

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 23 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now keep in mind from our last study that Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. From there He faced three religious trials, one before Annas, the former High Priest and yet still looked upon by the people as the High Priest, kind of the power behind the position now. From there He went to Caiaphas, the acting High Priest, placed there by the Romans and the son-in-law to Annas.

And lastly, as the sun came up that morning He went before the Sanhedrin or the Jewish religious Supreme Court you might say.

This is what transpired and we will read starting in verse 66 of Luke chapter 22 for some background information that will lead us to our study this evening. We are told, **“As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.’ Then they all said, ‘Are You then the Son of God?’ So He said to them, ‘You rightly say that I am.’ And they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’”** Luke 22:66-71.

Now, after these events, we will pick up our study this evening in Luke chapter 23 starting in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

LUKE 23**VERSES 1-2**

Now begins the first of three civil trials, starting with Pilate, then to Herod, and finally back to Pilate. The reason they went to Pilate was because the Jews had no authority to put Jesus to death, only Rome could do this.

And these Jewish religious leaders had great hope that Pilate would put Jesus to death for them. They wanted this trouble maker out of their hair and they did not want to be responsible for doing it! And make no mistake about it, Pilate was not a good guy!

Philo, the ancient Jewish scholar from Alexandria, described Pilate this way, “His corruption, his acts of insolence, his rapine [the violent seizure of someone’s property], his habit of insulting people, his cruelty, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never-ending gratuitous and most grievous inhumanity.” (Barclay)

But there was a little problem for these Jewish religious leaders. Remember that they found Jesus guilty of blasphemy. That He being a man made Himself equal with God and they rejected that, even though it was true!

Thus, if they came to Pilate with those charges, chances are that Pilate would let Him go, he did not want to get involved with religious issues, it was too dangerous for him.

And think about this. Since they could not use this blasphemy charge against Jesus, they came up with these three charges against Jesus to assure His death by crucifixion.

First of all, they said that He was “**perverting the nation**” or He was a revolutionary, which was not true, He was not starting a war with Rome, but with the Devil!

Next, they said that Jesus was telling the Jews not to pay taxes to Caesar, which again was untrue. In fact, in Matthew 22:19-21, Jesus dealt with this very issue and this is what He had to say, **“‘Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’”** So, this too was untrue.

And lastly, they claimed that Jesus made Himself King, in opposition to Caesar. And I guess that is true, He was King, not ordained by man but by God. And, as you can see, these are the civil charges against Jesus, not religious.

But they were lies. How in the world did these men of God, these Jewish religious leaders come to the conclusion that lying was okay to do as long as they could get rid of Jesus? Now, before we are too harsh on them, what about us? Do we lie to get something we want? We need to be careful because Jesus said that the Devil is the father of lies and thus, lying should not be a part of our life! (John 8:44)

So here are these charges brought before Pilate against Jesus. How did Pilate respond to all of this? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 3-4

Pilate was the judge and as he heard the evidence against Jesus, he came to the conclusion that Jesus was innocent. Now think about that for a minute. Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews and Jesus says yes!

Pilate should have been upset here. There was only one King and that was Caesar and yet, Jesus is making the claim that He is above Caesar? Why wasn’t Pilate more upset?

Some say that Jesus was just an average person when you looked at Him and the Jews beat Him up some. So, He probably did not look too intimidating, too threatening.

As true as that may be, I think there is another point that Pilate was well aware of. You see, in Mark 15:10 we are told that Pilate knew the reason the Jews had brought Jesus to him. Mark tells us, “**For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.**”

So that may be the reason that Pilate was not too harsh upon Jesus. And in saying that, in saying that there was no fault in Jesus, that should have been the end of the story, but it is not. Listen to what takes place in the next verse.

VERSE 5

They are trying to make Jesus into an insurrectionist, causing all kinds of trouble against Rome. Which again was untrue, He was coming against the Jewish religious leaders and thus, they wanted Jesus dead. So, they were trying to find anything against Him so Pilate could comply with their wishes.

And as the crowd is getting restless and these charges are brought before him regarding Jesus, Pilate sees this getting ugly and out of control. Thus, he is trying to find a way out of this mess, he doesn't want any more trouble with the Jews or with Rome, he has two strikes against him already with Rome and three strikes and you are out!

But there is a loophole and the loophole is given in this next verse and the resulting action in the next few verses, and that is He grew up in the Galilee region. Listen to what Pilate does here.

VERSES 6-7

Keep in mind that Jesus grew up in the area of Galilee. And thus, Herod was responsible for Him. Now Luke tells us that Herod was in town and you may be wondering why? The reason is simple. He was in town for the Passover feast and thus, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod to decide what to do with Him!

Clarke gives to us this summation of what is going on here. He wrote, “The city of *Nazareth*, in which Christ had continued till he was thirty years of age, and that of *Capernaum*, in which he principally resided the last years of his life, were both in *Lower Galilee*, of which *Herod Antipas* was tetrarch. Pilate was probably glad of this opportunity to pay a little respect to Herod, whom it is likely he had irritated, and with whom he now wished to be friends.”

Now who is this Herod Antipas? He was the son of Herod the Great, the one who massacred the infants in Bethlehem and rebuilt or beautified the Temple.

And Herod Antipas was the one who had John the Baptist put to death. And as we are going to see, Jesus is not going to have anything to do with this “sly fox”. Why? Because his heart was so hard and cold nothing was going to penetrate it, and when Jesus has nothing to say to a person, that is truly a sad state to be in.

So, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod and the word for “sent” in the Greek was a technical word for sending a prisoner from one authority to another. That is what happened here.

Now look at what happens in this second trial of Jesus, now before Herod.

VERSES 8-12

As you can see, Herod wanted to be entertained by Jesus, a few magic tricks you might say. When I was in Junior High School, many years ago, the play Jesus Christ Superstar was out. The music was great, their theology was awful! But when it came to Herod, looking back on it now, they did hit the nail on the head. This is what he sang,

Jesus, I am overjoyed to meet you face to face.
 You've been getting quite a name all around the place.
 Healing cripples, raising from the dead.
 And now I understand you're God,
 At least, that's what you've said.

So, you are the Christ, you're the great Jesus Christ.
 Prove to me that you're divine; change my water into wine.
 That's all you need do, then I'll know it's all true.
 Come on, King of the Jews.

Jesus, you just won't believe the hit you've made around here.
 You are all we talk about, the wonder of the year.
 Oh what a pity if it's all a lie.
 Still, I'm sure that you can rock the cynics if you tried.

So, you are the Christ, you're the great Jesus Christ.
 Prove to me that you're no fool; walk across my swimming pool.
 If you do that for me, then I'll let you go free.
 Come on, King of the Jews.

I only ask what I'd ask any superstar.
 What is it that you have got that puts you where you are.
 I am waiting, yes I'm a captive fan.
 I'm dying to be shown that you are not just any man.

So, if you are the Christ, yes the great Jesus Christ
 Feed my household with this bread.
 You can do it on your head.
 Or has something gone wrong. Jesus, why do you take so long?
 Oh come on, King of the Jews.

Hey! Aren't you scared of me Christ?
Mr. Wonderful Christ?
You're a joke. You're not the Lord.
You are nothing but a fraud.

Take him away.
He's got nothing to say!
Get out you King of the,
Get out King of the,
Oh get out you King of the Jews!
Get out of here!
Get out of here you,
Get out of my life.

- <https://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/jesuschristsuperstar/kingherodssong.htm>

But Jesus did not come to entertain us but to save us. What is sad today is that we see that same mentality in some churches and with some Christians. They are looking to be entertained by Jesus, and that is not why Jesus came. He came to save that which was lost, you and me. He came to heal the broken hearted, you and me. May we not forget that!

And in this crowd watching were these religious leaders and they continue to try and bring Jesus down. And Herod, not happy that Jesus won't entertain him, and won't answer his questions, begins to mock Jesus!

Now the reason that Jesus did not answer Herod's questions is that Herod was not interested in the truth and thus, Jesus was not going to waste His time. So, as the mocking ends we see Herod send Jesus back to Pilate for the third and last of the civil trials!

Interestingly enough, Pilate and Herod were not close friends but this issue regarding Jesus united them. When you think about this you can easily understand why Theophylact mourned when he said, “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.” For me, I truly can’t understand this issue, but I bet **PRIDE** has a lot to do with it. That is something to think about!

VERSES 13-17

Notice once again Pilate found Jesus innocent of any crime and thus should not be put to death. And also, we are told that Herod found Jesus innocent as well. Remember the Passover lamb was to be inspected for any spot or blemish and thus, Jesus was innocent, He was sinless and could be offered as the sacrificial lamb to take away the sins of the world.

Peter said, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**” I Peter 1:18-19.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 4:15, “**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**”

And we see this played out for us, what God has done as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

So, Pilate, understanding the innocence of Jesus, is going to let Him go. But, I guess to appease the Jews, he had Jesus “**chastised**” which was not a light punishment, but the Roman third degree you might say.

You see, scourging was a brutal whipping with a whip that had metal, sharp rock, even sharp bone tied to the ends with leather cords. The victim would be tied to a post with his back exposed and as the whip would come down upon the victims flesh it would rip it open.

It was so violent that many died from this. You see, each time the Roman soldier came down with the whip and the victim did not confess to the crimes he was being accused of, the soldier would come down harder with the whip.

If he did confess, then the whipping would be lighter. But Jesus was innocent and thus, took all 40 lashes, each one getting harder and harder, ripping more and more of the skin off of Jesus, causing a large blood loss and His back to be like raw meat when they were done.

Of this, Dr. William Edwards tells us, “As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim’s back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross.”

“The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus’ physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.”

(Dr. William Edwards [with others] in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 21, 1986)

And for Pilate, he thought he had another way to let Jesus go, since He was innocent. They had a custom of freeing a prisoner every Passover, a kind of good will gesture to the Jews, and that is what Pilate wanted to do, but that is not what is going to happen as we shall see.

VERSES 18-25

Notice the anger of the crowds and how they would rather have this murderer, Barabbas, released and this innocent man, Jesus, put to death. And keep in mind that these Jewish religious leaders were supposed to be holy men of god. Tragically it was all a facade and some of that siding has come off and is exposing the ugliness of their hearts!

Not only were these Jewish religious leaders angry, but they got the crowds of people going as well. It was getting out of control. Morris sees that as well as he tells us, “Their *loud cries* give the impression that a riot was beginning to build up. It must have been obvious to Pilate that the situation was becoming increasingly ugly.”

We have seen that recently as groups of people are upset with President Trump. And they march and yell and do vandalism and so on. The interesting thing, when you ask the average person why they are so upset with President Trump, they don't know.

What is going on? There are groups of people, like the news media that is fueling this fire of anti-Trump and again, most don't even know why they hate him. They don't know what he is doing that is wrong. And that is what we see here with these Jewish religious leaders, they stirred the pot and now it is about to boil!

But Pilate still wants to let Jesus go instead of releasing this trouble maker, Barabbas! But Pilate, the judge, has lost control and the people are now telling the judge what to do. The Roman court system was not exactly fair but they would never let the people dictate what the judgment should be. But Pilate does because he fears the people more than he feared God!

Over the years, I have had to make some difficult decisions that were unpopular with some, but I knew what God wanted and that is what I did. You can never please everyone but you need to do what is right, what God wants, be a God pleaser!

And keep in mind that it wasn't that the Jews were right, that they were just in their accusations, Pilate knew why they were doing this. And with their voices raised, with things getting out of control, they were able to sway Pilate to do what was unjust, sentencing Jesus to death and freeing Barabbas. Interestingly enough Luke tells us that he “**delivered Jesus to their will.**” That is the will of the Jews and not his will or Pilate's will!

Also, we need to keep in mind that this was the Father's will as well. Peter tells us in Acts 2:22-24, “**Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know - Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**”

As I have said, Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and instead of taking the responsibility for what was taking place, in Matthew 27:24-25 we are told Pilate's response to the decision he made. We are told, **“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.’ And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”**

Here's the thing. You can't wash your hands from this filth. Pilate was still accountable for his actions and so are we in what we do with Jesus in our own lives.

Now we will deal with the Jews cry in Matthew 27:25, **“His blood be on us and on our children”** in a few verses here, and what a tragic cry, what a prophetic statement they were making as we shall see.

VERSES 26-31

Now we see the road to the cross, to Calvary. And Jesus, in this weakened condition from the torture that He received, now was carrying a 75 – 125-pound cross beam, part of the cross He would be nailed to shortly.

Now, according to the customs of crucifixion, a Roman guard led with a sign that carried the man's name and crime, calling out the name and the crime along the way to the place of crucifixion. They usually didn't take the shortest way so as many people as possible could see how the Roman Empire treated its enemies.

And as Jesus is going, we don't know how far He went before He could no longer carry the cross-beam, the Roman soldier compels Simon to carry it the rest of the way, something a Roman soldier could do, you had no choice in the matter.

Now Simon was from North Africa, a Cyrenian, traveling some 800 miles to celebrate the Passover and now he has an encounter with the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. Did it affect his life? You bet it did!

In Mark 15:21 we are told, **“Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.”**

Then in Romans 16:13 we are told, **“Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.”** Not only did Simon get saved, but his family did too, some becoming leaders in the early church!

Again, the streets were filled with people and many people followed these condemned men to the cross to watch, it was what Rome wanted, a kind of incentive program not to go down that same path.

And as Jesus is watching all these people as He heads to Calvary, He tells them, **“... ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin “to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?’”**

How prophetic these words were for in 70 A. D. Titus and the Roman army came in destroying Jerusalem and sending the people fleeing for their lives, and millions of Jews were

killed! Josephus records these events in The Wars of the Jews Book 7. Why did this happen?
Because they rejected the Messiah!

Jesus made that very clear in Luke 19:42-44 as He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as Messiah the King on Palm Sunday, and He said, **“If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”** And that is exactly what did happen!

Now verse 31 here in Luke chapter 23 can be confusing. It says, **“For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”** What is that all about?

I believe the idea here is that if this is happening to Jesus, the innocent one, the green tree, then what is the fate going to be of the guilty or the dry wood!

VERSES 32-33

Jesus was crucified between two criminals. And in that we see another prophecy fulfilled as the Scriptures tell us in Isaiah 53 verses 9 and 12, **“And they made His grave with the wicked - But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. . . . Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was**

numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”

So, Jesus and these two criminals were lead through Jerusalem to Calvary or the place of the skull. And this is important. Calvary is located outside of the city of Jerusalem, next to the Garden Tomb in a place called Gordon’s Valley.

Now the Roman Catholic Church believes Calvary is located inside the city gates and has built a church called The Church of the Holy Sepulcher there. The only problem with that is Hebrews 13:12 tells us, **“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”**

Also, in this place located outside of the city, Calvary or the place of the skull actually has a skull cut into the face of the rocks, I have seen it, and it is very possible that is where it got its name.

One other thing related to Calvary or this place of the skull where Jesus was crucified. Today this area is a bus stop. I find that interesting because it just tells me, like back then, people are going about their daily activities not aware that God has died on Calvary, paying the penalty for our sins, they are too busy to notice!

Now this path to Calvary, has been called by some The Via Dolorosa, or literally “the sorrowful way.” The problem with this path where we see these Stations of the Cross is that five of them are not even found in the Scriptures, they are nothing more than traditions.

And interestingly enough, Pate tells us, “It is a telling criticism that Fitzmeyer, a Jesuit theologian, observes in an aside comment on v. 32 that the account of Jesus’ road to the cross

says nothing about the fourteen stations of the cross, such as the falls of Jesus, the meeting with His mother or with Veronica ('true image'). Such later traditions, though certainly sentimental in appeal, seem to have no historical basis."

Was Jesus lead through the streets of Jerusalem and up to Calvary? Absolutely but not a route that has been known as the Via Dolorosa with those fourteen stations of the cross. That was something that man came up with and it is not in the Scriptures.

Now let me take a minute and speak about crucifixion, because it was a brutal way to die! One writer put it like this,

A medical doctor provides a physical description: The cross is placed on the ground and the exhausted man is quickly thrown backwards with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flex and movement. The cross is then lifted into place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees flexed. The victim is now crucified. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the bones of his feet.

As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. He fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically he is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen.

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

It is now almost over - the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level - the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues - the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air.

He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues . . . Finally he can allow his body to die.

All this the Bible records with the simple words, "And they crucified Him." (Mark 15:24).

What wondrous love is this?

- Adapted from C. Truman Davis, M.D. in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8

Now, today, many like to deny the fact of the crucifixion and its importance to us. But keep in mind that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin! This was the most important act of this most important life.

And there is historical evidence for the crucifixion, extrabiblical literature that speaks of Jesus dying on the cross of Calvary.

There is a letter written by Mara bar Serapion to his son in 73 A. D.

Then, Josephus, the Jewish historian mentions the crucifixion in his writings in 90 A. D.

There is also the Roman historian, Tacitus who wrote 110-120 A. D.

And the Babylonian Talmud speaks of the crucifixion in 200 A. D.

That is what our Lord and Savior has done for us. Shed His blood to pay in full the penalty for our sins. Never forget that!

VERSE 34

I don't know about you, but there is no way someone is going to treat me like that and my flesh is going to forgive them. And that truly is the issue, the battle of the flesh and the spirit and there is a war going on. Whoever we surrender to will be manifested in our lives. May it be the spirit!

And make no mistake about it. Jesus practiced what He preached. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus said, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good,**

and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Remember this, that God does not call us to do anything that He Himself has not done!

Now we see the first of seven sayings that Jesus spoke forth from the cross of Calvary in the Gospels and here they are in order:

- A. **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”** Luke 23:34
- B. **“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”** Luke 23:43
- C. **“Woman, behold your son!” “Behold your mother!”** John 19:25-27
- D. **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”** Matthew 27:46
- E. **“I thirst!”** John 19:28
- F. **“It is finished!”** John 19:30
- G. **“Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’”** Luke 23:46

VERSES 35-37

Picture what is going on here. As they looked upon this beaten, bloodied, broken man who was completely innocent, they still mocked Him and challenged Him to do something about the condition He was in.

I don’t know about you, but if I was up there and I was Jesus, at this point I would have come down and started knocking some heads around! But Jesus didn’t! Why? Because He knew what needed to be done to free us from our sins. Thus, His love for us held Him to the cross knowing the joy that was to come, death before glory.

It is as Hebrews 12:2-3 says, **“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”**

We must also note the many prophecies that were fulfilled during this time, crucified between two thieves, dividing His garments, and-so-on. There are over 300 prophecies regarding the First Coming of Jesus Christ and they all were fulfilled, which is beyond any mathematical possibility for any man to accomplish that by pure chance. God told us beforehand so that we might believe!

VERSE 38

I think Pilate is trying to get back at the Jews for making him do something that he didn't want to do. In John 19:19-22 we are told of this incident, **“Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”** Pilate answered, **‘What I have written, I have written.’**

And He is not only King of the Jews but He is King over all creation! He is Almighty God!

VERSES 39-43

When these criminals were placed on the cross both of them were coming against Jesus. But now one looks into the eyes of Jesus, he sees His innocence and their guilt, and he is broken. He recognized why he was being crucified but he saw the innocence of Jesus!

Now as unfair as that seems, that is the reason Jesus came, to save sinners! It was His shed blood that has cleansed us from our sins!

Now I want you to take note of this. Two sinners before Jesus, each with an equal opportunity to receive the gift of life, both were close to death, both were sinners, and yet only one turned to Jesus, Why?

Because man has a choice to make and the same is true today. You can either accept Jesus or reject Him, but by your actions there will be consequences. The one who came to Jesus entered into eternal life with Him. The one who rejected Jesus entered into eternal life apart from Him. He ended up in Hell and ultimately in the Lake of Fire.

Listen carefully to what Charles R. Erdman had to say regarding this man's salvation and ultimately our own. He said,

This story reveals the truth to us that salvation is conditioned upon repentance and faith. However, it contains other important messages also. It declares that salvation is independent of sacraments. The thief had never been baptized, nor had he partaken of the Lord's Supper . . . He did in fact boldly profess his faith in the presence of a hostile crowd and amid the taunts and jeers of rulers and soldiers, yet he was saved without any formal rites.

It is further evident that salvation is independent of good works . . . It is also seen that there is no "sleep of the soul." The body may sleep, but consciousness exists after death.

Again it is evident that there is no "purgatory." Out of a life of sin and shame, the penitent robber passed immediately into a state of blessedness.

Again it may be remarked that salvation is not universal. There were two robbers; only one was saved. [That is each had a choice to make, to either accept Jesus or reject Him. All have the same opportunity].

Last of all it may be noted that the very essence of the joy which lies beyond death consists in personal communion with Christ. The heart of the promise to the dying thief was this: “Thou shalt be with me.” This is our blessed assurance, that to depart is “to be with Christ” which is “very far better.”

- William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary, p. 1456

Amen to that!

VERSES 44-46

Now this is interesting to me. We are told that at the sixth hour or 12 noon there was darkness over the face the earth until the ninth hour or 3 pm when Jesus gave up His spirit. What in the world is going on here?

I believe that at noon the sins of the world were placed upon Jesus, He bore our sins and took the punishment for all our sins, the punishment that we deserved. And as He did the Father turned from Jesus or broke that intimate fellowship that they had in eternity past and on into eternity future. Something He never experienced before and thus, we are told in Matthew 27:46, **“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?’”**

It is as II Corinthians 5:21 tells us, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

Now when this darkness covered the earth some try to explain this miracle away. They try to tell us that this was an eclipse but that is impossible because Passover occurred on a full moon!

Others mock this but history does tell us through the Roman historian Phlegon that, “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.” (Cited in Clarke).

Also, Geldenhuys said “Origen (Contra Celsus, ii, 33) and Eusebius (Chron.) quote words from Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he makes mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion.”

It is as Amos 8:9 prophesied, **“‘And it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight.’”**

Also, the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom signifying that God opened this veil. This veil was some 18 inches thick and it separated man from God, the holy place from the holy of holies where the ark was and the presence of God dwelt.

Ripping this veil showed that man could now come before God through Jesus Christ, he did not have to go through the priest.

You see, it was only the High Priest who could enter the holy of holies and only once a year, on Yon Kippur, after a rigorous ceremonial cleansing.

But now Jesus has taken down that curtain and we can come before God, not in our own righteousness, but His! It is as Paul said in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

And in verse 46 of Luke 23, when we are told that **“He breathed His last”** we need to understand that no one took Jesus’ life but He freely gave it so that we might be saved. In John 10:18 Jesus said, **“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.”** Jesus gave up His life when the work was finished!

VERSES 47-49

Think about this for a minute. The number of people this centurion saw crucified and yet, there was something so remarkable about Jesus that he said something about Him that he could say about no one else. **“Certainly this was a righteous Man!”**

In John 12:32 Jesus said, **“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”** Now we see this come to pass with the remarkable words of the centurion.

People saw what had taken place and yet were not moved. They returned home just as they came, lost in their sins. But those who knew Jesus, I can’t imagine the emotions they were feeling. The One they loved so much was gone. Yes, it was a dark day, but remember, Sunday’s coming!

VERSES 50-53

Keep in mind that when the Roman's crucified criminals they were left on their crosses to rot or be eaten by wild animals. That was what they usually did and again, it was a deterrent not to do the crime or else this is what will happen to you!

But keep in mind it was Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was about to begin, and thus, the Jews wanted no such horror displayed during the Passover season, and Romans were known to grant the corpses to friends or relatives for proper burial. And we see here that Pilate allowed Joseph to take the body of Jesus down and care for it.

And here is Joseph, who was a follower of Jesus, along with Nicodemus. They were also members of the Sanhedrin. Their allegiance to Jesus was secret but not any longer.

As Joseph and Nicodemus take the body of Jesus down from the cross they bring His body and place it in a new tomb. This tomb was for Joseph and his family but now he freely gave it to bury Jesus in.

Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped the body of Jesus in about 100 pounds of linen and spices for burial, according to John 19:38-42, where we are told, **“After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in**

which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

We will see this as we read on.

VERSES 54-56

Now many assume that it is Friday and the Sabbath day was Saturday, but keep in mind that if it is Thursday, Passover, then on Friday would start the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a holy day, a Sabbath. Thus, the women would not have gone to the tomb on Friday, being the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Saturday, because that too was a holy day, it was the Sabbath, but on Sunday as the Scriptures tell us.

Also notice that the women saw where the body of Jesus was buried, so to say the women went to the wrong tomb would be ridiculous, but that is what some say trying to deny the resurrection. They went to the wrong tomb, which is why the tomb was empty! The Scriptures don't support that.

This chapter ends on a dark note, but don't lose hope, Sunday is coming, as I have said. Jesus is only going to use the tomb for three days for He will rise from the dead as the Scriptures tell us.

Let me leave you this evening with these words from Paul the Apostle when he said regarding the resurrection, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came**

the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” I Corinthians 15:20-22.

Are you in Adam or in Christ? That is the most important question. You see, in Adam, you have his sin nature and thus, you will die in your sins. But in Christ, you have the righteousness of Christ imputed into your life by faith and you are alive! I pray that if you are in Adam you repent of your sins and ask Jesus Christ, Almighty God, to be Lord and Savior of your life!

CALVARY

The place of the skull. As you can see the face in the rock!



Up above from the bus stop is Calvary, where they crucified the criminals and Jesus was crucified!



THE

GARDEN



TOMB

