

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE GRAVE

WALKING WITH JESUS
TO THE CROSS

WRITTEN BY
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Introduction

I have taught and preached the events surrounding our Lord's death many times over more than three decades. Every time I study and teach it, I find deeper truths about those events, my Lord, and myself. The truths recorded in the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life are profound and need a whole life of dedication to knowing them and living in response to them. It is standing before the cross of Jesus that a Christian understands love, faith, and sacrifice. Such knowledge is the very heart of a Christian's existence.

We can know so many things in this life, yet the events of Golgotha are the greatest knowledge in this world. With the eye of faith we can see Jesus on the cross between two criminals and the sun turning dark. We can hear the seven statements that Jesus spoke upon the cross and His fervent prayers in Gethsemane. Strong faith requires that we spend time at the cross of Jesus and allow the excruciating agony, undeserved love, total obedience, and complete sacrifice to be engraved into our hearts. We must feel His pain in the garden, the travesty of justice that He endured, and His tortuous death for our sins.

These lessons are not intended to be a simple recitation of the events. It is an effort to know God's infinite love, to see mankind's greatest failure, to find our own hands driving the nails, and to see our faces among those who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

The powerful and life-changing truth of the cross is that each of us are personally responsible for His death because we foolishly chose to sin. May we spend much time walking with our Lord Jesus through that dark night and terrible day as the Lamb provided by God did what was needed to take away the sins of the world — to take away my sins.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

Nathan Adams

Dedication

To Jeanne, Jonah, and Miranda —
whose support and love strengthens me in my life and
my service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

I thank God daily for each of you.

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Lesson One

The Garden of Despair

Textual Harmony

Matthew Mark Luke John Words Added **Jesus' Words**

ARRIVAL AT GETHSEMANE

As was His custom He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, to the Mount of Olives; Jesus came them with to a place where there was a garden called Gethsemane, in which He entered with His disciples. When He arrived, He said to them, **Sit here while I go over there and pray. Pray that you may not enter into temptation.** And He took with Him Peter and James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved, very distressed, and troubled. Then He said to them, **My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.**

THE PRAYING OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN

And He withdrew a little beyond them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down, fell to the ground on His face, and began to pray. And He was saying, **Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; My Father, if You are willing, if it is possible, remove this cup from Me; let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Your will be done.**

And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, **So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

He went away again a second time and prayed the same words, saying, **My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.**

And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

When Jesus rose from prayer, He came to the disciples the third time and found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, **Are you still sleeping and resting? Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation. It is enough; behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!**

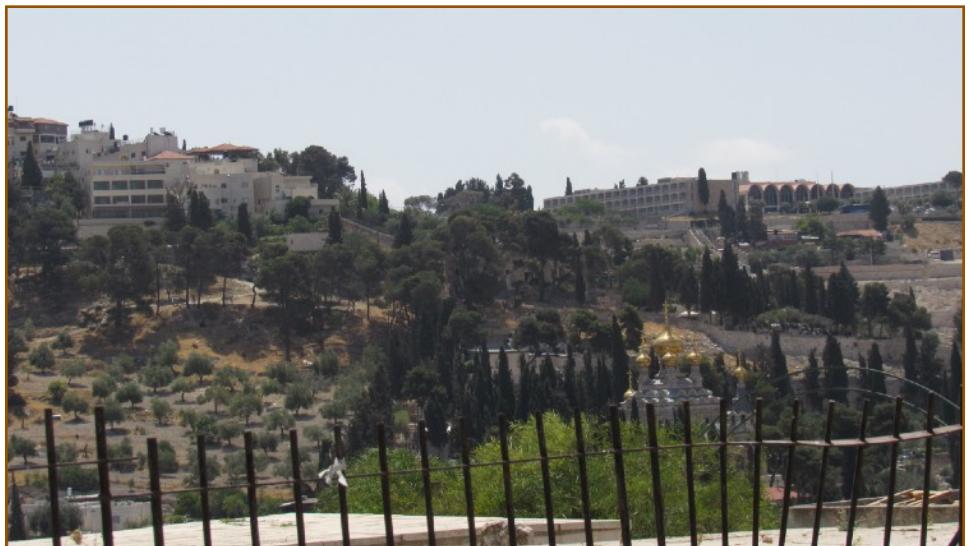
The Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus began His walk from the upper room to the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane. This garden was located on the Mount of Olives. The name 'Gethsemane' is only found in **Matthew 26:36** and **Mark 14:32**. The word means 'oil press'. Matthew uses the word 'place' which indicates that Gethsemane was a location that was enclosed. It may have been an area of land privately owned that contained presses to extract oil from the olives picked on the mount.

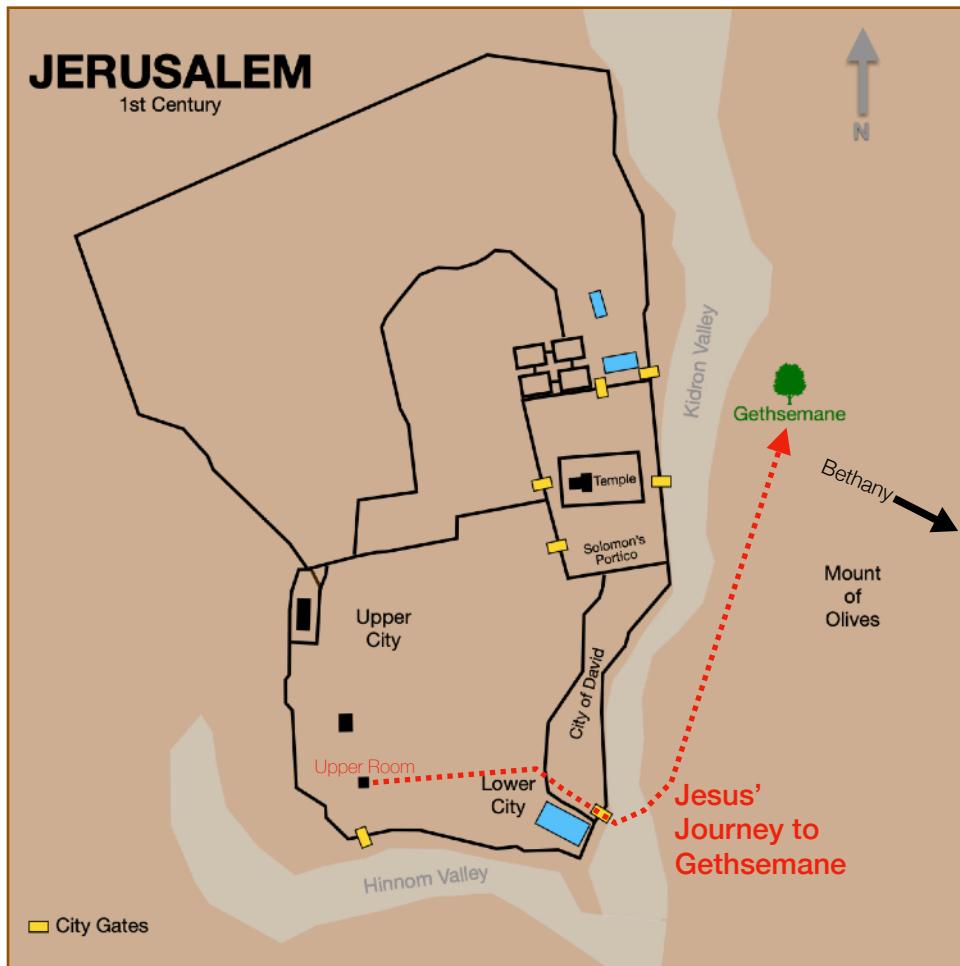


Olive trees on the Mount of Olives

Luke 22:39 says that it was Jesus' custom to spend time on the mount and probably in Gethsemane. The custom may have developed as Jesus traveled back and forth from Bethany to Jerusalem. Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The gospel accounts indicate that Jesus would stay in Bethany and travel into Jerusalem which was about two miles over the Mount of Olives (**Matthew 21:7; Mark 11:11; John 11:18**). Gethsemane was probably a quiet halfway point between those two locations. It would also seem that Jesus and his disciples had permission to enter into this enclosed area. Jesus and the disciples arrived in the dark of night as Jesus prepared to drink the cup that the Father would give Him.



Mount of Olives from the walls of Jerusalem



Pray That You Do Not Fall Into Temptation

Jesus entered Gethsemane with the eleven disciples (Judas had left earlier to betray Jesus). He told them to *“Sit here while I go over there to pray. Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*

He had already told these men in the upper room that they were going to abandon and even deny Him in the night to come. They refused to believe His words and argued that they would not ever do such a thing. While Jesus knew what was to come, He did all that He could to prepare and strengthen these men to overcome the temptations that lay ahead. Even in this most difficult of moments for Jesus, He still thought of others through His pain and distress.

Likewise for us, Jesus calls for us to prepare for the difficulties that are in our future by praying now for strength and deliverance from the temptations that would cause us also to abandon and deny Him as the disciples did that dark night.

Deeply Grieved to the Point of Death

After telling the disciples to pray, Jesus took Peter, James, and John a little further into the garden. It seems that Jesus needed those three men for strength and comfort in this difficult hour. In our lives, we often gather with those closest to us in times of difficulty and emotional pain. Jesus was doing the same in that moment.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was very distressed and troubled. He told the three, "*My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.*" There is an aspect of this moment for Jesus that we cannot fully fathom and I do not believe that I can adequately explain. No one has known the realities of their death like Jesus knew His. He understood with crystal clarity what would happen to Him in a matter of just hours. The stress and anxiety of that knowledge seemed to be more than He could bear in this moment, it was "*to the point of death.*" We find stress in the very idea of our future death in general. That stress would be greatly multiplied if we understood that our death would be so terrible that the word 'excruciating' would be derived from the pain and cruelty associated with it. That is what Jesus knew in His moment of distress.

Understanding all these things are compounded by the duality of Jesus' nature. Jesus' battle is found as His human nature fights against enduring such a terrible death. At the same time, the divine nature of Jesus is driven by an infinite love to save mankind from their sins. This battle going on within Him is beyond our comprehension, but we are able to see the intensity in the events and the prayers of Gethsemane.

Jesus asked His three close friends to keep watch over Him as He fought this battle. Sometimes in our lives, we just need to have people nearby. It has nothing to do with what they say, it is their presence that gives strength and encouragement. Their presence is visible and tangible evidence that we are not alone. Peter, James, and John were called by Jesus to be near Him in His moment of grief.

Not My Will

Jesus, for the third time, went deeper into Gethsemane as He left Peter, James, and John to go a short "stone's throw" away. Knowing that the help that His disciples could provide was less than needed, He turned to the only One who could truly help, His Father.

In His distress, Jesus fell to His knees and then to His face and began to pray. Jesus acknowledged that all things were possible for God. It is interesting that at the end of His life, there is a reminder of what Gabriel told Mary just before His physical life began, "*Nothing will be impossible with God*" (**Luke 1:37**). The events of Jesus' death were never outside the control of God. He continued to ask if it were possible for the Father to remove "*this cup*" from Him. That cup was the cup of suffering and death on the cross. The stress of this prayer is seen by the description of the sweat coming off of Him being like blood. **Hebrews 5:7** describes these intense prayers as "*loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death.*"

While He cried out loudly to be saved from the cross, He ultimately set self aside and submitted to the will of His Father (**John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38**). The foundation of all obedience lies within Jesus' solution to the conflict within His heart. Quite simply, "Not as I will, but Your will be done." That is the battle that all of us struggle with in our spiritual lives. All sin is born of my lust, in other words, what I want or my will (**James 1:14-15**).

The true tests of my faith are when my will comes into conflict with God's will in my garden of choice. It may be something that is incredibly difficult, yet the One through whom we pray understands that because of His night praying in the garden.

Hebrews 5:8 states, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." Jesus did not learn how to obey that night, instead, He learned the full price of

obedience. We too, in our moments of conflict may have to suffer the price of obedience to God. It may hard. We may find ourselves "grieved to the point of death." Like Jesus though, we must always submit to God's will over ours and drink whatever cup of obedience that is set before us.

We know that one of the prayers lasted at least an hour, yet we have only a small fragment of all that Jesus cried out to the Father on that dark night in the garden. His three prayers and their conclusion to do the Father's will was the mental decision by Jesus that will be carried out in obedience from the garden to the grave.

What are the things in your life that create battles between your will and God's will?

The Failure of Sleeping Friends

After fervently praying for an hour, Jesus returned to His three close friends that He had brought to watch with Him. They were there to support and strengthen Him in His time of need. A short time before, all of these men proclaimed how they would be there for the Lord, but now, when He needed them the most, they are sleeping.

The first time that Jesus found Peter, James, and John sleeping, He asked Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" As self-assured as Peter had been in the upper room and during the journey to Gethsemane, he now failed the Lord for the first time during this dark night. Instead of praying to be delivered from the temptations of this night, he is already giving into them. Peter is not alone in this failure.

I suppose some could try to make excuses for the disciples. They have been going nonstop for probably close to eighteen hours. The text tells us that they were "sleeping from sorrow." The past several hours had been exceptionally stressful and had caused them sorrow in their hearts (**John 14:1**) which would have added to the fatigue that these men were experiencing. The reality of their struggles may have been why Jesus stated, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Peter and the other disciples are not asleep from a lack of care for Jesus, they are just failing to be

strong enough to be useful in the moment. We will know these types of moments in our lives. As much as we may love someone, there will be times due to our own weaknesses that we will fail them in their times of need. The disciples' failure is clear and inexcusable, but it is something to which most of us can relate. We should consider how many times that Jesus has needed us for His work, yet we failed Him because we were asleep spiritually in worldliness or selfishness? We are no better than the sleeping disciples in those moments.

Three times Jesus finds the disciples sleeping as He returns from praying. The sleeping disciples are just the first instance of how men failed our Lord during His last hours. While men failed Jesus as He prayed and struggled in the garden, God never did. God strengthened Jesus by sending an angel. In this, God did what men had failed to do. It is clear to see that while men fail us, God never will.

No More Time

After finding the disciples asleep for the third time, Jesus told them, "*It is enough; behold the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!*" Throughout this night, Jesus had tried to prepare the disciples for what was coming. He had told them that one of them would betray Him, He would be taken by the Jews, they would all abandon Him, and Peter would deny Him. There was no more time to prepare them for that tragic night. There was no more time to pray to overcome the temptations that now lie just moments from their lives. The disciples have refused to accept all of Jesus warnings about the events of this night. They slept when they should have prayed. Now, there was no more time.

Each of us need to make the most of every moment to grow spiritually and pray that we might overcome the temptations that may lay in our future. Jesus has warned us that the world will hate and oppose us, that hate and opposition can equate to an incredibly difficult temptation in our lives — just like the disciples that night with Jesus. If we do not prepare, we are bound to fail like them. Do not wait until there is no more time and the temptations are upon you to seek the strength needed to overcome. It will too often, be too late.

Study & Reflection

1. How do you feel when you consider the emotional pain that Jesus clearly stated that He was in as He entered Gethsemane?

2. Study to learn what "Abba, Father..." meant as Jesus began to pray. How does this understanding help you with your relationship to the Father?
3. List times that you have had cups of difficulty placed before you and how you dealt with those times. Do you believe that you could have done better?
4. List times that your will has been in direct conflict with God's will and what you chose in those moments. How could you improve your choices in the future?
5. Have you ever been asleep when the Lord needed you? What did you learn?
6. How are you preparing your life today for the trials of tomorrow?

Lesson Two

Betrayals & Denials

Textual Harmony

Matthew Mark Luke John Words Added **Jesus' Words**

JUDAS' BETRAYAL

Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard."

When Jesus rose from prayer, He came to the disciples the *third time* and found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, **"Are you still sleeping and resting? Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation. It is enough; behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"**

Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people. Judas was preceding them.

After coming, he approached Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, **"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"** Immediately Judas said, "Hail, Rabbi!" And Jesus said to him, **"Friend, do what you have come for,"** and Judas kissed Him.

So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, **"Whom do you seek?"** They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, **"I am He."** And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, **"I am He,"** they drew back and fell to the ground. Therefore He again asked them, **"Whom do you seek?"** And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, **"I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way."** to fulfill the word which He spoke, **"Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."**

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.

So Jesus said to Peter, **"Stop! No more of this. Put the sword into the sheath; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My**

disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way? The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him. A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

PETER'S DENIALS

Takes place during the trial of Jesus at the house of Caiaphas (Lesson 3).

Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Now Peter, warming himself for it was cold, was sitting with the slaves and officers outside after they had kindled a charcoal fire in the middle of the courtyard to see the outcome.

Then the slave-girl of the high priest who kept the door seeing Peter warming himself, looking intently at him, came to Peter and said, "You too were with Jesus the Nazarene, the Galilean. This man was with Him too. You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not. I do not know nor understand what you are talking about. Woman, I do not know Him." And Peter went out onto the porch.

The servant-girl saw Peter, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them! This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "You are one of them too! Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" But Peter denied it with an oath, "Man, I am not! I do not know the man." Immediately a rooster crowed.

After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist to Peter, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too. Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." Then Peter began to curse and swear, "Man, I do not know this man you are talking about. I do not know the man!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed a second time.

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, **“Before a rooster crows twice today, you will deny Me three times.”** And he went out and wept bitterly.

The Betrayer Comes

Of all the people that have lived in this world, Judas may be the most to be pitied. Jesus said of Judas in the upper room, *“...but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be good for that man if he had not been born”* (**Mark 14:21**). Peter makes clear that there are degrees to the punishment of hell in **2 Peter 2:20-22**. I do not pretend to understand the whole of what that may mean.

However, it is possible that regret is one aspect of this greater suffering that will come upon some more than others. Peter writes of Christians who turn back to the ways of sin and how it would have been better for them to have never known Christ. Imagine being lost and knowing that at one time you had salvation and you threw it away for nothing of real value. That would certainly create an eternal regret from which there would be no coping. If just being a Christian and turning away would make hell worse, how much more would being one of the special twelve men that spent most every day with Jesus for around three years? To remember His words as He warned and tried to turn Judas away from the path that he had chosen to walk. Judas' regret in this brief temporal life was so great that he hung himself. Try to imagine the eternal regret that he has to feel in torment after having seen the miracles and heard the teachings of Jesus firsthand like few others. For all eternity, Judas threw it away for a few pieces of silver.

As Jesus confronted His sleeping friends, He could probably see the lights of the large armed mob approaching through the dark among the olive trees on the mount. He told His sleepy friends that it was time for Him to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. I can only imagine the hurt in Jesus' heart as He considered the man leading the mob. It hurts to have friends fail you because of weakness, it is soul crushing to have friends do something that will bring terrible hurt to your life. Throughout this night, Jesus has experienced progressively greater heartache. The disappointment of the disciples arguing about who was the greatest. The argumentativeness of them as Jesus told them of their upcoming failures. His frustration with how they still do not seem to understand His purpose in this world. Now, they have failed to prepare in prayer or provide strength to Him. When Judas left the upper room, John tells us that it was night as if this was indicative of the dark evil in his heart (**John 13:30**). From out of that dark night, Judas arrived in the garden bringing more hurt and pain to Jesus.

Judas was leading a mob of hundreds of temple guards and Roman soldiers. As he approached, the Lord spoke first to him. Jesus asked, *“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”* Judas had arranged with the soldiers to identify Jesus with a kiss. Now Jesus called Judas out, giving him another chance to see that Jesus had divine knowledge of his heart. This is the same knowledge Jesus had

demonstrated in the upper room earlier before Judas left. I am always amazed at how Jesus continued to try and stop Judas from making these choices, yet it was to no avail.

Judas called out to Jesus saying, "Hail, Rabbi!" He was so hardened in his evil intent that Judas did not seem to even acknowledge Jesus' divine knowledge, instead he presented a false devotion to Jesus as a disciple. He seemed to have no shame in the fact that Jesus saw through his duplicity. Jesus' response is one that was kind as Jesus calls Judas, "*Friend.*" Judas' actions did not change the love that Jesus had for him nor the relationship that Jesus wanted to have with him. This should be a source of great comfort and assurance to us in the times that we fail and maybe even betray Him with our choices — He still looks at us and says, "*Friend.*"

While Jesus called Judas "friend," He still saw in his heart the determination to betray Him. Jesus told Him, "*Do what you have come for...*" Judas followed through on His evil choice and kissed Him.

Whom Do You Seek?

With the kiss, Jesus was betrayed to the large armed mob that had come to take Him into custody. While our first instinct in such a situation would be to move away from the mob, Jesus moved toward it.

I have often thought about the size of this mob. It was a vastly oversized group to take twelve people at most into custody. **John 18:3** stated that Judas received the Roman cohort. At that time, a standard Roman Cohort was a unit of 600 Roman Legionnaires. These were the most skilled and deadly soldiers in the world. It was unlikely that the entire Cohort was used. When Jesus was scourged, the Bible says that the whole Roman Cohort was called together (**Matthew 27:27; Mark 15:16**). John does not state the whole Cohort was used, but a hundred soldiers under the command of a Centurion would have been very formidable to go up against even hundreds of armed men. In addition to these Roman soldiers were Jewish officers under the commander of the Jews. This commander of the Jews was in command of a thousand armed men and their unit officers. Again, probably not the whole one thousand men, but a large enough number to merit the commander being present. I think it is reasonable to assume that there was possibly four to six hundred violent men in this group sent to take the Prince of peace. Considering that possibility causes one to ask, what could the Jews have told the Romans about Jesus to cause the release of such a large armed force? Whatever the Jews said to the soldiers, it seems to be reflected in the reaction of these armed men as Jesus approached them.

As Jesus approached the mob, He asked, "*Whom do you seek?*" They answered, "*Jesus the Nazarene.*" Jesus stated, "*I am He.*" These soldiers were startled at being so close to the target they had come to apprehend. They rapidly backed up falling over each other in the darkness with surprise. Clearly these trained soldiers believed they were facing a formidable and dangerous foe.

Jesus asked who they were seeking again. They responded again, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus identified that He was who they were looking for and then asked that they allow His disciples to leave. This fulfilled His prayer in the upper room (**John 17:12**) that He had not lost any of His disciples. In this moment of betrayal, Jesus offered Himself to save His followers. A foreshadowing of what was to come.

At that time, the soldiers came and seized Jesus.

Courage and Fear

Judas was not the only one to fail Jesus on that dark night. Seeing Jesus be taken by the soldiers, Peter sprung into action in a vain effort to defend Him. He drew a sword and swung it at one of those men taking Jesus. The man was a slave of the High Priest, his name was Malchus. Peter sought a killing blow but missed and only sliced off the slave's ear. Jesus immediately rebuked Peter's behavior. Peter even having one of the two swords was a result of the disciples' refusal to accept what Jesus taught in **Luke 22:36-38**. Jesus made clear that Peter's actions were not the actions of the kingdom of heaven. Our weapons in the kingdom of heaven are never to be swords or physical, but instead they are the use of the knowledge of God to overcome all enemies of God (**2 Corinthians 10:3-6**). Jesus corrected Peter's rash act by miraculously healing Malchus of his injury.

Jesus explained why we do not need physical weapons — we have Him and the Father. He asked, "*Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*" Even with such a large armed force in place to take Jesus into custody, Jesus made clear that they had no power at all. A few hours later, Jesus would even tell Pilate who had the whole of Roman might at his disposal, "*You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above...*" We often sing the song, "He Could Have Called 10,000 Angels," but that song is not accurate. According to Jesus, He could have called for sixty thousand angels. A standard legion was five thousand soldiers. Jesus had the power to stop this, such was always the case. He would not die until He laid down His life voluntarily. Jesus was not looking for a way out of this situation, He had just decided in prayer to drink this cup given to Him by His Father.

We cannot deny Peter's courage and devotion to Jesus when we see him charging into this large number of soldiers with his single sword. It was the rashness of his actions and his continued inability to understand the nature of Jesus' kingdom that set up his later failure of denying Jesus. This action lined up with his thought process of a literal physical kingdom, Jesus' rebuke left him and his courage with no clear understanding of what to do next. Faith is impacted when our belief system is refuted. Courage is derived from faith or trust. Peter's confusion of faith at that time was going to result in a collapse of his courage.

After Jesus' rebuke, Peter and the other disciples run into the night abandoning Jesus and fulfilling the prophecy, "*I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.*" (**Matthew 26:28; Zechariah 13:7**) Mark tells us of one

other person who was in the garden during these events that was not one of the twelve disciples or Jesus. It was a young man who was in his linen night clothes. One of the soldiers grabbed him by his clothing, but he pulled free of it and fled naked into the night. Most likely Mark was speaking of himself personally, letting his readers know that he personally witnessed some of the things that he wrote about.

After the disciples ran, Jesus was taken away to be tried and mistreated. We will discuss those events in the next lesson. We will now consider what took place with Peter over the course of this night. His actions are happening parallel to what is happening to Jesus in the Jewish trials.

At some point after fleeing from Jesus in the garden, Peter and John came together and followed Jesus to the house of the High Priest Caiaphas. John knew the High Priest and entered into the courtyard with Peter. While John went into the house, Peter remained outside.

It is clear that at least some of the mob that took Jesus remained in that courtyard with Peter. Their presence there would have certainly been a factor in Peter's decision process that night.

Imagine being in a courtyard full of armed people who only a short time earlier were trying to take you into their custody. That situation would create in all of us a fear for our lives. I do not believe that Peter was any different, any less subject to the frailties that fear brings to all of our lives.

While Jesus was suffering abuse and an unjust trial inside the house of Caiaphas, Peter was being sifted like wheat by the devil (**Luke 22:31**). Earlier that night, Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail in this moment, but it did. This failure by Peter began by a fire in the courtyard. A servant girl who served at the door of the house saw Peter and accused him of being a Galilean and a disciple of Jesus. Peter denied that he was a disciple and stated that he did not even know Jesus. I wonder if Peter had any thought about Jesus' words earlier in the night concerning these denials at the moment.

Peter left the area of the fire and went out onto a porch. Even there, the slave girl continued her accusations. Another slave who was a relative of Malchus that Peter attacked with a sword, saw Peter and also accused him of being with Jesus in the garden. Peter denied knowing or being with Jesus with an oath. At that very same moment, a rooster crowed. If Peter did not go back to the earlier words of Jesus in the first denial, surely the crowing rooster brought that memory to the forefront of his



Courtyard at Caiaphas' House Where Peter Denied Jesus - The Steps in the Left Middle are from the 1st Century.

mind. If the rooster reminded him of Jesus' words, it still was not enough to turn Peter back from this course of choosing to deny Jesus.

For about an hour, Peter seemed to avoid any other confrontations in that courtyard. Inevitably, as the mistreatment and abuse of Jesus within the house came to a conclusion, another man began to accuse Peter of being a disciple of Jesus. Peter cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus. As the words were coming out of his mouth, the rooster crowed a second time.

The Face of Jesus

Peter's third denial seemed to have happened as the Jews were transporting Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the Sanhedrin chambers where they would have the "official" trial. As Peter spoke those terrible words of denial, Jesus looked at him from somewhere nearby. Jesus and one of His closest disciples locked eyes for the last recorded time in Jesus' life.

Peter had seen the eyes of Jesus many times. He had seen many things in the Lord's eyes. He had seen friendship in those eyes as Jesus called him from his nets to *"Follow Him."* (**Matthew 4:19**) He had seen pride as Jesus granted his request to step onto water of the storm-tossed sea and disappointment when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to fear (**Matthew 14:29-31**). Peter had seen approval when he stated emphatically that Jesus was *"the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (**Matthew 16:16**). There was heartbreak in the eyes of Jesus as He watched the crowds walk away and He asked Peter and the other disciples, *"You do not want to go away also, do you?"* (**John 6:67**) Just hours earlier, Peter saw unimaginable pain in those divine eyes as He pleaded with him to watch and pray in the garden. He had looked into the eyes of Jesus so many times, but nothing like the moment that he looked into those eyes as the echo of a rooster's crow reverberated through the streets of Jerusalem.

Sometimes I think about this moment in the courtyard of Caiaphas' house. I wonder what was in the eyes of Jesus in that moment. Some might think that His eyes showed hurt from the denials. Yet, Jesus had known well before that this moment would come. He had already endured the betrayal of Judas. Hurt would have been too much of a selfish feeling for the One who was always thinking of others. More likely, I think that Jesus' eyes were filled with pity for this man. Jesus loved Peter and knew that Peter loved Him with all his heart and the events of this night were going to crush him emotionally. No one wants to see their loved ones suffer, even from their own choices.

Whatever look was in Jesus' eyes, it broke Peter. He left that courtyard and wept bitterly. As hard as that moment was, it most likely laid a foundation for his courage and devotion from that day forward. It is probable, that every time Peter was tempted by the devil to back down or turn away from the task given to him by Jesus, he saw those eyes. The thought of that moment surely reminded him of the failure he never wanted to endure again.

What about us? Do we see the face of Jesus when we deny Him in our lives through disobedience and neglect? When we do see His eyes, do we weep at the hurt we caused and seek to change our lives to please Him? That was what Peter ultimately did and it made all the difference.

Study & Reflection

1. In your personal life, what ways do you watch and pray that you might not fall into temptation?
2. Have you ever betrayed, denied, or abandoned Jesus in your life? What emotion or attitude caused you to fail at those moments? How can you do better in the future?
3. What emotion do you personally think was in the eyes of Jesus when He saw Peter after the third denial? What about His eyes as He looks at your life?

Lesson Three

In the Hands of Sinners

Textual Harmony

Matthew Mark Luke John Words Added **Jesus' Words**

JESUS BEFORE THE JEWISH LEADERS

Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.”

When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?”

Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes were gathered together.

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple of God made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’ ” Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God, the Blessed One?”

And Jesus said, “You have said it yourself; I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to

you? What do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" And they all condemned Him. Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him. They began to spit at Him in His face, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, slap Him, and to say to Him, "Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

And the officers received Him with slaps in the face. And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.

When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber.

Now when early morning came, all the chief priests, scribes, and the elders of the people immediately conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

“Why Do You Question Me?”

Jesus was bound by Judas' mob in Gethsemane. There is no reason to believe that they were gentle as they manhandled Jesus. After all, they believed Him to be some dangerous criminal that required a large armed group to capture. They drug Him out of the garden, across the Kidron Valley, and back into the streets of Jerusalem.

The first place that Jesus was taken was to the house of Annas. In the New Testament, the office of the High Priest had become a political position appointed by the Romans. It was always held by a Sadducee because of their secular mindsets. The Sadducees were less a religious sect and more a political party given to Greek philosophy. That philosophy is what led them to not believe in a resurrection (**Matthew 22:23; Acts 17:32; 1 Corinthians 15:12**). Annas had been the High Priest from 7 A.D. to 15 A.D. He was deposed by the Roman governor. Even though he was removed from office, he still held tremendous influence and power. He was the leader of the Sadducee sect. People are sometimes confused because both Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas are called the High Priest. Caiaphas held the actual office, but Annas held such immense influence that he was still recognized as High Priest by many of the Jews. This may have also been a little bit of rebellion by the Jews against the Romans. They may have simply refused to accept the Roman's choice of Caiaphas as the true High Priest over Annas.

Jesus was brought before Annas. The first question that Annas had for Jesus was about His disciples. It is clear that there was interest in where Jesus' disciples were. While they fled from Gethsemane, the Jews were still searching for them. His question may have also been seeking numbers. It would be important to know what

opposition they may face come sunrise. Jesus referenced this mindset when He told Pilate, *"If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews...."* (**John 18:36**). This earthly kingdom mindset was what all the Jews had concerning the Messiah, it would only make sense that Annas was asking the question because of that mentality.

After his inquiry into the disciples, Annas asked about the teachings of Jesus. This question seemed to be nothing more than some kind of formality. Jesus immediately called out the ridiculous nature of the inquiry by pointing out to Annas, *"I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret"* (**John 18:20**). Jesus then asked the pertinent question, *"Why do you question Me?"* The relevance of the question is in the fact that Annas was seeking to make Jesus testify against Himself. At other times, such testimony was unacceptable when it was not what the Jewish leaders wanted. In **John 8:13** the Pharisees said to Jesus, *"You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true."* The rule for establishing a truth was that it be established by two or three witnesses. Jesus called Annas to this fact by telling him that He had spoken openly in the synagogue. It would be easy to find many more than two or three witnesses to what Jesus taught. Those witnesses would be and should be the answer to Annas' question concerning the teachings of Jesus.

A soldier standing by Jesus realized the obvious rebuke of Annas and he struck Jesus. This is the first recorded physical abuse of Jesus on that last day and the only one to which He verbally responded. Jesus knew the law and responded to this violation of it. He asked, *"If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"* It was illegal to strike a prisoner without established cause. Jesus asked for the cause, but the soldier did not have any based in law. Paul made the same argument before a High Priest for the same reason (**Acts 23:1-3**).

Annas knew that he was accomplishing nothing. The only wrongs exposed in his interrogation were his own and Jesus called him out. He also discovered through Jesus' silence, that he was not going to find out where the disciples were or how many there were. Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas and gathered Sanhedrin so that he could find a way to remove Jesus from the world.

True Prophecy-False Interpretation

Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas. John recorded a very interesting fact about the High Priest Caiaphas in **John 11**. Shortly after the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and the Pharisees met to determine what to do about Jesus and His popularity with the people. **Verses 49-50** recorded Caiaphas telling them, *"You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."* At first glance it seems that Caiaphas was simply agreeing with their concerns about the Romans taking their place of power in **verses 47-48**. However, **verse 51** makes it clear that such would not be an accurate understanding of his words. The Holy Spirit through John makes it clear that Caiaphas' statement was made by divine prophecy. He

was prophesying of the fact that what needed to happen to save the nation was the death of one man, Jesus Christ. **1 Peter 1:11** makes it clear that prophets often did not fully understand the prophecies that they spoke. That is most definitely the case with Caiaphas in this situation.

The greatest impediment in Jesus' ministry was a complete misunderstanding of the Messiah and His role in this world by the vast majority of Jews. They were seeking a physical kingdom and deliverance from Roman oppression. A spiritual kingdom that would provide salvation from our sins was simply something they had not even considered. Even the eleven disciples just before Jesus ascended were still struggling with this idea. Three and half years of Jesus' daily teaching had been unable to eradicate this false idea of the Christ even in His devout followers. This was also at the heart of how Caiaphas and the other Jewish leaders heard this prophecy. They heard it as a call to kill Jesus to save the physical kingdom of Israel and they began to plan for such an action. The prophecy was true, but their interpretation of the prophecy was a false one.

I find it amazing that God used an enemy of the Lord to prophesy about what must happen for the nation to be saved spiritually. One must die.

“Do You Not Answer?”

Jesus was placed in the midst of the Sanhedrin at Caiaphas' house. John was somewhere in the room and Peter was in the courtyard. Today, there are still remnants of this house in the city of Jerusalem. In that house are underground cells where one can still see places where they would tie prisoners' hands to the walls. On that dark night, it is quite possible that Jesus spent time tied to just such a location.

This time at Caiaphas' house has probably been mislabeled by many preachers and teachers. It was not a trial. Instead, this must be seen as nothing more than an effort to determine an accusation that could be sustained in a trial. They wanted an absolute certainty of convicting Him of something that was serious enough to warrant death. The text tells that their efforts were to *“obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death.”* They did not care if the testimony was true or not, they just needed it to sound true and to be able to uphold it before the people.

There is an aspect of this time that I have always found enigmatic. The entire process is fixed for one outcome, yet, somehow the Sanhedrin was struggling to find two or three witnesses that agreed. Even though they were providing the witnesses and the testimony, something was causing a problem. Their witnesses kept



Prisoner wall ties in the remains of Caiaphas' house.

contradicting each other which nullified their testimony. Why was that happening? A logical reason would be that someone was not going along with the plan. Someone within the Sanhedrin was asking questions that exposed the false witnesses. Who could that have been? We know of two men in that number who would have been motivated to expose the truth and help Jesus at the same time. By the end of that very day, these two men would publicly show themselves to be disciples of Jesus by asking for His body and laying Him in a tomb. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were a part of the Sanhedrin. They were in a position to help Jesus even though they were unable to stop what happened. John recorded that Joseph was a secret disciple at this point (**John 19:38**) and that Nicodemus had sought to defend Jesus when the Pharisees wanted to kill Him (**John 7:50-52**). I believe these two men questioned and pointed out inconsistencies in the lies of the false witnesses forcing the Sanhedrin to find others to bear false witness.

Finally, they found two men who said that they had heard Jesus state, "*I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.*" Jesus had said that three years before in **John 2:19**, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" I am sure that Jesus probably made that statement more than once. Luke told us that even in this testimony they were not consistent. We can see some discrepancies in the statement of the false witnesses and what Jesus actually said on that day after He cleansed the temple of God. These discrepancies may be the inconsistencies to which Luke referred.

At some point in the process of seeking to murder the best and only innocent man to live, Caiaphas' patience ran out. He left the place of a judge and took on the role of prosecutor. He interrogated Jesus by asking, "*Do you not answer?*" By asking that question, Caiaphas committed the same wrong as Annas in trying to get Jesus to testify against Himself. The High Priest continued by asking Jesus to answer for what the witnesses were saying. Jesus did not answer because their testimonies were invalid and could not be used in any legal proceeding.

Over three and a half years of opposing the ministry of Jesus, Caiaphas probably knew a lot about what Jesus said and what people said of Him. He used that knowledge to ask the question that Jesus had been careful not to answer in a direct way to most people, especially the Pharisees. Earlier in the last week of Jesus' life, the Pharisees had asked where He received His authority. He trapped them with a question regarding John the Baptist to prevent having to answer (**Matthew 21:23-27**). Jesus had not answered the question because it was not time. The answer was going to cause a very specific response from the Jewish leaders. During His ministry, when Jesus even alluded to His being the Christ, the Son of God, to the Jews, He was met with immediate hostile opposition (**John 8:58-59**). Now was the time for Him to answer the question in no uncertain terms. The divine timetable had established this moment for Him to state the truth that would put Him on the path to Golgotha and a cross.

Caiaphas demanded, "*I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God, the Blessed One?*" This question, if answered, solved all of Caiaphas' problems. If Jesus says that He is not, then that testimony will be given to people in order to discredit Jesus and He ceases to be a threat to

the Jewish leaders. If His answer is yes, then they can accuse Him of blasphemy. To portray Jesus as a fraud seeking to deceive the people would be the highest crime to a religious nation looking for the one true Messiah.

Jesus answered Caiaphas in a very direct manner saying, *"You have said it yourself, I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* Jesus stated what had been clearly and powerfully demonstrated throughout His ministry. The miracles and teachings of Jesus should have made Caiaphas' question unneeded. Unbelief created the question and truth was the final answer. However, since unbelief rejects the truth, Caiaphas rejected Jesus' true answer.

The answer not only confirmed who Jesus was, it also told Caiaphas what was to come. While Caiaphas sat in a place of power and judgment on that night, the day will come when Jesus is the judge and Caiaphas will confess that Jesus is the Christ and Lord, the Son God (**Philippians 2:10-11**). Like every person that has ever lived, Caiaphas will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and answer for the choices he made in his life, especially that very moment before Jesus.

Caiaphas had to be relieved to hear that response by Jesus. He immediately capitalized on the moment by tearing his clothing and saying to the leaders present, *"He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?"* He then asked the assembly, *"What do you think?"* Most everyone in the council had been waiting for that moment and that question. They immediately responded with what had always been the determined end of this proceeding. They answered, *"He deserves death!"*

“Who Hit You?”

With the condemnation now in place, those who held Jesus felt justified in their minds to mistreat the Lord. Once persecutors believe they have a legitimate reason for their acts of persecution, they will increase the abuse. They spat in the face of Jesus and then blindfolded Him so that they could beat Him with their fists. With each hit, they called for Jesus to prophesy who it was that hit Him. The one thing unknown to each of these cruel men was that Jesus knew the name of every man that struck Him. They gave Jesus back to the temple guards who received Him by inflicting more physical abuse upon Him.

Isaiah prophesied about the Christ by saying, *"I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting"* (**Isaiah 50:6**). While the New Testament does not record it, this prophecy tells us that one abuse that Jesus suffered was to have His beard plucked out. To pull out a man's beard was an act of humiliating a man (**2 Samuel 10:4-5**). We must never forget that every strike and mistreatment that took place upon the person of Jesus was allowed by Him. No one could put a finger on Jesus, instead, as Isaiah stated, He gave Himself to these abusive men willingly.

We must always remember the intensity that surely existed within this abuse that Jesus allowed them to inflict upon Him that night. For the Jewish leaders, they have hated Jesus and sought to destroy Him for three years. The slaps to Jesus' face

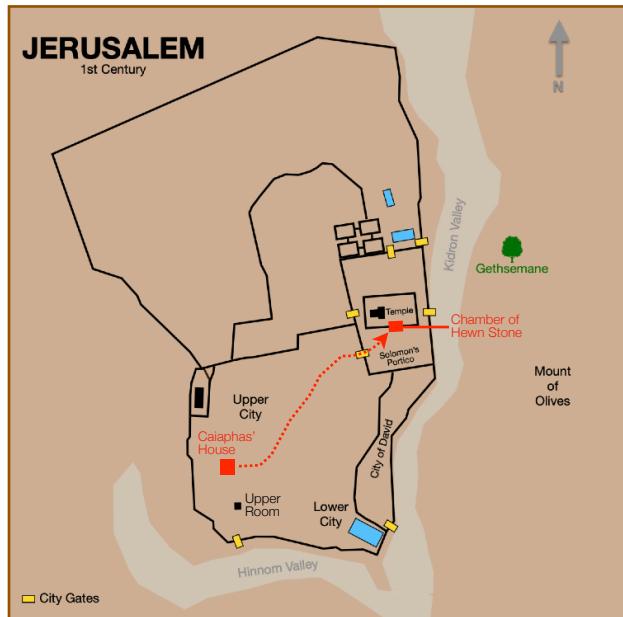
would have had the force of their long hatred and animosity behind them. For the soldiers, they apparently have been told that Jesus is a very dangerous man. Some men find great pleasure in demonstrating that they have power over others, especially those that are considered a threat or dangerous in some way. A long day of physical abuse began in Caiaphas' house and will end on a cross at Golgotha.

As the sun rose on His last day, Jesus left the house of Caiaphas not only condemned, but also bruised and bloody. As He was led out of the house, a rooster crowed somewhere in the distance. Jesus turned and found the eyes of Peter while he was telling everyone how he had never known Jesus. Seeing this probably hurt more than any fist or hand that had hit His face moments before. He watched as Peter, probably wide-eyed with fear and sorrow, ran away weeping.

Making It Official

After the night at Caiaphas' house, they escorted Jesus to the Chamber of Hewn Stone. This room was on the south side of the inner temple wall just off the Priest's Courtyard. It was the chamber where the Sanhedrin council met. Jesus was brought to this location for His official trial. Even though it was to be considered official, the proceeding was still illegal. Trials were to be held publicly and in the day. This location would meet those requirements. However, no verdict was to be rendered the same day as a trial. Those involved with the trial were to adjourn to their homes for two days before giving the verdict. They broke this law by rendering an immediate verdict against Jesus. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread forced them to make a rushed and illegal verdict.

Jesus was brought before the council for this official trial. They already knew what they were going to ask Jesus and what He was going to say. Again, they broke the law by compelling Jesus to testify against Himself. They told Jesus to tell them if He was the Christ. The response that Jesus gave revealed their hard hearts of unbelief. He told them, *"If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer."* This answer had to stir memories of all the times that they could not answer Jesus' questions. Those failures were because they simply refused the truth that Jesus' words and actions demonstrated. A sad truth is that some people are



impossible to save because they have chosen to refuse to see what is real and right. This is at the heart of Jesus' teachings regarding blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in **Matthew 12:31-32**. Jesus was condemning this attitude when He stated from **Isaiah 6:9-10**, "*You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them*" (**Matthew 13:14-15**). These men had seen all that Jesus did for three years, yet they refused to come to Nicodemus' conclusion that "*no one can do these signs...unless God is with him*" (**John 3:2**).

Jesus reminded them again of His authority. Ultimately, what He was allowing them to do would result in His being seated at the right hand of the power of God (**Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; Romans 8:34**). It was time for Jesus to be glorified as He glorified the Father through His ultimate obedient suffering and dying on the cross.

The Sanhedrin did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, they were unaffected by His statement of power or His condemnation of their hard hearts. Instead, they continued to press for the statement that they wanted from Jesus. They asked, "*Are You the Son of God?*"

Jesus answered, "*Yes, I am.*" Those three words set Him on the course to do the Father's will so that He would be the Lamb provided by God to take away the sins of the world (**John 3:16; 1:29**). After hearing Jesus' answer, the Jewish leaders said, "*What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.*" These men who claimed to be the defenders of the Law, now threw it aside by removing any need for witnesses. They would condemn Jesus by His own words that they compelled Him to speak. The Jews had now addressed the technicality of a trial and condemnation. Now, they must go to the only place where they could achieve their goal of killing Jesus.

Study & Reflection

1. Take time to study the life of Christ and note those places that the Jewish confusion concerning the kingdom and the Messiah caused difficulties for Jesus. How do people make the same mistake today?
2. Considering the Pharisees hatred and determination to kill Jesus, does that consideration change how you view those last hours of Jesus' life?

Lesson Four

In Pilate's Hall

Textual Harmony

Matthew Mark Luke John Words Added Jesus' Words

JUDAS' REGRET AND DEATH

Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him bound before Pilate the governor.

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."

And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me."

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

They led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."

So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die. They began to accuse Jesus, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus. Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "It is as you say. Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

He went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in this man." The chief priests and elders began to accuse Him harshly. He did not answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

JESUS RETURNS TO PILATE

Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. The notorious man named Barabbas, a robber, had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection made in the city.

So when the people gathered together, Pilate answered them, saying, “But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”

The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them to release for the people any one prisoner they wanted.

Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he knew that because of envy the chief priests had handed Him over.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.”

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. The governor said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”

So they cried out again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas. Away with this man!”

Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him, called Christ, whom you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify Him!”

Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify Him!” And he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him.” But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.

The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they stripped Him and put a purple robe on Him and a reed in His right hand; and they began to come up to Him and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and to give Him slaps in the face. They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

Pilate came out again and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!”

So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, “Crucify, crucify!” But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!”

Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”

Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify

You?" Jesus answered, "**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.**"

As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them; Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. He delivered Jesus to their will; he handed Him over to be crucified.

The soldiers took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross. Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

As they were coming out, they found and seized a man of Cyrene named Simon (the father of Alexander and Rufus), whom they pressed into service to bear His cross. They placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that 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 when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Betrayed Innocent Blood

At some point on that Friday morning, Judas came face to face with his actions of the night before. It seems that Judas never thought Jesus would be convicted. He certainly never thought that Jesus could be convicted of anything worthy of death. Yet, his actions were the beginning of what would end with Jesus breathing His last breath from a cross at Golgotha. The text tells us that Judas saw that Jesus was condemned and he felt remorse for what he had done.

I think it is easy to relegate Judas to a category of evil men that most of us believe that we could never be. Before we make such an assessment, let us consider Judas. There is no denying that Judas was a man of faith. He was a man who was chosen by our Lord to be a disciple. Jesus did not choose Judas to betray Him, He chose Judas to follow Him. There were many disciples of Jesus beyond those special twelve that Jesus invited to follow Him in a special way. Judas rose to a position above many others to be one of those twelve men that closest to Jesus. We cannot deny that Judas was a person who was close to and loved Jesus.

Jesus loved Judas and did not want him to make the decision that he did. The Bible does not tell us when Judas began to give in to the desire for money that drove him to that terrible end. But we do know that Jesus began warning Judas of his betrayal the day after He fed the 5,000 (**John 6**). That was a little over a year before the day of His death. Jesus said to the twelve after the multitudes went away in unbelief, *“Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”* (**John 6:70**) The use of the present tense “*is a devil*” shows that Judas was already inwardly struggling with the temptation to which he would succumb.

The degree that Judas was fighting this temptation in his heart is not made known in Biblical text. Whatever battle he was fighting within, there seems to be a point where he allowed the temptation in his heart to move into his actions. This moment seems to have happened after the supper in Bethany on the Saturday night before Jesus died (**Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8**). During the supper, Mary anointed Jesus for his death by putting an expensive perfume on His head and feet. While Matthew states that the disciples were indignant with Mary and what they perceived as a waste of money on the perfume. Mark states that they scolded Mary. John is a bit more pointed in his account, stating that it was Judas who spoke about the waste that could been used for helping the poor. While that sounded noble, John makes it clear that Judas did not care about the poor, but was a thief wanting to steal the money. Jesus rebuked what was said and praised Mary for her act of love toward Him. It was after this rebuke that Matthew and Mark both record that Judas went to the chief priests to see what they would be willing to give him to betray Jesus. It was possible that this rebuke was the event that moved Judas from thinking about to actively seeking to betray Jesus.

There is also indication that while he asked the chief priests about betraying Jesus, he was still wrestling with the idea up till that last night in the upper room. As Jesus was confronting him about what he was considering, John tells us that there came a point in time that Satan “*entered into him*” after taking the bread that Jesus gave to Him indicating his betrayal (**John 13:26**). This was not possession, but a decision by Judas to follow the devil’s temptation. Jesus saw this take place within the mind of Judas and gave Judas over to what he had chosen to do by telling him, “*What you do, do quickly.*” Judas left and John tells us that it was dark when he went out. Not just a statement of the time, but a metaphor of the heart that now had given itself to Satan.

As we consider these things in combination with the remorse that Judas felt the next morning, I think we can discern some reasons for this rapid change. John makes it clear that Judas’ motivation was driven by greed (**John 12:6**). Someone

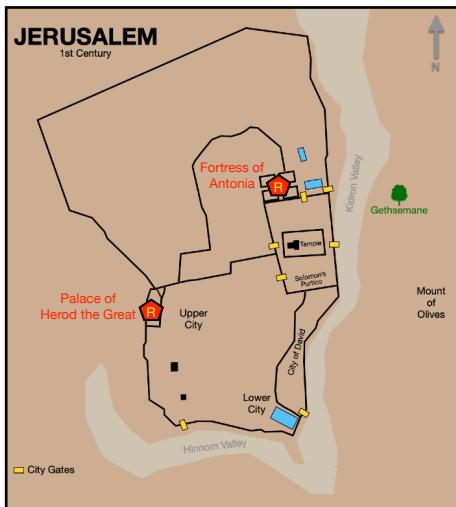
who may have been similar to Judas was the rich young ruler. Like Judas we are jaded in our thinking about the rich young ruler because we know what happened at the end of his time with Jesus. Even though his story ended with a bad decision, he was shown to be an exceptionally spiritual person (**Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23**). The man had faithfully kept the Law of Moses since he was young. Mark tells us that Jesus “*felt a love for him.*” All of us know that Jesus loves everyone, but there are people for which Jesus had a special love. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were spoken of in that same manner (**John 11:5**). This young ruler that was seeking eternal life and Jesus spoke of the reality that he was very close. He lacked “one thing” to be complete. Jesus told him to deal with that one thing and then follow Him. It is important to realize that Jesus called this young ruler to follow Him like He did with Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew. Those men left all they had because Jesus was more important to them. The rich young ruler failed because of his inability to put Jesus before his wealth. What we must realize is that Judas failed in the same way, money became more important to him than following Jesus.

Even with that failure, Judas still loved Jesus. I think that it is entirely possible that Judas believed that Jesus could never actually be convicted of any wrongdoing. He had been with Jesus nearly everyday and he knew that He had not broke the Law of Moses. He may have been fine to not follow Jesus daily anymore. He could make some easy money and Jesus would go on His way teaching and performing miracles as before. In addition, Judas had seen Jesus escape efforts to capture and kill Him many times before. With this knowledge we can understand why he may have not been worried about what would happen to Jesus.

Considering these possibilities helps us understand the extreme reaction by Judas to kill himself after learning of Jesus’ fate. He clearly never believed it would end in that way. We must always remember that sin will always appear to be harmless, but it always ends with death. So it was for Judas.

“Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus was moved from the chamber of the Sanhedrin to the Praetorium early that morning. The Praetorium was both a military and governmental term for the Romans. In this case, it was governmental as it applies to the place where Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea was rendering judgment. There were two possible locations in Jerusalem at that time where the Praetorium may have been located. It was either the Fortress of Antonia on the northwest corner of the temple complex or the palace of Herod the Great on the western edge of Jerusalem. It is not made clear to which location Jesus was taken.



John tells us that Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders did not enter the Praetorium with Jesus because they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover on the upcoming night (**John 18:28**). Since they would not enter, Pilate went out to them and asked, "*What accusation do you bring against this Man?*" Their response was not what they had convicted Him of in their fake trial. The first accusation was of simply being an evildoer. Pilate had no interest in the religious judgments of the Jews and told them to deal with Him themselves. At that point, the Jews showed that what they really wanted was for Pilate to put Jesus to death. They want Jesus to be crucified by the Romans.

It was not about their inability to kill Jesus. They had already tried to do that several times within His ministry. In the book of Acts, the Jews did not bother to take Stephen to the Romans before stoning him to death. This was about protecting themselves from blame. Many people followed Jesus and they were not going to like it if Jesus was killed. Having the Romans do it for them, enabled them to blame the Romans. It was also possible that they thought crucifixion would bring a shame to Jesus that would limit His supporters. Paul would deal with this Jewish mentality that a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block in his writings to Corinth (**1Corinthians 1:23**). The Jewish leaders had to know how hard it would be to promote a man who had been crucified. John tells us that the Jews seeking this from Pilate fulfilled the words of Jesus signifying the kind of death He would die. Jesus stated in His ministry that He would be crucified after being delivered up by the Jews.

Since they knew that Pilate would not crucify Jesus for blasphemy, the charge of which they convicted Him, they began to accuse Jesus of things that would cause a Roman to crucify someone. They stated that Jesus was misleading Israel by telling them to not pay taxes to the Romans and that He proclaimed Himself to be a King. These are the kind of accusations that the Romans would regard seriously.

Pilate decided to question Jesus regarding the accusation of being a king. The taxes accusation probably carries little weight because the very men making the accusation oppose Roman taxes. The Jews had even used not paying Roman taxes in an effort to trap Jesus and hurt His reputation among the people (**Luke 20:20-26**). In contrast to the accusation, Jesus had taught that day they should give to Caesar what belonged to Caesar.

While Pilate probably didn't care about the Jews' accusations, however he was compelled to make sure that there was not a man claiming to be a king that might threaten the rule of Rome. He entered the Praetorium and questioned Jesus concerning these things. Jesus made it clear that while He was a King, His kingdom was no threat to the Roman Empire because it was not of this world. His kingdom's focus was not earthly political power or subjugating people by force, instead Jesus' kingdom would be a rule that people lovingly submitted their lives to through love and appreciation. It was a kingdom of truth within the hearts of men that led them to live righteously.

Pilate considered the idea of a singular absolute truth from God as something that was hard to believe. While he did not necessarily believe in the truth of which Jesus spoke, he was able to understand that Jesus' was not a threat to the Romans.

“I Find No Guilt in This Man”

Like with Judas, we often judge Pilate based on our knowledge of his failure to prevent the death of Jesus. There are at least eleven instances in the gospel accounts of Pilate stating that he found Jesus to be innocent or not worthy of being put to death. When one considers this last day of Jesus' life, they cannot help but see that Pilate was the person who most fought for the life of Jesus. He would fail terribly and in moral weakness allow Jesus to be crucified. However, we must at least recognize the effort that Pilate did make to set Jesus free.

In no way should we consider Pilate a good person. The historical record does not allow such a characterization of the man. He provoked the Jewish people by displaying the Roman ensigns which bore the face of Caesar. This was considered pagan by the Jews. Pilate took funds from the temple to build a 35 mile aqueduct to Jerusalem. During the protests by the Jews, Pilate had his soldiers disguise themselves and infiltrate the crowds. At his command the soldiers pulled out clubs and beat the Jewish protestors, killing many of them. Pilate sent heavily armed soldiers against a Samaritan prophet and his followers at Mount Gerizim. He slaughtered many of those who were present. This brutal action led to Emperor Tiberius replacing Pilate as the Prefect of Judea. **Luke 13:1** tells of a group of Galileans that Pilate killed at the temple, mixing their blood with the blood of their sacrifices. Pilate was a brutal and hard man whose brutality made the emperor remove him from his office. This was the man that would see the innocence of Jesus and seek to free him throughout that early morning trial. That reality shows just how much evil dwelt in the hearts of the Jewish leaders that day.

I find it amazing that of all the people involved, the brutal Roman Prefect is the one who would listen and believe Jesus on that day. He alone advocated for what was right and just before the evil men who claimed to be God's servants. Pilate also had a clarity of understanding about the motivations of the Jewish leaders. He knew that they were jealous of Jesus' popularity among the people (**Matthew 27:18**).

Pilate told them a second time that he did not find any guilt in Jesus. This caused the chief priests to begin to harshly accuse Jesus. It seems now they were trying anything they could to convince Pilate to kill Jesus. Pilate seemed to be shocked that Jesus would not respond to such a wide range of accusations. Pilate would have killed men who made such accusations toward him. He seemed to struggle to fathom the self-control that Jesus demonstrated in that moment. He asked Jesus, “*Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?*” Jesus did not answer, which amazed Pilate all the more.

A Fool’s Court

During the litany of accusations, Pilate heard that Jesus' ministry began in Galilee. With that statement, the keen political mind of Pilate saw a way out of this inconvenient situation. Galilee was not within his area of authority. It belonged to Herod Antipas, the man who had beheaded John the Baptist. The man Jesus called, “*that fox*” (**Luke 13:31-32**). Now Jesus would be sent to stand before that

morally bankrupt murderer. Like Pilate, Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Herod had clearly heard much about Jesus over the past three years. He had wanted to see Jesus and was very excited to finally have that opportunity. In **Luke 9** people said of Jesus that He might be John resurrected. In **verse 9** Herod stated, "*I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?*" After asking that, the text says, "*And he kept trying to see Him.*" This desire had continued up to this point in Jerusalem and now he finally had his opportunity to see Jesus. It must be understood that Herod had no interest in the truth that Jesus taught, he simply wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle or be entertained by something He said.

Jesus was not going to be Herod's entertainment this early morning. There was probably a pronounced difference between Jesus and John the Baptist who Herod knew till he put him to death. John had been bold in his speaking to Herod. Jesus however said nothing, even when Herod questioned him. Standing near Jesus were the chief priests and scribes. They began to accuse Jesus vehemently. Still, Jesus was silent in the face of this farce of justice and onslaught of lies against Him.

It seems that at some point, Herod became bored waiting for Jesus to perform a miracle or say something. Along with his soldiers, Herod treated Jesus with contempt by mocking Him. They dressed Jesus up in a gorgeous robe mocking Him as the king of the Jews. Clearly, Herod did not feel threatened by Jesus or this claim of being a king. The Herod family rarely allowed people to live that they believed were a real threat to their power.

Herod finished his fun with Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate still wearing the royal robe. This back and forth between Herod and Pilate seems to have resolved an issue that was causing friction between the two. For Herod, Pilate provided him an opportunity that he had wanted to see Jesus. For Pilate, Herod agreed with his judgment that Jesus was not a threat and not worthy of death. In helping each other, their strife seemed to ease.

“What Evil Has This Man Done?”

When Jesus returned, Pilate told the Jewish leaders and the people that both he and Herod had determined that Jesus was not guilty of the charges they had brought against Him. Pilate stated that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. However, he was willing to punish Jesus because of the trouble He had caused the Jews and then he would release Him.

This result was not what the Jews sought from Pilate. There was only one end to this that would please the rulers of the Jews, Jesus' death. Pilate understood this and decided to provide what he believed to be a choice that was easily one-sided. There was a tradition that the governor would release a prisoner at the time of the feast. It was very likely that the Romans had put Jewish leaders in prison that they would want released. This action would please the Jews at a time when the largest

number of people would be present in the city and it would decrease the chance of a riot. Pilate took this tradition and offered them a choice between two men. He offered a criminal named Barabbas. He is described as a robber and a person who had murdered people during an insurrection within the city of Jerusalem. That Pilate would even risk such a person being set free in the territory that he governed shows how much he believed that the Jews would not want this man freed either. The other choice was Jesus. He was a man who had healed their sick and had taught like no one they had heard before. He presented this choice and waited for the people's response.

While sitting on the judgment seat, Pilate's wife sent him message begging him to have nothing to do with righteous Jesus. She stated that she had suffered greatly the night before in a dream because of Him. This is a very difficult text. I believe that God will never seek for someone to sin (**James 1:13**). Pilate is included in that fact. Like Jesus trying to direct Judas away from his betrayal, God was seeking to help Pilate make the right decision. God wanted Pilate to choose right, at that point, the choice became Pilate's and the consequences will be his own in judgment.

At that time, the people were being persuaded by the chief priests and the elders to make a unconscionable choice. They told Pilate that they wanted Barabbas to be freed. He asked what they wanted him to do with their King? He was seeking to arouse their national pride and desire for a true king, but to no avail. The people shouted, "Crucify Him!"

Pilate's sense of justice, as lacking as it was, struggled to understand and process this moment. He wanted to release Jesus, but with every effort he was met with a cry to "Crucify Him!, crucify Him!" Pilate asked, "*Why, what evil has this man done? I have found no guilt demanding death, therefore I will punish Him and release Him.*" You can sense the desperation in Pilate to find a path out of this predicament that does not end with Jesus on a cross. Whatever one might say about Pilate, one must give him credit for trying. He will fail through weakness and fear, but he tried more than anyone else present that day to save Jesus. Now Pilate will attempt an extreme action to satisfy the bloodthirsty Jews.

“Hail, King of the Jews!”

Pilate had told the Jews that he would punish and release Jesus. I think many people often struggle with the contradictions in Pilate's statements. He said Jesus was innocent, but then stated that he would punish Him. If innocent, why was Jesus going to be punished? That was the ultimate reality for the whole of this situation. He was innocent of any wrongdoing in any context, yet He would be punished for the sins of others. In Pilate's case though, it seemed that he was speaking of any violation of Roman law that would be worthy of their worst capital punishment. The punishment would be for His conviction by the Sanhedrin of blasphemy. Pilate was acknowledging the Jews' legal process and providing the punishment for it. This was surely done to placate and appear sympathetic to the Jewish institutions. Yet, I believe that Pilate was still trying to free Jesus from the sentence of death through the barbaric punishment of scourging.

Jesus was taken by soldiers from Pilate's presence and scourged. Scourging was something so brutal that it was hard for us to fathom its cruelty. See **Appendix A** for details of Roman scourging. The Bible does not describe the scourging, it just states it happened to Jesus. This beating with a whip would have left Jesus a bloody mess probably on the verge of shock from trauma and blood loss.

After the soldiers scourged Jesus, they then gathered around Him to mock Him. The Bible tells us the whole Roman cohort surrounded Jesus. A cohort was around 600 soldiers. While Jesus is bleeding from deep gashes from His shoulders to the backs of His legs, the soldiers put a purple robe on Him and upon His wounds. They placed a reed in His right hand like a king's scepter. They then began to mock Him by bowing and saying, "*Hail, King of the Jews.*" Then they began to spit and slap Jesus on the face. These are callous and uncaring soldiers who have been hardened by battle. They hate the Jews and Jesus becomes their opportunity to vent that hatred. Their disdain for the royalty that causes suffering in their lives was also present in their spit and each slap that landed on Jesus, the King of the Jews. Imagine, being on the receiving end of the spit and physical abuse of 600 soldiers. That was Jesus on that day.

Never miss the reality of how much suffering Jesus endured before He ever arrived at Golgotha to be crucified. In one night and an early morning, He had already suffered abuse greater than any of us have probably known in the whole of our lives. Why? To save us.

Washing Hands Does Not Make Them Clean

Pilate made his final effort to free Jesus. This effort has come at great expense in pain and humiliation to Jesus. Pilate brought Jesus out before the crowd. The robe had to be soaked in blood. There had to be a trail of blood behind Him and blood surely dripped from His body as He stood before the people. His face bruised and swollen from being struck hundreds of times. He was the image of the suffering servant from **Isaiah 53** in this moment as Pilate called to the people to, "*Behold, the Man!*" Pilate wanted the people to look at Him. He was seeking their pity for Jesus. Jesus condemned the Jews for their blindness to His miracles and teachings. That blindness was never more dark than in that moment as Jesus stood beaten and bloodied before them. They could not have sympathy because they had their eyes shut to the reality of who Jesus was and is as the Son of the living God. Their response to the pitiful sight of Jesus was to cry out again, "*Crucify!, Crucify!*"

Pilate responded with the only real question, "*Why, what evil has He done?*" They did not answer his question. They only shouted louder, "*Crucify Him!*" They told Pilate that their law stated that He must die because He claimed to be the Son of God. When Pilate heard this, he became afraid.

Pilate's fear may have been for a number of reasons. From a strictly political standpoint, he knew how difficult it was to move people that were religiously motivated. While the leaders were hypocrites, many of the people were serious about the Law of Moses. This is why the Romans were lenient regarding religion in the empire. From a personal aspect, Pilate may have been fearful of Jesus being

something more than he originally thought. There was a long string of people on this last day of Jesus' life who would change because they were near Jesus. The Centurion at the cross, the criminal crucified with Jesus, and people at the cross itself. Maybe we should consider Pilate in that group as well. He would not be the last Judean procurator to be fearful when presented with Jesus. Felix wanted Paul to go away because he became fearful from Paul's preaching (**Acts 24:25**). Pilate had been impressed by Jesus and warned by his wife, maybe those things are weighing on his mind in this moment and causing him to fear.

This fear, prompted Pilate to return to the Praetorium and once again question Jesus. He asked Jesus, "*Where are you from?*" Pilate already knew where Jesus grew up and where His ministry took place. That was why he sent Him to Herod. He was seeking to hear if Jesus would claim the divinity that was inherent in being the Son of God. Jesus did not respond to that question. Pilate seemed to feel betrayed that Jesus would not answer him considering how much he probably felt he was doing and even risking to free Jesus. He asked Jesus, "*You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have the authority to crucify You?*" Pilate seemed mystified by the lack of a response from Jesus. He was probably used to people begging and seeking the power he had to help them with their problem. Jesus was unlike those people.

Jesus answered Pilate by addressing the authority that he claimed to have. He told Pilate that he would have no authority over Him unless it had been given to him from above. This answer disabused Pilate of his own power, but also answered the question of where Jesus was from, He was from above. He was connected to that which provided Pilate with his power. Jesus went on to say that others had a greater sin than Pilate for what was happening to Jesus. Because Pilate was brought into this situation by another party, the greater wrong was with the Jews that were seeking to force Pilate's hand. Even with that being true, Pilate still had a choice of right and wrong for which he would be accountable.

The response that Jesus provided to Pilate strengthened his desire and efforts to release Jesus. His efforts are refused by the Jews who feigned allegiance to Caesar. They said to Pilate, "*If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.*" This statement was something that truly could be a problem for him in Rome.

At this point, Pilate seemed to move to end the whole situation. It was still early in the morning, around 6:00 A.M. according to John. Pilate brought Jesus out before the people as he sat down upon the judgment seat. If he was going to crucify Jesus for being a king, the people were going to have to accept that Jesus was just that, the King of the Jews. Pilate proclaimed, "*Behold, your King!*" The people cried out in response, "*Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!*" Pilate again confronted them with the charge by saying, "*Shall I crucify your King?*" The chief priests proclaimed, "*We have no king but Caesar.*" These men had no loyalty to Caesar, they simply said this to place themselves on the right side of Roman law in this situation and place Pilate in a difficult position. Once more, Pilate asked, "*Why, what evil has He done?*" Again, they only cried for His crucifixion.

Pilate realized that he was not going to persuade the Jews concerning Jesus' innocence. In fact, the crowd was becoming more intense to the point of turning into a riotous mob. That was the last thing Pilate needed at this time when the city was filled beyond capacity for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He stood and in a symbolic gesture washed his hands as if to say that he was innocent or clean in this matter. Pilate stated, "*I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves.*" While that may have been the intended metaphor in this action, the reality is that the act in no way cleansed Pilate of his failure to do what was right.

Blood On Us and Our Children

After Pilate attempted to wash his hands of the blood of the innocent Jesus, the people said to him, "*His blood shall be on us and on our children!*" The people ignorantly ask for the guilt of killing the Son of God to be on them and their descendants. When Jesus asked for the Father to forgive these people from the cross, He stated that they did not know what they were doing. Jesus stated in His ministry that these people had their eyes, ears, and hearts closed to the truth of God that would bring healing (**Matthew 13:14-16**). They could only make this kind of horrible choice because of blindness to the truth brought on by ignorance and hardheartedness.

Pilate failed to make the right and just choice. Instead, seeking to satisfy the angry Jews, he released Barabbas to them. He then pronounced that he would grant their demand and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Study & Reflection

1. Like Judas & Peter — Can you identify times in your life where even though you failed Jesus, you still loved Him? How did you deal with those times?
2. After this study, how do you now consider Pilate and his efforts regarding Jesus and the Jews?
3. What accusations by the Jews came because of their failures to understand the true nature of the prophesied Messiah?

Lesson Five

“There They Crucified Him”

Textual Harmony

Matthew Mark Luke John Words Added **Jesus' Words**

THE JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA

The soldiers took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross. Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

As they were coming out, they found and seized a man of Cyrene named Simon (the father of Alexander and Rufus), whom they pressed into service to bear His cross. They placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that 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 when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?’”

THE CRUCIFIXION

And when they came to a place called Golgotha in Hebrew, which means Place of a Skull, they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.

There they crucified Him, and with Him two criminals, one on either side, and Jesus in between. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS.”

It was the third hour when they crucified Him.

Pilate also wrote an inscription of the charge and put it on the cross above His head. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZAREN, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.

So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’ ” Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture:

"THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." Therefore the soldiers did these things and sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.

But Jesus was saying, "**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**"

And people stood by, looking on and those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders were sneering at Him and were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe! He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**" The He said to the disciple, "**Behold your Mother!**" From that hour the disciple took her into his household.

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**"

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**" Which is translated, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "**I am thirsty.**" A jar full of sour wine was standing there; Someone ran filled a sponge of hyssop with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down."

JESUS' DEATH

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. It is finished!”** And Jesus uttered a loud cry, bowed His head, breathed His last, and gave up His spirit.

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and rock were split.

Now the Centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened. **When the Centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he began praising God saying, “Certainly this man was innocent. Truly this man was the Son of God!”**

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

Many women and all His acquaintances who accompanied Him from Galilee were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joseph, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts.

JESUS' BURIAL

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, named Joseph, a prominent member of the Council, and a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action). Who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God and had also become a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.

This man gathered up courage and went to Pilate and asked that he might take away the body of Jesus.

Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, Pilate granted permission and ordered it to be given to him.

Joseph bought a clean linen cloth. Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden Joseph's own new tomb, which had been hewn out of rock, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

Joseph rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on, sitting opposite the grave. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

The Long Walk to Golgotha

The soldiers came and took Jesus from before the judgment seat of Pilate. They took off the robe they had placed on Him after His scourging. It had to be a horrible moment when they removed that robe. Imagine all that blood that had soaked into that robe and began to coagulate. When they took that robe off, the horrific wounds that the scourging caused would have been reopened by the fabric that had become stuck to the wounds by the clotting of His blood. Blood would have flowed freely once again from Jesus as they put His original garments on Him.

They then led Him along with two criminals to be crucified. This fulfilled the prophecy of **Isaiah 53:12** that said He would be “numbered with the transgressors.” While Jesus left the Fortress of Antonia carrying His cross. It clearly was more than He could bear in His severely weakened state. Jesus was not carrying the vertical and horizontal beams of the cross. He was only carrying the horizontal crossbeam upon which His hands would be nailed. That beam would have weighed from 75-100 pounds and would have been strapped to His arms and across His mutilated shoulders and back. The Bible never says that He fell beneath this burden of that beam. He may have simply been going too slow. The soldiers had to put these men on their crosses and remove them before 6:00 that afternoon. From their perspective, there was no time to waste with someone who was going too slow. The soldiers took a man named Simon from the crowd and pressed him into service to carry the cross of Jesus. Simon was a man from Cyrene in North Africa. It would seem that Simon's family was someone known to the early church as Mark recorded that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Simon followed behind Jesus with the cross on his back.

At some point in the journey from the Fortress of Antonia, in the crowd following Jesus were women who were mourning and lamenting what was happening to Jesus. These may have been the same women that were mentioned as watching the crucifixion from a distance. Among these women were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less, and Salome the mother of James and John. I wonder if this group of women may also have included Mary, Martha, and possibly even his own mother?

Jesus was not focused on His suffering alone, He was concerned for these women. He warned them of the days that would come because of the evil hearts in the men that were committing that terrible act of injustice against Him. Jesus warned that if these men would do this when times were good, imagine what they would do when times were bad. You would not want to be there or have children in that environment. Even in this moment, Jesus was concerned about the effects of sin on people's lives and the suffering that it would cause.

Jesus quoted **Hosea 10:8** where the people would want to be hidden from the events that would come upon them. This warning on the road to the cross was most likely about the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in less than forty years. During that same week, Jesus warned of those days with similar language saying, *"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* (**Luke 21:23-24**) The siege of Jerusalem would be the time when the tree was dry that Jesus warned these women about. During that siege, Jews killed each other in mass over the little food and water that was in the city. The point was that evil and sinful hearts in good times will only become worse when times are bad.

Jesus' pain and suffering in this world would be over in about seven hours, these women would continue to know that pain and suffering from the evil of this world after He was gone. Everything that Jesus endured was to bring about the destruction of the sin that has caused all the pain, heartache, and death in this world.

The Place of a Skull

The journey to the cross was now at an end after thirty-three years of moving toward that place. Jesus was brought by the soldiers to Golgotha which John tells us in Hebrew means 'Place of a Skull'. The location of Golgotha is uncertain. It's name and what took place with Jesus makes clear that it was a location where executions took place. Jesus had walked as far as two miles to reach Golgotha. He was most likely suffering from dehydration and shock from the abuse and blood loss of the scourging. If someone today had the same physical conditions as Jesus, they would be in the ICU at the hospital in critical condition. The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh to dull the pain of the crucifixion process. Jesus refused, the only cup that He was going to drink that day was the cup of pain because it was the Father's will that He drink it.

The four most tragic words ever written are “*There they crucified Him.*” In the history of the world, there are few forms of execution that would approach the brutality and pain of the crucifixion (See **Appendix B** for more information on crucifixion). The New Testament does not focus on the pain of the cross. Old Testament prophecies allude to the suffering of the Messiah from Gethsemane to the cross. While there is not a great focus upon it, there is a need for us to understand it. Maybe it was not focused upon because the people of the first century did not need a reminder that crucifixion was a horrible and painful way to die. They witnessed it first-hand on a regular basis. It is important that we remember the terribleness of it all, because it shows the depth of Jesus’ love for each of us. That is the death He was willing to die to save us. What are we willing to endure for Him?

They nailed Jesus’ hands to that crossbeam and lifted Him up on the vertical beam to which they nailed His feet. The hands that had touched and healed the sick and the feet that walked many miles to teach, were now pinned to the cross. This was the end of that work and the journey that began when Jesus came up from waters of the Jordan and heard, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*” The cross was always the end of His ministry, because His ministry was preparing people for the kingdom of heaven that the cross would make a reality. While His hands and feet had been stopped, His words would still change lives in those final six hours.

He was crucified and placed between two criminals so that He would be numbered with the transgressors (**Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:37; Mark 15:28**). The meaning of this prophecy is broader than just these last moments. Jesus was always numbered with the transgressors by being upon this earth as the only innocent man. He was always innocent of the sin that characterized every other person’s choices (**Romans 3:23**). How it must have grieved Jesus to see the sin in every heart that He encountered in this life.

This is Jesus, The King of the Jews

In what seems to be a final act of defiance toward the Jews, Pilate had a sign placed above Jesus’ head that read, “*Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews*”. It was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek so that all would be able to read it. He did this to force the Jews to accept the accusation that they had made and the only one that he would put Jesus to death for, that Jesus was a king in opposition to Caesar. Pilate would not put a man to death for simply making the claim, Jesus had to be an actual King usurping the authority of Caesar to warrant such a death. While the Jews wanted Jesus dead for supposed blasphemy, they did not want to be implicated with Jesus as their King.

The Jewish leaders came to Pilate objecting to the inscription. They wanted Pilate to change it to “*He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’*” Pilate completely dismissed them and their complaint by saying, “*What I have written, I have written.*” The Jews would have to be connected now to the lies that they had told to coerce Pilate to kill Jesus. Pilate knew his hand had been forced and did this to exact his revenge.

Permit It to Happen

As if the cross was not bad enough, the actions of men around Jesus added to the evil of this terrible day. They had stripped Jesus of His clothing before crucifying Him, now the soldiers took His clothing and sought how they might divide it among themselves. The four soldiers each took a piece of His outer garments. There was also a tunic that Jesus had so they chose to sit at the foot of the cross and gambled for it by casting lots. This fulfilled the scripture in **Psalm 22:18**, “*They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*” There is a clear and casual callousness seen in these soldiers. They had crucified many men, it was just another day’s work for them.

Jesus was placed upon the cross to die and still it was not enough for the Jews. The Jewish leaders needed to continue to attempt to prove that Jesus was a fraud who was worthy of death. They did this by mocking and deriding Him. Some who were passing by on the road near the cross were saying, “*Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” These mockers were using one of the accusations made during the trial the night before about destroying and rebuilding the temple. Jesus said this nearly three years earlier in His ministry after cleansing the temple for the first time (**John 2:19**). He was responding to the Jews questioning His authority to clear the temple of the animals and moneychangers. **John 2:21** explains that Jesus was not talking about the temple in Jerusalem, instead He was speaking of His body. At the moment that these people were mocking Jesus, they were mocking the very act of destroying that temple as Jesus died on the cross. It is ironic how in their ignorance they were speaking an ultimate truth about what was happening in that moment. In that same statement, they copied the devil’s temptations of Jesus by saying, “*If you are the Son of God...*” (**Matthew 4:3,6**). Same statement at the beginning and the end of Jesus’ ministry, yet in neither instance did Jesus need to prove what He eternally is as the Son of God. I don’t know who these people were, but clearly they were a part of the plan to destroy that temple so Jesus could build it again in three days.

While not knowing the people passing by on the road, the text shows us a group of people we do know. The chief priests of the Jews, the scribes, and the elders were standing among the people having an open debate with each other for all around to hear. The text says they were mocking Him among themselves. This was a standard way that these men operated. An example would be the Pharisee and the publican prayers. They did not speak directly to the people because that would be beneath them. Instead, they talked within their own circle so all could hear what they wanted them to hear. They were acting baffled by Jesus and were pretending to want to believe if He would just show them something. It was all a theater of lies to move the people’s opinion away from Jesus and away from blaming them for the death of Jesus. They said, “*He saved others, He cannot save Himself.*” Their complete misunderstanding of the Messiah is seen in this statement. In truth, He could not save others while saving Himself from this painful moment on the cross. In the end, all that they said came back to the same basic premise of the devil and

those passing by, "If You are the Son of God?" Again, to the last moment, the devil's effort was based in a fact that he already knew was true. Jesus is the Son of God. These Jewish leaders stated that they would believe if Jesus came down from the cross. These men have seen Jesus perform powerful miracles and know that He raised Lazarus from the dead, yet they refused to believe in the face of those works. What they were asking for at the cross was not even a miracle. There is a reason why the Romans guarded the crosses of those they crucified. A person could remove themselves from a cross through an act of sheer will, it would not require a miracle from God. If these men would not believe in the face of miracles, they would not if Jesus did something others could do without any Divine help. All that these Jewish leaders were doing was deceiving the people regarding Jesus.

At some point the soldiers finished their gambling and began to mock Jesus by calling on Him to save Himself and offering Him sour wine. They may have picked upon this statement from those people on the road and the Jewish leaders. In addition, the criminals on each side of Jesus insulted Him using the same words. Sometimes suffering people find distraction from their situation through hurting another like these two did to Jesus.

In the midst of all this pain, cruelty, abuse, and mockery, Jesus said repeatedly from the cross, "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*" He did not say it to provide forgiveness in the moment because Peter made it clear in the first gospel sermon that they were still guilty of killing Jesus (**Acts 2:23,36**). This was more than just seeking to provide forgiveness in the future, His being on the cross was for that purpose. Jesus repeatedly said this. He actually had no need to beg for forgiveness to be given, nor did He have to ask for it from the Father. It was more than just for some effect, Jesus spoke from the heart and meant what He said. Jesus made it clear that He Himself had the power to forgive men of their sins (**Mark 2:1-13**). If He had wanted all the sins of that day forgiven, He had the power. He exercised that power with one of the criminals that very day.

I believe a deeper understanding of the word "forgive" is important. The word translated "forgive" also has the meaning of permitting something. Eight times in the New Testament it is used this way. When John said that Jesus should baptize him, Jesus responded, "**Permit it at this time...**" (**Matthew 3:15**). That was the same word that Jesus used on the cross that is translated, "forgive." How do we apply that understanding to what Jesus said? I think that Jesus was begging the Father in heaven to permit Him to die. The night before Jesus had asked not to die, but then determined to go through with it. For a holy God to witness profound evil against such pure and undefiled righteousness had to cause God to struggle with allowing such sin to exist. Jesus knew the Father. Jesus knew this was a possibility and was telling the Father to permit it. He was pleading for God not to bring about a holy and just judgment upon these people from God's justified wrath. Jesus said they were ignorant of the gravity of their evil actions. He wanted the Father to be patient and show them mercy till they could learn from the gospel that would be preached in the kingdom of heaven. In Gethsemane it was the Father's will to be done, on the cross, it was the Son's will. His will was always the Father's will and in that we see the oneness of God in a way that is powerful and life-changing. Jesus begged

repeatedly on the cross to die for our sins so that He could save us and bring the joy of man's salvation into existence (**Hebrews 12:2**). I believe understanding this aspect of Jesus' first statement from the cross shows to us the greatest love this world has ever known. The greatest love of the One who would willingly lay down His life for His friends (**John 15:13-14**).

He Was a Good Son

Amid all the mockery and ugliness surrounding this scene, Jesus' mother emerged at the foot of the cross with John, the disciple that He loved. This moment had to take Mary back 33 years in her mind to the first time she brought her Son to Jerusalem and into His Father's house. Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary went to the temple to present Jesus and offer the commanded sacrifice for a first-born son. While there, a man named Simeon who was filled with the Holy Spirit came to them. He had been promised by the Spirit that he would see the Christ before the day of his death. He prophesied to Mary in **Luke 2:34** "*Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even you own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts will be revealed.*" It took 33 years for this prophecy to be fulfilled as she looked up to see her first-born Son hanging on a cross before her. I am certain that she felt the pain of the sword piercing her own soul in that moment. The heartache in this precious woman had to be great and hard to fathom.

It had to be equally hard for Jesus to look down and see His beloved mother looking at Him with tearful eyes and streaked cheeks. Jesus spoke to her and the disciple that He loved saying, "*Woman, behold, your son!*" People have often thought that Jesus was telling His mother to look at Him on the cross. Instead, the son that she was to behold was not Jesus, it was John. He wanted Mary to consider John as her son. He then told John, "*Behold, your mother!*" Jesus wanted John to consider Mary as his mother.

These statements were born from His great love for His family and His mother. The last time that Joseph was seen in scripture was when Jesus was twelve years old in Jerusalem for the Passover. Most believe that at some point in the 18 years between then and the beginning of Jesus' ministry that Joseph most likely had died. If that was the case, Jesus, the first-born son, would have taken the responsibility for supporting and taking care of His mother, brothers and sisters. Jesus knew that He was going to die soon, He made certain that His responsibilities to His mother were given to someone that He trusted. He gave them to the disciple that He loved. While John's physical mother was Salome, Jesus called him to now view Mary in that same way and to make certain that her needs were met.

Jesus taught the need for children to honor their father and mother as was stated in the Ten Commandments (**Matthew 15:4**). He was honoring His mother even in this moment of great pain and suffering. His sufferings had not blinded Him to the responsibilities He had to those that He loved. John took Mary from that heartbreak scene and cared for Her as he would his own mother in his household.

A Change of Heart

We do not know all the crimes committed by the two criminals on the crosses on each side of Jesus. In our translations, Matthew and Mark call them thieves or robbers. The word used is broader than just the idea of stealing stuff. It can include murder, assault, and even insurrection. Simple stealing would not have warranted crucifixion. Luke calls them criminals. He uses a word for one who commits gross misdeeds and serious crimes. John just refers to them as men and does not describe any aspect of them. Clearly these were men who took from people by force, violence, and possibly murder.

These men were casting insults at Jesus after they were placed upon their crosses. After nearly three hours on the cross, only one of these criminals continued to hurl abuse at Jesus. He called on Jesus to prove He was the Christ by saving all three of them. While one of these men had found no reason to change his life, the other had apparently found a change in his heart toward Jesus.

He rebuked the criminal mocking Jesus by saying, *“Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”* Even though much of his life had been given to evil, it seems that at some time in the past he learned about God. It seems to have been more than just what Jewish children learned at synagogue. This was demonstrated when he requested of Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. His request had an understanding about Jesus and His kingdom that seems unique. It also seems to ignore the fact that Jesus was also dying on a cross next to him. The common belief of the day was that the Christ would be a physical leader of the nation of Israel. That being the reality, this man had to understand that it was more than some physical kingdom. Where would he have come to that understanding? The most likely answer would be that he had heard either Jesus or John the Baptist teach of the coming kingdom. That is important for us to remember about this man. He was not a stranger to Jesus and His teachings.

Jesus responded to the man's request by saying, *“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”* This response acknowledges the reality that Jesus was going to physically die along with that forgiven criminal and enter into the spiritual realm of Hades on that very day.

Many people look at Jesus' action toward this man as a reason to not obey the command of the New Testament to be baptized. New Testament baptism enables us to be forgiven (**Acts 2:38**), born again (**John 3:5**), and saved by the working of God in that action of obedience (**1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12**). Some argue that this man was not baptized, but Jesus still forgave and saved him. I would never argue the forgiveness or saving aspect of what took place. Jesus had the divine power to forgive and to save because He is God (**John 1:1; Mark 2:5-12**). What happened at this time does not negate what would be taught as a part of the New Testament of Jesus Christ which His death on that day would bring into affect for the world. There is also an assumption made by people that this man was never

baptized. Yet, his knowledge of the Jesus' coming kingdom indicates that he may have been baptized by John or the disciples at the time when he heard the teaching of the kingdom of heaven which was at hand (**Matthew 3:1-6; 4:17; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2**). There is more evidence for the assumption that he may have been baptized, than for the idea that he was not. Either way, it has no bearing on now because it does not have anything to do with the Law of Christ in the New Testament which we live under. At the time that Jesus forgave that criminal, it was not yet in effect for mankind (**Hebrews 9:15-18**), and therefore is not an applicable comparison.

It is sad that we look at this event and spend most of our time arguing about something that it has little or nothing to do with. Instead, we should be looking at how Jesus has the power to truly change the hearts of people through His death upon the cross. That criminal began the day mocking and abusing Jesus with so many others. Within the first three hours, he saw something in Jesus that changed his heart. He ceased to be an abuser of Jesus and became a defender of our Lord. Jesus had powerful sermons and moments of teaching that impacted multitudes of people. On the cross, the manner in which He died changed this hardened criminal into a disciple in a very short period of time. Jesus stated that if He was lifted up on the cross, He would draw men to Him (**John 12:32**). This criminal was the first of those people that the cross of Jesus drew to Him.

The Time of Darkness

Three hours into the crucifixion of our Lord, the sun went dark across the earth. The word translated "land" carries the meaning of the surface of the earth. Some people have attributed this to an eclipse, but that is not how eclipses work. I have been at the place of two different total eclipses. Their totality will only last a few minutes at which time there is a quiet darkness across the narrow area within the shadow of the moon on the earth. This darkness at Golgotha lasted for three hours and was across the earth. A person of faith should have no problem with this idea, because our faith also calls us to believe that God made the sun stand still for Joshua (**Joshua 10:13**). If God could cause light to continue when it should be dark, He could just as easily make it dark when it should be light.

There was another time that God brought darkness upon the earth. It was in a more limited sense, but I would say that it correlates to this moment with Jesus. God brought darkness upon the nation of Egypt as the ninth plague. I find it interesting that darkness preceded the death of the paschal lambs during the tenth plague. Likewise, Jesus' death upon the cross came at the time of the sacrifice of the paschal lambs at the temple in preparation for the Passover. Jesus was our Paschal Lamb without blemish (**1 Corinthians 5:7**). It is His blood upon our lives that enables us to not suffer spiritual death, but instead to live as God's people. Just as during the exodus, darkness also preceded the death of Jesus. In that same way that death brought the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery, the death of Jesus brings about ours today.

This darkness is indicative of the evil that took place that day against the Holy One of God upon this earth. The only sinless, holy, and righteous person to ever live being brutally killed based on the envy, lies, and covetousness of evil men. For three hours, God would drape this earth in the darkness of mourning. The only Light shining was the Light upon the cross. **John 1:5** states, “*The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*” Jesus had already stated the people doing this to Him did not understand what they were doing. They simply did not comprehend or accept what Jesus came to provide to them. Their ignorance was shown in this darkness as Jesus continued to shine as the one true Light of the world (**John 9:5**). This darkness would remain upon earth from noon till Jesus’ death at 3:00 when the darkness would finally, for all time be defeated by the perfect sacrifice of Light on that dark day.

Forsaken

The Bible does not tell us anything about what took place from noon when the sun became dark to just before 3:00 when Jesus would breathe His last breath. Shortly before His death, Jesus cried out into that darkness that surrounded Him saying, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” When one considers all that had happened to Jesus on that day, this is the one time that scripture says He cried out with a loud voice. What made Jesus finally cry out? Some have tried to imply that God turned away because of the horror and evil of the cross. I think that is to apply human frailty to God. I believe it was something far more fundamental to God, His nature, and the purpose of the cross.

At this point, Jesus has experienced all that we can experience in this life with one notable exception. He had never sinned, therefore He had never known the separation from God that each of us have known through our sins. As the sacrifice for our sins, Jesus took our sins upon Himself that He might take them away through His death. **Isaiah 53:6** prophesied concerning this moment saying, “*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquities of us all to fall on Him.*” I do not pretend to understand even a small portion of the fullness of this statement that Jesus cried into the darkness. Yet, I believe the Bible shares at least a small glimpse of the pain our sins inflict upon a holy God. Paul refers to this moment in **2 Corinthian 5:21** when he states, “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”

John 1:1 states that the Word (Jesus) was with God. This denotes a intimate closeness between Jesus and the Father. Jesus stated that He and the Father were One in His prayer the night before these events (**John 17:11**). We are not capable of understanding the depth of this Oneness that exists within the Godhead. Throughout the eternal ages, there has never been a moment that this Oneness did not exist. Yet in these final moments of Jesus’ life, He experienced the separation that sin brings to a person’s life. **Isaiah 59:2** teaches us that our iniquities separate us from God.

I think that it is quite possible that the most painful moment for Jesus on the cross was this moment that He became sin by taking our sin upon Himself. Our sins created a separation in that moment and Jesus cried out into the darkness.

Do we understand the pain and heartache that God endures because of our sins against Him? **Hebrews 10:29** tells us of how God views willful sin. It is to stomp on Jesus, consider His blood shed as an unholy thing, and to insult the Spirit of grace. Do we feel pain for our sins because of our mistreatment of God? Sins of all types are a brutal assault upon God and they tear us away from the relationship that we were created to have in this life of being God's children.

Unquenched Thirst

As Jesus felt the pain of our sins, He also knew that the pain of our sins was something that had to be accomplished in order to save mankind. The time of His death was at hand and He sought to complete all that He was to do. In order to fulfill all prophecy, Jesus said, "*I am thirsty.*" The prophecy was in **Psalm 69:21**, "*And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*"

While Jesus said this to ultimately fulfill prophecy, I am certain that He was truly thirsty. He had to be severely dehydrated from the excessive blood loss that took place during and after His scourging by the Romans. Neither the Jews or the Romans probably gave Jesus much to drink during the hours of His trials before they crucified Him that morning.

I think that the statement may also carry a spiritual connotation. **Psalm 63:1** has David calling for God in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Jesus spoke of living water that supplies all our spiritual needs. When He was at the Feast of Booths, He cried out, "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'*" (**John 7:37**). Jesus also stated that demons wandered in dry places (**Matthew 12:43-45**). This thirst may well be from His taking on our sins and knowing the lifeless desert that sin makes of our lives. In that place, Jesus thirsted for God as He never had before.

This statement was also one last chance for mankind to show Jesus the love and compassion that He had shown for three and a half years. At first it appears that someone does care by dipping a sponge into a jar of sour wine. The sponge was then placed on the end of a reed so that it could be lifted up to Jesus' mouth. While it appears to be a kind gesture initially, when we look closer we see that it may have been something else entirely.

After Jesus cried out, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,*" some of the people thought that Jesus was calling on Elijah. The people had been looking for Elijah's return as Malachi prophesied (**Malachi 4:5**). After Jesus said that He was thirsty, the person who offered Him the sour wine said, "*Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.*" The person who put the sour wine to the mouth of Jesus was actually trying to provide something that would dull the pain and help Jesus live longer so that Elijah might possibly come. He was more curious than caring. How sad, that as Jesus

gave all of Himself to save men, men could not find enough compassion or kindness to provide for His thirst. Jesus only had one person that He could truly rely upon in this moment.

“Into Your Hands”

Jesus knew death was upon Him and turned to the One in control of life and death. He now concluded this journey of pain and suffering in the same way that He began it in Gethsemane, in prayer to the Father. Man had proven unwilling to help, but Jesus knew that the Father longed to bring Him to the rest and help that Paradise promised to provide. Following the final failure of man, Jesus turned to the One who would never fail Him and committed His life to the hands of the Father to do with as He willed. Jesus had always chosen the Father’s will, now He trusted in Him to do what was right and good.

Each of us as children of God must commit ourselves to trust God in all things especially in death. When Jesus stated, *“Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit,”* He was summarizing the whole of His life upon this earth. It should be the same for us in our lives. Paul was saying the same thing to Timothy when he stated just before His death, *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Though death was near, He trusted and committed Himself to what the Lord would do through his death. Paul simply followed the example of His Lord in that moment.

“It is Finished”

As Jesus committed His Spirit to the Father, He was not looking for salvation from His fate. Instead, He was seeking the completion of His mission upon this earth. It is hard to comprehend the fullness of Jesus’ final statement in this life, *“It is finished.”* Four thousand years of preparation for a plan that was made in eternity before time began. The promise began with God’s response to Satan’s tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God stated, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.”* (Genesis 3:15). Satan began the need for Jesus on the cross by tempting a woman, but it would be through a woman that he would be defeated. Jesus is that seed of woman that Satan wounded on the heel. He wounded Him on the cross. But when it was finished, Jesus destroyed Satan and the sin that He tempted man to commit. Sin was finished. Satan’s work was finished. Jesus crushed Satan’s head when He finished the Father’s will in His life and in His death upon the cross as prophesied by the Holy Spirit.

What was finished that day was sin’s power over mankind. Before Jesus finished His work on that cross, man was inextricably enslaved to sin and its consequence. Jesus provided the means for us to extricated from that hopeless enslavement and

brought home to the Father that loves us. It being finished for Jesus meant that our lives were not finished, but were just beginning in Him through the church that He would build and purchase with His blood.

After these final words, the Bible tells us that Jesus uttered a loud cry, bowed His head, breathed His last, and gave up His spirit.

The Miracles at His Death

After Jesus breathed His last breath for us at 3:00 on that dark Friday afternoon, there were three miracles that occurred.

The first miracle was the return of light to the world. It was not actually mentioned at the time of His death. But earlier, **Luke 23:44** states, *"It was about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour."* Jesus died at that ninth hour (3:00 P.M) and it was then that the light returned. It is so fitting because for the first time since Adam and Eve sinned, there was true light to drive away the darkness of sin. Can you imagine what it was like for the sun to shine bright again after three hours of darkness? The death of Jesus brought the Light of truth and grace to this dark world of sin. In preparing the created earth for physical life, the first thing that God created was light (**Genesis 1:3**). Spiritual life was also brought into being accompanied by light dispelling the darkness of that dark day.

The second miracle was the earthquake that accompanied His death. It was strong enough to break open the stone tombs around the city. Sometimes people think that the dead were raised and walked the streets of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death. However, consider what Matthew says, *"The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many"* (**Matthew 27:52-53**). The earthquake broke open the tombs, but the dead were not raised until Sunday morning at the time of the resurrection of Jesus. It would be hard to deny the resurrection of Jesus when people saw others who had died walking the streets that same morning. The earth shaking was always a prophetic symbol of a change that was happening. That day brought about the greatest change this world has ever known, why would we be surprised that the earth shook and prepared a proof of the resurrection on Sunday morning? I don't know what happened with those resurrected people after they walked the streets on Sunday morning. Maybe they returned to the tombs and died or lived for a time like Lazarus before dying again. The text seems to indicate a sense of brevity regarding their resurrections, but we simply do not know.

The third miracle was the tearing of the veil within the temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. This was a thick fabric that would have made a loud sound as it was torn down from it's sixty foot height. In the moment that this happened, hundreds of thousands of people were gathered around the temple courtyard in order to offer their paschal lambs for the Passover Feast that night. I can only imagine the chaos that broke out amongst that multitude when this happened. The Holy of Holies at one time held the Ark of the Covenant and was

representative of the presence of God. It could only be entered by the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. Yet, in this moment it was opened for all to see. In simple terms, this miracle symbolized the end of the Old Covenant and the ability for all men to come to God by Jesus. The writer of **Hebrews** speaks of this in **6:19-20**, *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."* The priesthood of Levi and Aaron was complete and the true high priesthood of Jesus had begun by the order of Melchizedek (**Genesis 14:17-24**; **Psalm 110:4**). God was no longer hidden behind a veil, but shown clearly to us in Jesus Christ (**John 1:14**; **Hebrews 1:3**).

Those miracles all showed that something incredible happened on that day and they had a true impact upon many of those who witnessed them. Luke tells us that the people who had gathered to view the crucifixion of Jesus were changed over the course of those six hours. After Jesus' death and the manifestation of these miracles, the people who had mocked and jeered at Jesus earlier in the day now returned to their homes beating their chests in sorrow for what had happened there (**Luke 23:48**).

“Truly This Man Was the Son of God”

Standing before the cross was the Roman Centurion that was in charge of the soldiers who crucified Jesus. To have achieved his rank, this man would have been hardened in battle and by the difficult life of a soldier. He had probably seen hundreds of crucifixions and a myriad of behavior by the men on those crosses. Yet, he had never witnessed a day like that one, nor a man on a cross like Jesus.

He looked up at the cross and proclaimed, *“Certainly this man was innocent. Truly this man was the Son of God.”* The Bible states that there were two reasons the Centurion made these statements.

First, he was moved by the manner in which Jesus breathed His last. The appeal to the Father and the statement of being finished. He may have heard one of the many times that Jesus begged, *“Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”* I am certain he had never seen a crucified individual seek forgiveness for him and the people who wanted Him dead. Jesus changed this man by the way He died in those last hours.

Second, he was very frightened by the darkness and the earthquake. The conjunction of these events with what was happening on the cross were things that he believed were connected to Jesus.

There was an amazing the change in that man. He had watched his men callously gamble for Jesus' clothes six hours earlier, he may have even participated. Now, he saw Jesus in a way that demanded respect and reverence. It should be noted that the Bible says that he praised God when he said these things. He most likely did not truly understand God, but he recognized the supernatural when he saw it in the events of that day. He was honest enough to see the reality of the moment.

Blood and Water

Three hours after Jesus died, the Sabbath and the Passover would begin. Both of these events equated to a “high day” (**John 19:31**), which meant that the day carried even greater meaning than normal. The Jewish leaders considered leaving people on crosses as a violation of the Sabbath so they requested that Pilate ensure that they were removed by sundown. Pilate did as they asked and ordered that their legs be broken. Breaking the legs of a person on a cross would accelerate their death. A person could only breathe on the cross by pulling on the nails with their arms and pushing up with their legs. A person’s legs are much stronger than their arms and after the soldiers had broken the legs, they would not be able to keep pulling up on the nails with their arms in order to breathe and would rapidly suffocate.

The Centurion would have given these orders to his men. They broke the legs of the men on each side of Jesus. When they came to Jesus and it was clear that He was dead, one of the soldiers thrust a spear into Jesus’ side. Roman soldiers knew where to strike killing blows. This spear thrust would have pierced to Jesus’ heart. The Bible tells us that blood and water came forth. This fulfilled the Messianic prophecies in **Psalm 34:20** and **Zechariah 12:10** that not a bone would be broken and they would look on Him who they pierced. As our perfect sacrifice, this made Him the true Lamb without blemish physically and His sinless nature made Him without blemish spiritually.

Blood and water are the elements required in salvation. The waters of baptism and the blood of Jesus that is provided by being baptized into His death. Water and blood have been at the core of God’s actions throughout scripture. There was the water of the flood washing away sinful mankind which was a foreshadowing of the salvation found in New Testament baptism (**1 Peter 3:20-22**). The water of deliverance in the Exodus as the children were baptized in the Red Sea (**1 Corinthians 10:2**). Naaman found healing through dipping seven times in the Jordan River (**2 Kings 5**). There are more and a study of these instances reinforce what we are taught in the New Testament. The blood of sacrifices was always required by God. While that blood was unable to truly take away sins, the blood that flowed from Jesus’ side flows in both directions of history from the cross to save God’s people throughout time.

To the Grave

The Jewish leaders actively opposed Jesus throughout His ministry and were central to seeking His death on that day. Yet, there were exceptions among these men. Joseph of Arimathea is described in the Bible as a rich man, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a good and righteous man who was waiting for the kingdom of God. The only problem to this point with Joseph was that he had been a secret disciple because he feared the Jews. So many of the people who believe in Jesus are similar to Joseph in that they hide their faith out of fear of the world. On that day, something changed in Joseph. It also seems that the same process happened in the heart of Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus at night in **John 3**. The Bible

tells us that these men “gathered up courage” and went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. When Pilate had been told that Jesus was dead, he granted their request.

The request these two men made would make them ceremonially unclean for the Passover by touching a dead body. They no longer cared, the care of Jesus’ body superseded those thoughts as they sought to honor the Son of God. Joseph brought a clean fine cloth to wrap the body of Jesus within. Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They wrapped his body and used the myrrh and aloes to prepare it for burial. This would have happened in a side chamber of the tomb. They were in a hurry to finish their task before the Sabbath began, so Joseph laid Jesus in his own tomb, which was in a garden nearby.

As Joseph and Nicodemus carried Jesus’ body and placed it in the tomb, precious women were following and watching. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where Jesus was placed. After knowing where Jesus’ body was, they immediately returned to prepare spices and perfumes so that they could come back and properly care for the body of their beloved Jesus on Sunday morning after the Sabbath was concluded.

In these final moments on that Friday, we have people who had been secret disciples stand up to be counted with Jesus through acts of love and honor. We also see those disciples that had been open and clear about their faith in Jesus for years. Both were assembled before the grave of Jesus to honor Him even in death. Thankfully, they would be able to honor Him again through His resurrection on Sunday morning when those same women would hear at that same grave, “*He is not here, He is risen.*” Thanks be to God for the salvation and eternal hope that we have been given in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Study & Reflection

1. Memorize the seven statements by Jesus on the cross — use them as a means to remember what happened there.
2. Commit what happened at the cross to memory so that you can truly, “Do this in Remembrance of Me” when you partake of the Lord’s Supper.
3. Spend time everyday reflecting on the price that was paid for you by Jesus.

Appendix A

Roman Scourging

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING CAN BE GRAPHIC AND DISTURBING

It is a mentally and emotionally difficult effort to study the scourging of our Lord. Any Christian who loves their Savior will find their heart breaking and tears flowing when they see Jesus being scourged through the eye of faith. The brutality of scourging is something that our minds resist knowing. Yet, knowing what Jesus suffered adds to our knowledge concerning the depth of His love for us.

Scourging preceded Roman execution. The only exceptions were for women, Roman Senators, and soldiers (except for desertion). The soldiers would strip the clothes from the victim. They would then tie them to a post with their arms stretched above their heads or bend them over a beam and tie them to a horizontal post. The purpose of this was to stretch the skin tight across the person's back.

A Roman soldier would take a whip that was composed of a number of leather strips. Embedded in those strips were sharp pieces of bone and metal. These were used to shred the skin with each strike. They would also connect iron balls to the strips to create deep bruising and greater bleeding. This whip was a weapon that caused terrible trauma to the person struck by it.

The soldier would stand to one side and strike the person's back allowing the leather straps of the whip to wrap around the body. It would grip into the skin. The soldier would then pull the whip back ripping the flesh as he pulled it around. After that soldier hit the person from one side, another soldier would do the same on the other side. They would alternate strikes as they worked their way down the person's back and to their thighs. These lashes created deep contusions and cut deep into subcutaneous tissues and muscle. The shredding of tissue would produce long ribbons of flesh hanging from the body. The pain and excessive blood loss from these wounds would set the stage for circulatory shock to occur.

By the time that Jesus was nailed to the cross, He would have already been in a pre-shock state. If Jesus were taken to a hospital today after His scourging, He would be considered to be in serious or critical condition. Many died as a result of the wounds they received during a scourging. When we see the pictures of Jesus on the cross, He is often clean, with very little blood. The reality was that Jesus would have been a bloody mess from the scourging that He endured. Pilate even tried to use Jesus' post-scourging appearance as a means to get the Jews to back down out of pity.

The beating that Jesus endured was described by someone in this way, "They beat Him until His shoulder blades looked like two whitecaps on an ocean of blood." The prophet Isaiah stated, "*by His scourging we are healed*" (**Isaiah 53:5**). May we never forget the brutal beating that Jesus allowed to take place upon Himself. The love of Jesus is powerfully demonstrated in every strike upon Him and His desire to save us is manifested in every drop of blood that fell to the ground that day. When we see His scourging, we see that He deserves the whole of our devotion in life.

Appendix B

Roman Crucifixion

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING CAN BE GRAPHIC AND DISTURBING

The word 'crucifixion' comes from the Latin word 'excruciatus,' which means, 'pain from the crucified one.' It is where we get our word 'excruciating,' which means, 'out of the crucified.' Crucifixion had its beginnings with the Babylonians. **Lamentations 5:12** speaks of those "*hung up by their hands.*" The Greeks spoke of the Persians tying, nailing, and impaling people to crosses or stakes. The book of **Esther** tells of Haman preparing to hang Mordecai on the tree (**Esther 6:4**). The phrase 'hang on the tree,' refers to crucifixion.

The Romans perfected crucifixion so that it would bring the maximum amount of pain to a person before they finally died. They were able to control how long someone would be able to survive on a cross. There was a precision to crucifixion that I believe many people fail to realize.

The person being crucified would first be scourged (See Appendix A). After the scourging, the Romans would strap the crossbeam of the cross to the mutilated shoulders of the person. That crossbeam weighed between 75-100 pounds. The person would then carry that crossbeam to the location of execution where the vertical posts were permanently in place. A Roman soldier would walk ahead of the criminal holding a sign telling the crime of which he had been convicted. For Jesus, this walk to Golgotha could have been as far as two miles and the sign would have said, "*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*"

Upon arrival at the place of execution, the crossbeam would have been taken from their shoulders and laid on the ground. Roman law stated that the criminal was to be given a bitter drink as a mild painkiller before nailing them to the cross. This was less about mercy as just make the process easier for those doing the crucifying. Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh (gall), but He refused to drink it. The soldiers would then place the criminal on the ground with his arms outstretched to the crossbeam he had carried. Archeological evidence has shown us that the nails were five to seven inches long with a square shaft that was three quarters of an inch across. The nails were driven through the wrist, crushing or severing the median nerve causing great pain and the hands to spasm in a clenched position. The nail's proximity to the nerve would cause bolts of nerve pain up and down the arm every time the nail moved inside the wrist. Four Roman soldiers would then raise the crossbeam with the person nailed to it into slots on the vertical pole. With the feet hanging down, the soldiers would take them and drive a single nail through both feet into the vertical post. Crucified skeletons have been found with nails piercing through the heel bone. This wound would have also damaged nerves in the feet causing similar pain as was in their arms.

Aside from the extreme pain, the cross impacted a person's breathing in a very unusual way. The positioning of the body on the cross caused the normal passive exhalation of air from the lungs to no longer happen passively. In order to exhale, the

person would have to pull up on the nails in his hands and push up on the nails in his feet. This action greatly reduced pulmonary function. Every breath taken on a cross twisted those nails against those damaged nerves and rubbed that splintery wood against the wounds of the scourging on their backs. The average resting respiratory rate is 18 breaths/minute, which means that Jesus pulled and pushed on those nails at least 6,500 times over the six hours that He was on the cross. Every breath taken and word spoken was a journey into extreme pain.

Suffocation tended to be the end cause of death on the cross, but it was combined with a number of factors that took place within the body. With the loss of blood and pulmonary function, the body began to shunt blood and oxygen to the vital organs. This provided less blood to the arms and legs that made breathing possible. Slowly the person on the cross found it harder to breathe and that would accelerate the body's emergency efforts to stay alive. In doing so, it only brought on death more rapidly. It turned the person's body against itself in this way.

This breathing aspect of the cross was how the Romans controlled the amount of time a person would live. Some remained on crosses for days and even weeks. It depended mostly on where they nailed the feet. Placing the feet closer to the body provided more strength from their legs for breathing. On the other hand, if the Romans wanted someone to die faster, they would stretch out the legs. They would then be forced to rely more on the arms to pull up to breathe. This was an effort that could not be continued for a prolonged period of time.

Jesus chose the cross, it demonstrates the terrible and painful nature of sin. He willingly endured that horrific death to provide life and a place of rest for each of us. Live everyday remembering the death of the Lord. Remember that you caused someone to die an excruciating death. Make your life a response to that truth.

Appendix C

A Broken Heart?

What happened to Jesus when He died? Medical experts have studied and considered the aspects of Jesus' death. The Bible tells us that Jesus cried out and then died. It does not sound like suffocation. Even Pilate seemed surprised that Jesus was already dead on the cross (**Mark 15:44**). Forensic analysis tends to conclude that Jesus died of a cardiac event, most likely a rupture of the heart. This is thought to be the case because of the blood and water that gushed forth from the spear wound to His side. A dead body does not bleed because there is no blood pressure. The water was most likely under pressure within the pericardial sack around the heart, having built up pressure leading to congestive heart failure. If the heart ruptured, it would have immediately mixed blood into that fluid. This would have created a pressure causing the blood and water to flow forth from that wound.

If that is the case, it can truthfully be said that Jesus died of a broken heart for you and me. His love for us is eternal, unending, and without measure. That kind of love is tormented by the failure of those who are the object of that love. It should break our hearts to know what Jesus did for us.

Using the Harmony of the Gospel Accounts Text

The harmony used in this book was created in order to bring all the information regarding the death of Jesus in the four gospel accounts into one place that is easy to read. It also gives us a general idea of the chronological order surrounding those events. The order is sometimes difficult to see across the accounts. Some of the chronology of the harmony is a matter of the author's opinion based on the study of the text. The harmony also will not always effectively show the context of the original texts. Therefore, it cannot replace the study of the gospel accounts as originally written.

I hope this study will help each of us become intimately familiar with the most important event in our lives. The sacrifice of Jesus for our sins must be at the very heart of who we are. It is the beginning and end of our being true children of God.

Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this harmony.

— Nathan Adams

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**Jesus stated, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw all men to Myself.”**
John 12:32

The cross of Jesus demonstrates the greatest love ever known. It is that love that draws men to be the disciples of our Lord and to love Him with all their heart. We can never be true disciples until we stand in the shadow of the cross looking to see our Savior dying in our stead. Every Christian must have the events on that Friday seared into their hearts and minds so that it will motivate them everyday to live indebted to the One who paid our price.

As Christians, we can only partake of the Lord's supper in remembrance of Him if we have memories of Him and His death. This book endeavors to help us have those memories and see with the eye of faith the events that led Jesus from the garden to the grave.

This book is a companion to five lessons presented in the “From the Garden to the Grave” Seminar.

About the Author

Nathan Adams is a fourth generation gospel preacher. He has been teaching the gospel since he was 14 years old. He has been happily married to Jeanne for over 33 years and they are the proud parents of Jonah and Miranda. Over the past 32 years he has been in full-time ministry in Missouri, Colorado, Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina, and Mississippi. He has directed preacher training camps, lectureships, exegesis workshops, and other brotherhood activities. Nathan has taught in foreign and domestic preacher training schools.

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