

⁵⁴So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

These soldiers had seen many executions, many men had been crucified by their detail. But at none of their deaths had anything like this happened.

What about Pilate? What about Caiaphas and the chief priests and elders?

Do you think maybe a huge "Uh oh!" went through them when all this happened?

Maybe it did, but it didn't move them to faith.

This Centurion & his men were moved though!

⁵⁵ And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, ⁵⁶ among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

N. The Burial 27:57-61

⁵⁷ Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. ⁵⁹ When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

It was the usual custom that the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to rot or be eaten by wild animals.

But the Jews wanted no such horror displayed during the Passover.

A body so exposed would ritually defile the land, so Pilate would be inclined to

let Joseph have the body for burial.
Matthew tells us the evening had come – the Sabbath was about to begin, so Joseph had to do a hurried job of preparing the body and insert it into the tomb before the sun set.

The women who followed saw that Joseph had not done a proper job of attending to the body so they determined to do it themselves – but that day was spent. They'd come back at the earliest opportunity; dawn Sunday morning.

O. The Tomb-Guard 27:62-66

62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,

This is the Sabbath day – Which means for some of these guys, they went *farther* than the Sabbath limit for travel.

And they visited a Gentile on the Sabbath, *another violation*.

63 saying, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’”

So, all their playing dumb about what He meant about rebuilding the temple is exposed! They knew full well what He meant! Oh the hypocrisy of these religious men!

64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

The official Roman seal was placed over the seam between the tomb and door-stone.

No one, and I repeat, *no one* would *dream* of breaking this seal! It carried the authority of no one less than the Emperor himself!

There's a theory about the resurrection that's popular among skeptics; it's called the “Swoon theory.”

It says that Jesus merely passed out on the cross and was shocked back to life by the cold stone bed of the tomb, then was nursed back to health by the disciples.

This is simple hog-wash! Look here – his arch enemies took him to be **DEAD!!!**

Pilate knew he was dead, the soldiers who were experts at crucifixion, they knew He was dead!

But still, the Swoon theory gets play among the skeptics, because the resurrection? Well, it just *can't be true* – please don't *let* it be true!!!

Please, please, please!

Some years ago a humorous letter appeared in a magazine poking fun at the Swoon Theory.

The letter went – “Dear Eutychus: On Easter our preacher said that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered”

“Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy

strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens. Sincerely, Eutyclus”

One of the things that will come to the mind of many of us as we go see “*The Passion*” is not if Jesus just swooned, but how could He have survived **THAT LONG!**

V. THE RESURRECTION 28

A. *The Resurrection Is Announced By Angels 28:1-8*

¹Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

The angel came, not to let Jesus out; He was already gone.

The angel came to let the women in so they could see that Jesus wasn't there!

³His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” ⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

The terror of the angel overwhelmed the soldiers who collectively passed out.

The women went into the tomb, saw it was empty and then left, running to find the disciples to tell them the good news.

I love v. 8 – it says they went out of the tomb with both fear & great joy!

Those seem like two opposite emotions! How can you be both fearful and joyous at the same time?

Well, since this will be my text for this coming Easter, you'll have to wait to find out!

B. *The Women Meet Jesus 28:9-10*

⁹And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!**” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “**Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.**”**

They held Him by the feet because they were on their faces in worship!

This One had conquered death!

Though Jesus actually appeared to the disciples in their room there in Jerusalem, Matthew leaves out these appearances of Jesus & moves the story to Galilee, their old stomping grounds.

All the disciples were from Galilee and would be returning there now that the Passover was over.

Jesus is simply letting them know they will see Him again back home.

C. *Bribing The Tomb-Guard 28:11-15*

11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. **12** When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, **13** saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ **14** And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” **15** So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

What a foolish cover-up!

Roman soldiers bested by some fishermen from Hicksville? Absurd!

It was an offense punishable by death for a soldier to fall asleep at his post – and it was against this very thing, that the disciples would steal the body of Jesus, that they’d been stationed there.

But Roman soldiers were used to pay-offs by local citizens to look the other way.

D. *The Great Commission 28:16-20*

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.

How many disciples? 11, not 10 – 11! Peter is included!

In His appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem He’d told them to go to a particular mountain in Galilee where He would meet with them.

They got there, and Jesus appeared to them.

Note the v. 17 -

17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

All the disciples worshipped, but *some* of them struggled with doubt.

The word for ‘doubt’ here refers, *not* to outright hardened unbelief, but to a faith that isn’t settled.

Some of the disciples doubted simply because the truth was just too good to be true.

They were gun-shy of fully committing themselves to the idea that Jesus, *their Jesus*, had risen from the dead!

Their bitter disappointment had created a kind of emotional shock that kept them insulated & reserved from fully embracing the idea that Jesus had risen.

Their heads knew the fact of it because their senses told them He lived, but their hearts held back from *entrusting* themselves to the reality of it.

This happens with people all the time. They suffer some terrible trauma, and then when it turns out there was a big mistake and things were not at all the way they thought they were, they still act as though the event was real.

They hurt so badly, they withdraw and protect themselves against further hurt.

Within a few days, those disciples who still doubted released those doubts to the Spirit and enjoyed a full, firm faith in the Lord.

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has**

been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

This is my text for Sunday, so I'll leave it till then.

[1] Eastman, Mark M.D. *The Search for the Messiah* pg. 96-103

[2] *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume 2*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily Study Bible, Rev. ed. (Mt 27:27). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

[3] Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 27:26). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

[4] *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume 2*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily Study Bible, Rev. ed. (Mt 27:45). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

[5] Guzik, David – *Online Commentary on Matthew* (Cited in Clarke) Origen (*Contra Celsus*, ii,33) & Eusebius (*Chron.*)