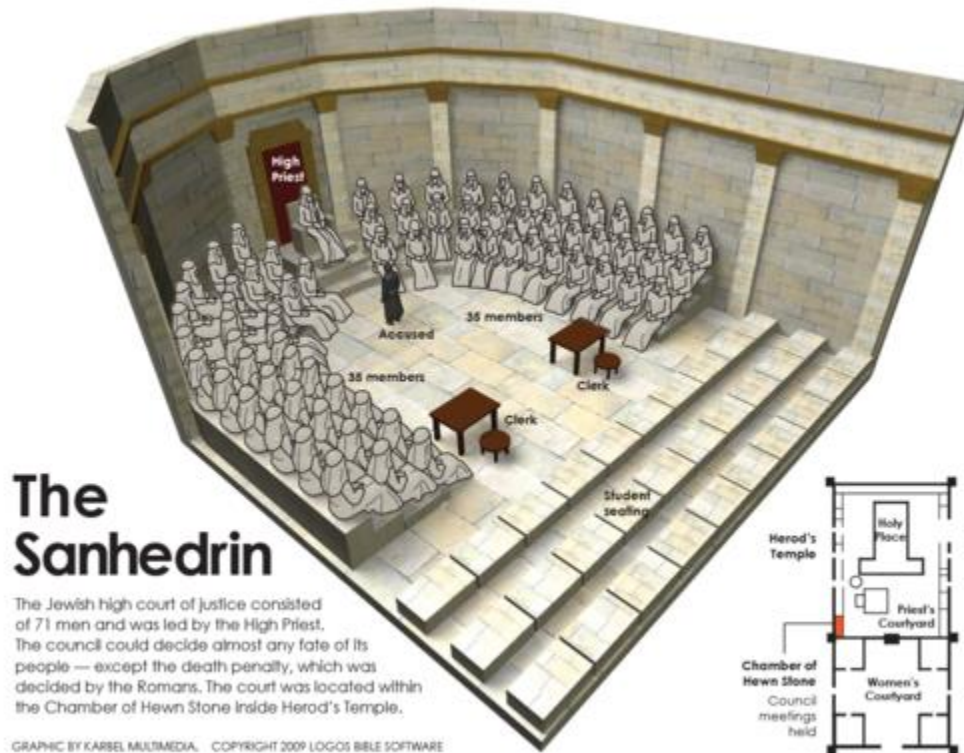


Matthew Chapter 27
Jesus before the Sanhedrin (27:1-2)



“The trial of our Lord may be divided into two main parts, the Jewish and the Roman trial. Each of these must be subdivided.

(1) The Jewish trial comprises

- (a) The examination before Annas, John 18:12–14, 19–23;
- (b) The sentence by an informal session of the Sanhedrin, Matt. 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65;
- (c) The formal trial before the Sanhedrin, which sends him to Pilate for sentence, Matt. 27:1 f.; Luke 22:66–71.

(2) The Roman trial includes

- (a) The first examination before Pilate, 27:11–14; John 18:28–38;
- (b) The reference to Herod, Luke 23:6–12;
- (c) The final appearance before Pilate, 27:15–31; John 18:39–19:16.”¹

Matthew 27:1 *When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.*

Earlier we read,

“And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.” (Matthew 26:57, NKJV)

The question is, are we still at Caiaphas house? Or are we now in the chambers of the Sanhedrin? It is not entirely clear, 27:1 may simply pick up at 26:75.

¹ Broadus, J. A. (1886). Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (p. 544). Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society.

When morning came.... Jesus will not see another morning on this earth until the resurrection.

The hours of darkness have taken us from the beginning of the Lord's Supper to his appearance before Pilate.

"When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve." (Matthew 26:20, NKJV)

morning.... "...it was required in Jewish trials that the sentence be given in the daytime, not at night."²

Jewish law "required that the verdict of death should be rendered at a second session of the Sanhedrin which was to be held after an interval of at least a day; moreover, night sessions were illegal. Now the Sanhedrin was determined to rush Jesus to death, for it feared an uprising of the people in case of a delay. So the illegality of the night session was simply disregarded. But the formality of holding a second session was found feasible even though in this case it was illegal because it would confirm an illegal night session; yet it lent a show of legality to the procedure by being a second session."³

all.... The word "all" may imply that as the night continued, more and more of the priests were located and increasingly showed up for the hearing. By morning, the great majority of them were present.

all the chief priests and the elders of the people.... "*All the chief priests* indicates a full assembly of ecclesiastical dignitaries, while *the elders of the people* points to the eminent laypeople who formed part of the highest Jewish assembly in the land."⁴

These two groups legally represent the whole of Israel. All of the "better families" agreed—*he must die*.

took counsel.... With this phrase, we can see that they waited until daybreak to officially declare him guilty. "The expression means, "to pass a resolution," and the resolution that had to be passed in this case was the confirmation of the death verdict that had been pronounced at the night session...."⁵ All this is a part of God's divine plan:

"Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying," (Psalm 2:1–2, NKJV)

put him to death.... The legal process did not involve the possibility that Jesus would be found not guilty.

² Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 691). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

³ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (p. 1076). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

⁴ Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 691). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

⁵ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (p. 1077). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

Matthew 27:2 *And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.*

they bound him.... "...binding is likely to have more to do with appearances than with legal realities. If Jesus is going to be represented to the governor as a claimant to royal power and thus a threat to civil order, then he must be made to look dangerous. A man who needs to be bound is a man who represents a threat when he is free."⁶

"...Jesus was *bound* before a temporal ruler so that believers could be *freed* before the eternal ruler...."⁷

delivered him over.... "...it was the Romans who had the power to put people to death. Since the Jewish leaders wanted to have Jesus executed, they had to bring him to the Roman authorities and persuade them to carry out the execution. They had reached the limits of what was possible within their own jurisdiction, and the story now moves to what they could persuade the Romans to do."⁸ All this is as he had predicted.

"and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day." (Matthew 20:19, ESV)

Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, A.D. 26–36

His term in office coincided with the adult ministry of Jesus.

Some background and history of Pilate:

"Appointed by Tiberius as the fifth prefect of Judea, and who served in that capacity from A.D. 26–36. He appears prominently in the trial narratives of the Gospels as the Roman governor who authorized Jesus' crucifixion. In addition he appears in a variety of extrabiblical sources as a dispassionate administrator who relentlessly pursued Roman authority in Judea.

Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) mentions Pilate in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus but adds little to the Gospel account. Josephus, on the other hand, provides three narratives. First, he describes Pilate's arrival as the new prefect (*War* 2.9.2; *Antiq.* 18.3.1; cf. Eusebius, *Hist.* 2.6). Offending Jewish law, Pilate brought ensigns into Jerusalem which bore the image of Caesar. A large gathering of Jews then came to Caesarea in protest, fasting there for five days. Pilate called in troops to dismiss them but he learned his first lesson about Jewish intransigence. The Jews were ready to die rather than tolerate the ensigns. Soon thereafter Pilate relented.

A second incident occurred when Pilate appropriated temple funds in order to construct a 35-mile aqueduct for Jerusalem (*War* 2.9.4; *Antiq.* 18.3.2). Again there was a major protest. Pilate ordered his soldiers to dress in tunics and so disguised infiltrate the crowds. At his command, the troops used clubs to beat the offenders and many Jews were killed. Josephus records the horror with which Jerusalem perceived the affair.

⁶ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 1146.

⁷ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 702.

⁸ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 691). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Finally, Josephus records the story of Pilate's dismissal (Antiq. 18.4.1–2). In A.D. 36 a Samaritan false prophet (pretending to be the *Taheb*, or Samaritan messiah) promised to show his followers sacred vessels hidden by Moses on Mt Gerizim. Pilate sent a heavily armed contingent of footmen and cavalry which intercepted the pilgrims and slaughtered most of them. The Samaritans complained to Vitellius, the prefect of Syria, whereupon Pilate was ordered to report to the emperor Tiberius. Another prefect, Marcellus, was then sent by Rome as Pilate's replacement."⁹

Judas's Remorse and Suicide, and the 'Field of Blood' (27:3–10)
(Acts 1:16-19)

This section is out of chronological order and so one is inclined to ask why Matthew stopped to place it right here.

“There are perhaps three main purposes in inserting this strange pericope here. (a) It sets the treachery of Judas alongside the failure of Peter, and allows the reader to compare and contrast their faults and their different fates. (b) It narrates the fulfillment of Jesus' dire prediction about the fate of his betrayer (26:24), just as his prediction of Peter's failure (26:34) has also been precisely fulfilled. (c) It allows Matthew to introduce the most complex and creative of his formula-quotations, to show that even in the betrayal of the Messiah and in the fate of his betrayer Scripture continues to provide the pattern, even to the most incidental details.”¹⁰

Matthew 27:3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,

Judas....

“Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.” (John 12:5–6, NKJV)

“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” (John 17:12, NKJV)

In some sense, to Judas, the life of Jesus turned out to be a great disappointment. He had higher hopes for Jesus than this; probably Zealot images of Jesus leading an army into Jerusalem with the Twelve serving as important officials in this new kingdom. But, it is now clear that his hopes have all been dashed. How would he salvage these wasted 3 ½ years? Thirty pieces of silver was the best offer he had; he took it.

“At and around the Lord's Supper (in the first half of chap. 26), Jesus predicted three events: a serious falling away by one disciple, a serious denial by another, and a serious defection by all the rest. Two of Jesus' prophecies have already been fulfilled (Peter in 26:69–75; the other disciples in 26:58). The gravest of “the three

⁹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

¹⁰ France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1038). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

disappointments” now reaches its climax in the present awful story.”¹¹ **Matthew typically uses triads in developing his story. This not only stands out in the Sermon on the Mount, it provides critical insight on how to interpret the Sermon.**

Judas, his betrayer, saw.... “Since at the time of the arrest Judas was with the crowd that took Jesus into custody, we are probably to imagine that he returned with them to the high priest’s house and was **an immediate witness to the unfolding of events.**”¹²

saw that Jesus was condemned.... One wonders what he had expected if not Jesus condemnation. Is it only now that he understands that Jesus is condemned to die? We will never know what was in this man’s mind now and during all the years he followed Jesus. **Outward appearances often conceal great inner depravity.**

changed his mind¹³.... “...from *metá* ..., denoting change of place or condition, and *mélomai*, ... to be concerned.”¹⁴ Judas changed his concern, he regretted his action, he felt sorry, he was remorseful. But was it repentance? **This word can be used of repentance, but in this case it is more like sorrow or remorse. These are not bad emotions when one has sinned but they do not always move one to a true repentance.**

“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NKJV)

brought back the thirty pieces of silver....

Matthew 27:4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”

betraying innocent blood....

“Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.” “And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” (Deuteronomy 27:25, NKJV)

What is that to us? They answer him this way demonstrating that they refuse to share in Judas guilt. *“What has that got to do with us?”* “Everything in the world!” Judas can reply. **“First**, you have power here—reconvene the court; **second**, let me give fresh testimony; **third**, let me give a sin-offering; **fourth**, judge me according to my offense; **finally**, give me a chance!” The ministers of God are in the temple of God to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Mic 6:8). But “what has that got to do with us?” denies justice to Jesus, mercy to Judas, and any kind of responsibility before God.”¹⁵

¹¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 703.

¹² Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1149). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

¹³ *changed his mind μεταμέλομαι* “...to feel regret as the result of what one has done—to regret, to feel sad about, to feel sorry because of.” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

¹⁴ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

¹⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 706.

See to it yourself. Or, **You see to it.** “The responsibility is yours.”¹⁶

Matthew 27:5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple.... Judas cannot undo his evil deed. He wants to, but it is impossible. He does what he can do, but he is not able to go back and do something else, something better. He is locked into this sin forever.

Only a few hours earlier these coins were of great value and importance to Judas. Now, they are of no value at all.

he went and hanged himself.... “Jewish law prescribed for false witnesses the penalty they had wished to inflict on others....”¹⁷

“If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” (Deuteronomy 19:16–19, ESV)

“...since the chief priests refuse to serve the cause of justice, Judas has to see to his own execution....”¹⁸

Luke in Acts tells the story this way:

“(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)” (Acts 1:18–19, NKJV)

The account by Matthew and the account in the Book of Acts view the scene from two different angles and, therefore, appear to conflict. But do they? If not, then how do they harmonize? At this distance, we simply don't know. It is possible that after Judas hung himself, in some way when he was taken down, either intentionally by those that took him down and then threw his body over the wall, or somehow unintentionally, he fell into the valley below. But, we are not fully privy to all the details on how this happened, just that it happened and that both stories are true.

A Summary

There is something about this scene that reminds us of Esau when he sinned against his own inheritance.

“lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” (Hebrews 12:16–17, NKJV)

¹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1011.

¹⁷ Keener, C. S. (1997). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, Mt 27:3). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹⁸ Keener, C. S. (1997). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, Mt 27:3). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

And what was behind this rejection? It was the election of God.

“As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”” (Romans 9:13, NKJV)

And now we have portrayed before us two men of like weaknesses, one Peter and the other Judas; one was loved and the other hated. The explanation of their eternal condition found only in the eternal election of God.

So ends the life of one who walked with Jesus, heard his teachings and saw his miracles.

Matthew 27:6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.”

“You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 23:18, NKJV)

“These leaders were willing to pay out blood money for Jesus’ capture, willing to allow Judas’s suicide, but too pious to accept their own blood money into the temple treasury.”¹⁹ “What is clear is that Matthew is again pointing out the propensity of the Jewish leaders for **ceremonial probity** even in the face of gross injustice....”²⁰

Matthew 27:7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers.

“...Jesus’ death *will* be the “blood money” that pays for the admission to God of *all* strangers, all sinners....”²¹

Matthew 27:8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

“The same people who without scruples previously set the stage for a legal murder are now overly concerned with minor details (cf. 23:23–24). They strain the gnat and swallow the camel. The same people who have declared that Judas’s remorse is none of their business and have left him to his own devices now suddenly know that the money they gave Judas and have now gotten back is “blood money.” With his ostensibly prosaic portrayal the evangelist wants to expose the depth of the Jewish leaders’ malice. For him they, not Judas, are the evil persons.”²²

“There are no reliable early traditions of its location, though Matthew’s “**to this day**” shows it was well known when he wrote. The best assumption is that it lay in the valley of Hinnom near the juncture with the Kidron.”²³

¹⁹ Keener, C. S. (1997). Matthew (Vol. 1, Mt 27:3). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

²⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 561). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 708.

²² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 473–474.

²³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 562). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Matthew 27:9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,

And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel.... “If a free adult man or woman had been gored to death by the ox of a careless owner, both the ox and the owner were put to death (Exod 21:29). That was the high value put on a free adult’s life. But if an ox gored a *slave*, the slave’s owner was recompensed a mere thirty pieces of silver (Exod 21:32). Matthew means, “The *Messiah* came to Israel, was gored, and they valued him no higher than a slave!”²⁴

“If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.” (Exodus 21:32, NKJV)

Matthew 27:10 and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.”

This is what is known as a *conflated quotation*, which means it combines material from two or more sources. This was common practice by the Rabbis of this time.

There are at least two passages in Jeremiah that Matthew may be referencing:

“Thus says the LORD, “Go, buy a potter’s earthenware flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, and go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. You shall say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind— therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds. And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.’ “Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, and shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. Thus will I do to this place, declares the LORD, and to its

²⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 709.

inhabitants, making this city like Topheth. The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah—all the houses on whose roofs offerings have been offered to all the host of heaven, and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods—shall be defiled like the place of Topheth.’ ” (Jeremiah 19:1–13, ESV)

“It may be that Jer. 19 offers a better cluster of images that Matthew may be citing, especially with its references to “the blood of the innocents” (27:4), the “potter” (27:1, 11), the renaming of a place in the Valley of Hinnom (27:6 [the traditional site of the Potter’s Field]), violence (27:11), and the judgment and burial of the Jewish leaders by God (27:11) (see Moo 1983b; Conrad 1991; see also Brown 1994: 651). References to the house of the potter also appear in Jer. 18:2–3.”²⁵

“Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me: Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.’ Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. “And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver.” (Jeremiah 32:6–9, ESV)

But most of what Matthew is saying comes from Zechariah.

“Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.” (Zechariah 11:12–13, ESV)

You will note that the more precise description is found in Zechariah not either passage in Jeremiah. Yet the reference is cited as Jeremiah. “Jeremiah alone is mentioned, perhaps because he is the more important of the two prophets, and perhaps also because, though Jeremiah 19 is the less obvious reference, it is the more important as to prophecy and fulfillment.”²⁶ “Rabbis at times would create a composite quotation of more than one Scripture but refer to only one of their sources by name, often the more obscure one....”²⁷ “Such fusing of sources under one “quotation” is not unknown elsewhere in Scripture....”²⁸ This common practice is illustrated in the material before us.

“Zechariah 11:4–17 begins with God calling the prophet to shepherd the flock marked out for slaughter (11:4–6). Zechariah does this, caring particularly for the oppressed of the flock (11:7) and getting rid of evil shepherds (11:8a). But the flock detests him, Zechariah grows weary of the opposition, and he finally decides to leave them to die. He

²⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 95.

²⁶ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 563). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²⁷ Beale, G. K., & Carson, D. A. (2007). *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (p. 95). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos.

²⁸ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 563). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

breaks the two staffs that represented the covenant he had made with the people and the brotherhood between Israel and Judah (11:8b–11, 14). Verse 12 is thus dripping with irony when Zechariah tells his people to pay him if they think it best; but if not, they should just keep the money. They do pay him his wages, but 11:13 simply adds to the irony as Zechariah refers to the thirty shekels that he has received as a “handsome price,” when in fact it was a comparatively paltry sum for the work he had done (McComiskey 1998: 1200). Although equivalent to the price of a slave in Exod. 21:32, as remuneration for a spiritual leader, thirty shekels was an insultingly low wage (Petersen 1995: 97). So Zechariah throws the pieces of silver back into the temple “to the potter.”²⁹

“...the central parallel is stunning: in both instances Yahweh’s shepherd is rejected by the people of Israel and valued at the price of a slave. And in both instances the money is flung into the temple and ends up purchasing something that pollutes.”³⁰

Jesus before Pilate (27:11–26)

Before the story on Judas we read:

“And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.” (Matthew 27:2, ESV)

In 27:11 we pick up where we left off.

Matthew 27:11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.”

“From the involvement of the crowd in most of this scene, it seems that the hearing took place in public... [from] a raised platform in front of the governor’s residence.”³¹

One cannot help but be reminded that one day this scene will be reversed.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.” (Matthew 25:31, ESV)

And from that throne he will judge the world. But for now, he stands before this Roman judgment seat to give account for the sins of others.

Are you the King of the Jews? Luke provides us background to this meeting and question.

“And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” (Luke 23:2, ESV)

This passage in Luke demonstrates how the Jews were presenting Jesus to the Romans—as a political threat to them. The Jews understood that when Jesus

²⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 95.

³⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 564). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³¹ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1051). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

acquiesced to being the Christ (Matthew 26:64) he was making claim to be King as well. They want Pilate to hear “king,” a threatening figure to Roman rule.

You have said so. Jesus had given a similar answer to the Sanhedrin just hours before when asked a similar question. It was “*tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.*” (Matthew 26:63, ESV). Although this question by Pilate, “**are you the King of the Jews?**” is seemingly a different question, in fact the two questions are very similar. *The Christ, the Son of God* would indeed be *King of the Jews*.

However, when talking to the Jews, Jesus added critical new material.

“Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:64, ESV)

At this point, Jesus gives the same answer but without this additional material--being *Christ, the Son of God* is of no interest to Pilate. **Pilate is not interested in Jesus’ religion, he is interested in Jesus’ politics.**

Are you a king? **You have said so, yes, but not in the way you understand the term.**

No doubt, Pilate expected a negative answer and would have been surprised at Jesus response. Certainly Jesus would know that anything that approached a positive answer would provoke a violent response from Pilate—the local representative of the King of the Roman Empire.

“Since the activities of Jesus had raised no alarm for the Romans, a negative answer may have been quite enough to convince Pilate that the bid by the Jewish leaders to eliminate Jesus was only an attempt to use his office in the cause of Jewish factionalism. Why should Pilate play along with their games?”

“The negative answer which might reasonably have been expected was not, however, forthcoming. Not that Jesus quite said ‘yes’. But his manner of equivocating was closer to a ‘yes’ than a ‘no’.”³²

Why the equivocation? The answer is similar to why Jesus did this to Caiaphas earlier. Yes, I am the king of the Jews, but not like you understand the term, **as a Zealot-like political challenger to Rome.** “If the readers heard political connotations in Pilate’s question, based on their own knowledge of Jesus they would have heard in his “you say it” a rejection of those connotations.”³³ The Apostle John expands this telling us more of what Jesus said:

“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

³² Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1162). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

³³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 495.

But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:33–37, ESV)

So, again, are you a king? **You have said so**, yes, but not in the way you understand the term.

Matthew 27:12 *But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer.*

he was accused by the chief priests and elders.... What the Jewish accusations were we are not told. But we can assume they focused not on the charge of blasphemy, which Pilate would care nothing about, but on the charge that he was King of the Jews, which Pilate would care much about.... “Presumably they amplified his alleged claim to be “*the king of the Jews*” with appropriate accounts of what Jesus had said and done.”³⁴

he gave no answer. This is just as Isaiah had predicted.

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7, ESV)

Matthew 27:13 *Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?”*

how many or **how great**³⁵ It is not entirely clear if Pilate is drawing Jesus’ attention to the quantity of the charges or the seriousness or weightiness of the charges—or both; I suspect the later.

Matthew 27:14 *But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.*

“Prisoners on trial for their life normally must have been very vocal; they would have tried to refute any and every accusation brought against them. This kind of accusation, alleging crimes that involved the death sentence, would normally have elicited a vociferous defense. So Pilate *was greatly astonished.*”³⁶

“Pilate’s “great amazement” (27:14) appears to be mingled with respect for Jesus and antipathy for the Jewish leaders, and so he takes tentative steps to release the prisoner.”³⁷

(Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:13–25; John 18:19–19:16)

³⁴ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1052). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

³⁵ “πρόσος can signify “how great” as well as “how many,” and the expression may refer to the weight of the accusations rather than the number.” Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

³⁶ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 701). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

³⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 568). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Matthew 27:15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.

“In order to explain for his readers the unusual turn of events that Jesus’ trial now takes, the evangelist must digress. He tells of the custom that on the occasion of a feast the governor permits the people to ask for one prisoner.”³⁸

“One thing is clear: Pilate at this particular moment is most willing to grant the request of the people (Mark 15:8) that, according to custom, a prisoner be released; for, as he sees it, this may be the way he can get Jesus off his hands.”³⁹

Matthew 27:16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

“As a second piece of information he relates that a notorious prisoner named ... Barabbas was being held—naturally he means by the Romans.... This prisoner is ... “well known, eminent, famous.”⁴⁰

notorious.... It is likely that he was a Zealot, an insurrectionist, just the kind of person they say Jesus is.

“And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.” (Mark 15:7, ESV)

“They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.” (John 18:40, ESV)

*robber*⁴¹.... Robber or bandit (*ληστής*) “was a generic term for any rebel or insurrectionist who rose up against Rome or its Jewish collaborators.”⁴²

“It is probable that some of these robbers were really zealots in rebellion against the authority of Rome....”⁴³ “Neither theft nor violent robbery was a capital offense, but insurrection was. Revolts and bloodshed fostered by guerrilla action were common (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 3–10 [i.1], 60–62 [iii.2]; Luke 13:1), and Barabbas had been caught. **In the eyes of many of the people he would not be a “notorious” villain but a hero.”⁴⁴ And that explains why they wanted Barabbas freed—he was a national hero.**

³⁸ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 496.

³⁹ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. 9, p. 952). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁴⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 496.

⁴¹ *robber* *ληστής* “a person who engages in insurrection—‘insurrectionist, rebel.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁴² Aslan, Reza (2013). *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (p. 18). New York, NY: Random House.

⁴³ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

Jos. Antiq. Josephus: *The Antiquities of the Jews*

⁴⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 569). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Matthew 27:17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

“Now the readers have enough information that the narrator can return to his primary report.”⁴⁵

“It seems altogether probable that Pilate expected the multitude to choose *Jesus*. After all, the echoes of their hosannas in honor of the prophet from Galilee had scarcely died. ... five days ago “the whole world” applauded him....”⁴⁶

Matthew 27:18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.

envy⁴⁷.... “Envy is the displeasure aroused by seeing someone else having what you do not want him to have.”⁴⁸ Envy “—the worst of all evils.”⁴⁹

“Pilate remains unimpressed with the case against Jesus, and he realizes Jesus’ popularity with the crowds and the jealousy this has created among their leaders (v. 18). So to be rid of his problem, he tries to pit the crowds against the Jewish authorities.”⁵⁰

“If the crowd had chosen Jesus for release, then Pilate would have been spared a difficult decision. If his plan had worked, he could have avoided a major confrontation with the Jewish leaders with whom he needed to work, kept Barabbas in his hands, and released a popular Jesus—whom Pilate really considered innocent....”⁵¹

“The fact that three crosses were prepared strongly suggests that Pilate had already ordered that preparations be made for the execution of the three rebels. If so, Jesus the Messiah actually took the place of the rebel...Barabbas because **the people preferred the political rebel and nationalist hero to the Son of God.**”⁵²

Matthew 27:19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.”

righteous man.... ““Have nothing to do with that righteous [man]” isn’t presented as a message conveyed in the dream (contrast 1:20; 2:12–13, 19, 22). It’s presented as advice generated by the governor’s wife herself because the dream had caused her anguish. As a result, the accent falls on her description of Jesus as “righteous”—not just innocent (guiltless), but righteous (positively good as well as guiltless [compare

⁴⁵ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 497.

⁴⁶ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. 9, p. 952). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁴⁷ *envy φθόνος* “Envy, jealousy, pain felt and malignity conceived at the sight of excellence or happiness....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁴⁸ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. 9, p. 952). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁴⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 497.

⁵⁰ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 410). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁵¹ Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1168). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

⁵² Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 569). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

23:35]). So Jesus appears as the example par excellence of the righteousness which surpasses that of the scholars and Pharisees and without which no one will enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20).⁵³

Matthew 27:20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

persuaded⁵⁴.... “Although the arguments they used are not given, it is not difficult to imagine that Jesus was characterized as a charlatan and blasphemer, one who was misleading the people. It was clear that Jesus of Nazareth was not the promised Messiah; in no way could one so obviously helpless in the hands of the Romans be significant for the hope of Israel. Perhaps, on the other hand, Barabbas was set forth as a patriotic freedom fighter....⁵⁵ Such a person is exactly the kind of messiah they are looking for. Jesus simply never lived up to this hope of the Jews. So, let’s support someone that has lived up to this hope, Barabbas!

Matthew 27:21 The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”

“They have come to demand Barabbas’s release.... When they are confronted with the choice of Barabbas or Jesus (v. 21), both of whom were widely popular, their momentary faltering is resolved by their leaders. If the crowd must choose between Pilate’s choice and the Sanhedrin’s choice, especially if the Sanhedrin members are circulating stories of Jesus’ “blasphemy,” then there can be little doubt on which side of the issue they will come down.”⁵⁶ They choose the one who murders Romans.

Matthew 27:22 Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!”

They all said.... “...the decision is unanimous—as far as the crowd went there was no dissenting voice....⁵⁷

Let him be crucified! “It is not at all surprising that they went along with what their leaders urged rather than accept the suggestion of the Roman governor. Subject peoples will normally prefer the advice of their own leaders to that of the conqueror where they have a choice.”⁵⁸

Matthew 27:23 And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

⁵³ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 127.

⁵⁴ *persuaded* πείθω “...to convince someone to believe something and to act on the basis of what is recommended—‘to persuade, to convince.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁵⁵ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, pp. 823–824). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

⁵⁶ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 570). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁵⁷ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 705). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

⁵⁸ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 705). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Why, what evil has he done.... “As far as Pilate could see, Jesus had done nothing wrong. No crime had been demonstrated by his accusers.”⁵⁹

“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,” (Acts 3:13–14, ESV)

Matthew 27:24 *So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”*

(Pilate) took water and washed his hands before the crowd.... Pilate’s behavior would have been understandable to Jew and Gentile alike; it was common to the Mediterranean world. He was seeking absolution from uncleanness and sin by means of ritual purification. Jews did the same thing as illustrated in the passage below.

“Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed (νιπτω) hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash (νιπτω) their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash (βαπτίζω). And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing (βαπτίζω) of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.” (Mark 7:2–4, NKJV)

Notice that in this passage this ritual purification was called a washing twice and a baptism twice. The words were used interchangeably. By means of this ritual washing, baptism, Pilate sought a moral cleanliness from the act that was to follow, the murder of Jesus.

innocent...blood.... This is now the third time that Jesus is declared innocent or just.

By Judas....

“saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!”” (Matthew 27:4, NKJV)

By Pilate’s wife....

“While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”” (Matthew 27:19, NKJV)

And now by Pilate....

I am innocent of this man’s blood.... “After Judas (v. 4) and Pilate’s wife (v. 19), Pilate is the third person who delivers this testimony....”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 706). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

⁶⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 500.

“We cannot be certain that Pilate actually thought his action would excuse him; it may have reflected his contempt for the Jews or have been a taunt.”⁶¹ Being familiar with Jewish law, he throws the scripture in their face.

“And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, and they shall testify, ‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed.’” (Deuteronomy 21:6–7, ESV)

Here Pilate finally pronounces a judgment, but he says that he is innocent not that Jesus is innocent.

see to it yourselves. “Pilate now passes the bloodguilt on to the people....”⁶²

Matthew 27:25 *And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”*

all the people.... The primary meaning to this phrase would refer to the people that were at the trial crying out for Jesus crucifixion. *People* “has the clear connotation of “God’s people, Israel,”....”⁶³

His blood be on us and on our children! Earlier, Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus must die, although he did not understand the fulness of his statement.

“And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” (John 11:49–52, NKJV)

Now we have the crowd doing much the same thing with this statement **His blood be on us and on our children!** But a big question here is how long will this self-induced curse last? Let’s consider two possibilities:

One: Crucifixion was a Roman form of execution, not a Jewish one. Nevertheless, Peter lays the offense of crucifixion at the feet of Israel.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36, ESV)

“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.” (Acts 4:10, ESV)

⁶¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 570). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁶² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 500.

⁶³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 501.

And yet, all the early disciples and converts were Jewish. But whether Jew or Gentile, Jesus blood was spilt for all—for all are guilty.

One might ask how this crowd of perhaps three thousand Jews could represent a nation of 3 million people at that time and tens of millions in later years, but is this not what Adam and Eve did in the Garden, they represented all the billions of humans ever to live. So, conceptionally and theologically, this makes perfect sense. It also makes sense to note that half the responsibility of the murder of Jesus was shared by the Gentile community as well. So, his blood was on Gentiles and their children as well. We all stand guilty of Jesus' murder.

Two: perhaps there is a more immediate meaning; the curse in this verse is not applied to all Jews into the distant future, but to those present Jews in the immediate future. Jesus had made this statement some two or three days earlier:

“that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” (Matthew 23:35–36, NKJV)

Then Jesus gives details as to what will happen to “this generation.”

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ” (Matthew 23:37–39, ESV)

Verse “23:38 shows that Matthew is thinking not of the final judgment but of the destruction of Jerusalem....”⁶⁴

“See! Your house is left to you desolate;” (Matthew 23:38, NKJV)

By “house” Jesus meant the house of God or the Temple. “In prophetic tradition ... contemporary Jews interpret the destruction of the temple and the city by the Romans as divine punishment for Israel’s sins, especially those of the Zealots. Matthew, the Jewish believer in Jesus, interprets them similarly, except that he is thinking of the killing of Jesus, of the prophets, and of those who proclaimed Jesus (cf. 22:6–7).”⁶⁵

“And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” (Matthew 22:6–7, NKJV)

I find this second explanation, the destruction of that generation, to be the more cogent explanation of “*And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children.”*” (Matthew 27:25, NKJV). To extend this special judgment for two thousand years upon generation that were not there crying for Jesus blood does not seem to fit the context. This judgment took place in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans.

⁶⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 503.

⁶⁵ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 503.

Perhaps logically and historically, both of the above solutions are true; Jews and Gentiles are responsible for the death of Jesus, his blood is upon us and our children.

Barabbas Released, Jesus Delivered to be Crucified

Matthew 27:26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

he released for them Barabbas.... It is probably that Barabbas was the one heading for crucifixion. However, because he was an anti-Roman Zealot, he was popular with the people. Jesus' message had nothing to do with revolt against Rome, he had proved to be disappointing and given the choice the crowds chose the Roman murderer in his place.

"The wrong Jesus (Barabbas) was released, the wrong Jesus scourged, the wrong Jesus crucified, but God used all these wrongs to make *everything* right. **"He who did nothing wrong was condemned for everything so that we who have done everything wrong would be condemned for nothing."**⁶⁶

scourged⁶⁷ "There were three degrees of flogging (scourging) during the 1st Century. (1) *fustigatio* -for minor offenses, usually accompanied with a stern warning. (2) *flagellatio* - fairly brutal, administered to criminals whose infractions were more serious. (3) *verberatio* - brutal, inhumane in its scope, frequently fatal, usually administered along with other punishments like crucifixion, if the convicted survived the flogging. The *verberatio* only came after a death sentence was handed down. It was a way of weakening the condemned."⁶⁸

"Roman law required that the *verberatio* always accompany a capital sentence, preceding the execution."⁶⁹ "The whip was the dreaded *flagellum*, made by plaiting pieces of bone or lead into leather thongs. The victim was stripped and tied to a post. Severe flogging not only reduced the flesh to bloody pulp but could open up the body until the bones were visible and the entrails exposed **Flogging as an independent punishment not infrequently ended in death.** It was also used to weaken the prisoner before crucifixion."⁷⁰

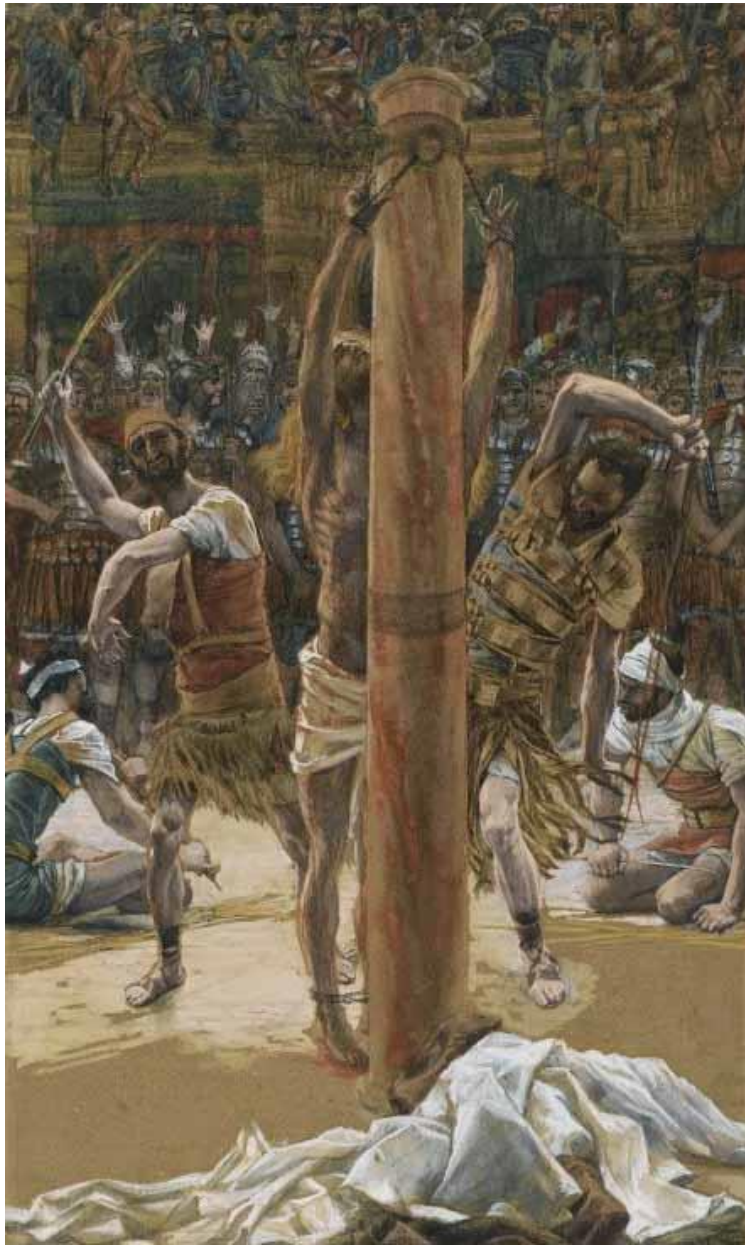
⁶⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 726.

⁶⁷ φραγελλόω "...to beat severely with a whip...." Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁶⁸ <https://theviewfrommychair.blogspot.com/2015/09/how-many-times-was-jesus-flogged.html>

⁶⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 176.

⁷⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 571–572). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.



“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5, NKJV)

“The gospel narratives, both at this point and at the point of crucifixion, make no attempt to draw out the sheer physical horror of the procedure, though Matthew’s first readers would have known, as modern readers do not, that Roman “flogging” was something far more serious and obscene than a few strokes with a whip.”⁷¹

In general, it is amazing how unemotionally the gospel writers tell this story. It is common and proper—even necessary for preachers and teachers to speak of these scenes with great emotion. However, perhaps to insure the accuracy of the details, God’s inspiration of the telling of the story stressed the bare facts with little emotion in the telling. The result would be a confidence in those facts.

Pilate’s Soldiers Mock Jesus’ Claim to Royal Status (27:27–31)

⁷¹ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1059). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

Matthew 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

governor's headquarters⁷².... "The Praetorium was the official residence of the Roman governor...."⁷³ Up to this point he was outside in a public courtyard, he is now moved inside.

whole battalion⁷⁴.... This would be between 400-600 soldiers. They may not all have been on duty or in that area at this time, but no doubt a large number would have been present.

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

scarlet⁷⁵ **robe**⁷⁶.... "One of the red cloaks worn by the Roman soldiers became a mock royal robe."⁷⁷ He claimed to be a king, they would mock his as one.

Matthew 27:29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

"The cutting sarcasm of this adoration was intended to humiliate the soul of Jesus as much as possible. Jesus was in reality not only the King of his nation but the very King of kings, God's own Son! The mind staggers before the scene here depicted."⁷⁸

crown⁷⁹ **of thorns**.... There were many thorny plants growing in Israel, some with thorns 12 inches long. A king must have a crown.

⁷² *governor's headquarters* *πραιτώριον* "...the palace in which the governor or procurator of a province resided, to which use the Romans were accustomed to appropriate the palaces already existing, and formerly dwelt in by kings or princes; at Jerusalem it was a magnificent palace which Herod the Great had built for himself, and which the Roman procurators seemed to have occupied whenever they came from Caesarea to Jerusalem to transact public business." James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

⁷³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 176.

⁷⁴ *battalion* *σπεῖρα* "Spoken of Roman foot soldiers, probably a cohort (numbering between four hundred and six hundred), of which there were ten in every legion.... Each legion contained from 4,000 to 6,600 foot soldiers...." Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁷⁵ *scarlet* *κόκκινος* "Scarlet, of a scarlet color, so named because this color was produced by dyeing with what was called *kókkos baphiké*, the dyeing grain, the grains which adhere to a small dry twig of a little bush. These grains were full of little worms or maggots whose fluids were remarkable for dyeing scarlet and making the famous color which the ancients adored. Both the insect and the color were called by the Arabs "alkermes," from which our Eng. word "crimson" is derived...." Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁷⁶ *robe* *χλαμύς* "A garment of dignity and office. The purple robe with which our Lord was arrayed in scorn by the mockers in Pilate's judgment hall (Matt. 27:28, 31). When put over the shoulders of someone, it was an indication that he was assuming a magistracy. It may have been the cast-off cloak of some high Roman officer which they put over the body of Jesus to mock Him as if He were an official person." Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁷⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 177.

⁷⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1102.

⁷⁹ *crown* *στέφανος* "...a wreath consisting either of foliage or of precious metals formed to resemble foliage and worn as a symbol of honor, victory, or as a badge of high office—"wreath, crown." Louw, J.

reed⁸⁰.... “A common wooden staff was a nasty hoax for a ruler’s scepter. This staff is used to beat Jesus again and again around the head, as they spit at him and mock him.”⁸¹

Soon he would exchange his crown of thorns for a golden crown and his reed with a sharp sickle for coming judgment.

“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.”
(Revelation 14:14, ESV)

kneeling.... One day these soldiers will again kneel before Jesus, as will all.

“This is linked with the bowing of the Magi in 2:11 and the Canaanite woman in 15:25. They bow in worship, while here the soldiers bow in derision. The Magi gave the baby Jesus, the future king, magnificent gifts, while the soldiers give him a mock robe and scepter....”⁸²

“so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10–11, ESV)

mocked⁸³.... “...“made fun of,” Old English “mocked.” Sometimes the cruelest things happen in words and gestures that are meant to be funny: the obese child at school, the social misfit in the classroom, the oddball on the playground. Jesus here takes all such persons’ places and suffers with them.”⁸⁴

Hail, King of the Jews! ““Hail, King of the Jews,” the Roman soldiers, like Caiaphas (26:63) and Pilate (27:11), unwittingly speak the truth.”⁸⁵

“Note how often “King of the Jews” appears, with Pilate’s question (v. 11), the inscription on the cross (v. 37), and the taunts of the leaders (v. 42)—four in all.”⁸⁶

Matthew 27:30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.

P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁸⁰ *reed κάλαμος* “...the stalk of a reed plant—‘reed.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁸¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 177.

⁸² Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

⁸³ *mocked*.... *ἐμπαίζω* “...to make fun of someone by pretending that he is not what he is or by imitating him in a distorted manner—‘to mock, to ridicule.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 434.

⁸⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 728.

⁸⁵ Hagner, D. A. (1998). Matthew 14–28 (Vol. 33B, p. 831). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

⁸⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1031.

spit on him.... “The soldiers spit on Jesus as the Jewish leaders in 26:67 also have done. The repetition shows that one is no better than the other. Both of them, Jews and Gentiles, participate actively and maliciously in mistreating and killing Jesus.”⁸⁷

struck⁸⁸.... “Not content with the ridicule and the torture of the thorns, they spat on him (v. 30) and used the staff, the symbol of his kingly authority, to hit him on the head “again and again” (cf. the imperfect tense of the verb).”⁸⁹

“I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.” (Isaiah 50:6, ESV)

And by time this had finished—

“As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—”
(Isaiah 52:14, ESV)

Matthew 27:31 *And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.*

put his own clothes on him.... “In normal Roman practice the prisoner would go naked to the place of execution, but they may have made a concession to Jewish sensibilities in Judea. At the cross, however, Jesus will be stripped of his clothing (27:35).”⁹⁰

to crucify him.... “Crucifixion is the master code for understanding the riddle of God’s purpose in the Hebrew Scriptures....”⁹¹

John in his gospel (19:1-15) has Jesus brought to Pilate after his torture where he then received the sentence of death by crucifixion.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; John 19:2-3

About 7:30 am on Friday morning, the fifteenth of Nisan

The tribune took Jesus by the arm and led Him into an adjoining enclosed courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard were three small stone pillars, each about three feet tall. Each one had embedded in it two big iron rings. After being stripping Yeshua, He was taken to the nearest post and pulled down so that both wrists were tied to a ring, making Him unable to move. Stripped naked, His back, buttocks and legs were exposed.

⁸⁷ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 515.

⁸⁸ *struck* *τύπτω* “To strike, smite with the hand, stick, or other instrument repeatedly.” Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁸⁹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 573). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁹⁰ Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1185). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

⁹¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 729.

Roman flogging was called the halfway death because it was supposed to stop this side of death. The dreaded verberatio (flogging) always preceded the crucifixion. Two Roman soldiers stood behind Him, one on each side. Each held a wooden handled whip called a flagrum, from which there hung three strips of leather, each about three feet long. Knotted leather thongs caused the least damage, while metal weights braided into the straps caused deep contusions and even rib fracture. Some flagrum braided small shards of sheep bone into the straps, which tore the victim's flesh with each lash. Victims who didn't die immediately of shock often succumbed to infection later.

A third soldier stood by holding an abacus so he might keep track of the number of blows inflicted. A fourth soldier was responsible for tying and chaining the victim to the flogging pole. He stood ready to replace any soldier who tired of his duty and watched over all of them was the supervisor. So after being manacled and stripped, it began. The Son of God felt the lash. Unlike a woman giving birth, there was no time to rest between contractions. The instant one soldier pulled back his whip - the other struck with full force. The leather strips with the braided weights or sheep bones would cut into and beneath the skin. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering muscles and bleeding flesh. Many times bones were exposed. It would not take more than three minutes. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock.

Quoting Isaiah, Peter wrote: *By His wounds [or stripes NKJV] you have been healed* (First Peter 2:24). This gives us a vivid picture of how our Lord's back looked after flogging. The word translated wounds or strips is singular in the Greek. It refers to a bloody disfiguration trickling with blood that came as a result of the flogging. Yeshua's back was so lacerated by the verberatio that it was one mass of open, raw, quivering flesh trickling with blood, not a series of wounds or stripes.

The severity of the flogging, however, depended on the disposition of the soldiers and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse. The amount of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross. The length of survival on the cross generally ranged from three or four hours, to three or four days depending on the severity of the flogging. Afterwards, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

Many died from the flogging itself, never living to be crucified. After the flogging, Jesus was unchained and helped to His feet and got him dressed. The severity of the flogging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most likely left Him in a pre-shock state. The lash marks extend from Messiah's back, down to His calves. One cannot imagine carrying a heavy wooden cross on top of the wounds that He suffered. The Roman soldiers had clearly done their job. Striking with surgical precision, they had almost beaten the Lord to death. But the governor had made it crystal clear that they were not to kill Him. That would be left for another team of Roman executioners. Although the soldiers of the governor were under Pilate's orders have Yeshua flogged, they exhibited their own wickedness by far exceeding what basic duty required.

The soldiers probably shared the procurators' hatred of Jews and took this opportunity to vent their anger on a Jew condemned by fellow Jews. Although in an extreme way, they expressed the natural wickedness of every human heart that is ignorant of ADONAI.

The tribune ordered a soldier to help Jesus stand. He could not remain standing without two hands under His arms. Yeshua was held in this position until He felt a slight return to strength. Then He was permitted to sit on the stone column. Little by little, His entire body began to throb with pain. It began as a pulsing thing, dull and debilitating, and it continued to build until His entire body screamed with agony. No one felt pity for Him. To the soldiers' way of thinking, any man who permitted himself to get into this position was either stupid or corrupt. And considering how they had been treated by the Jews, they would not have felt pity even if they had understood the emotion. Just as the high priest sincerely felt that the Great Sanhedrin was striking a blow for ADONAI in plotting against Jesus, so too these soldiers were certain that, in beating Him half to death, they were performing a routine duty.

The Roman soldiers were amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, so they would dress Jesus like a king . . . a comic king. It would be in the same manner as Herod's joke, but exaggerated. As they prepared, the victim sat, thin and bearded and subject to shivering, which started spasms and shook His whole body and rattled His teeth. He looked up into the sun and His face was a suffering mask. Then the governor's soldiers had taken Jesus into an enclosed courtyard of the praetorium. Once inside they summoned the whole Roman cohort and gathered around the perimeter to watch in amusement. Normally, a cohort was 500 soldiers.... However, whatever the number, it was quite the show for the bored soldiers. After the brutal torture of the flogging Jesus would have been in no state to resist even if He had wished. They stripped Him again, and to further amuse themselves, they put their own purple robe (the color of kings) on Him. Then the soldiers twisted together their own crown of thorns and set it on His head (Mt 27:28; Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2). That day, the crown, which is normally a symbol of royalty and honor, was turned into a tool of mockery and hate. Yet, our Savior willingly wore that thorny crown for us, bearing our sin and shame. The One who deserved the best of all crowns took the worst for us.

Little did those soldiers realize that the crown of thorns pictured Jesus bearing the curse of Adam. Messiah did, in fact, come to Isra'el and the whole world to be King and also to reverse the curse on a fallen world Over and over again the prophets said that one of the main works of Messiah would be the restoration of a fallen paradise. As a result, the crown of thorns that the mocking soldiers gouged into the head of the Suffering Servant demonstrated a remarkable spiritual truth and a painful reminder of work of redemption that He would ultimately fulfill. The soldiers stepped back to admire their handiwork. Then they put a staff in His right hand. Then they knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. They began to call out to Him again and again, saying, "Hail (Rejoice), king of the Jews," which paralleled the formal Roman praise, "Ave, Caesar." And they slapped Him in the face (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3)! What a tragic figure Jesus presented at that moment. This was the fourth mockery. *When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges rightly* (First Peter 2:23). Through it all, the Lord suffered in silence, knowing that it was all part of His Father's plan of purchasing lost sinners through the shedding of His blood.

Falling on their knees, they mockingly paid homage to Him. But Jesus did not answer and had not said a word since the flogging began. Then they spit on Him and slapped Him in the face. But the soldiers weren't done yet, as they took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again (Mt 27:30; Mk 15:19; Jn 19:3)! The words again and again reflect the imperfect tense of the Greek verbs. They kept on slapping Yeshua in the face, spitting on Him, and they continually struck Him on the head. It was not unusual for a convicted criminal to actually die from the torture even before reaching the point of

death on the cross. Seven hundred years before our Lord's suffering, Isaiah had a vision of Jesus' face after the inhuman treatment of those frenzied soldiers. Isaiah tells us that His face was so disfigured that He was hardly recognizable. There were many who were appalled at Him – His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man His form marred beyond human likeness (Isaiah 52:14). Unwittingly they had fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. The severe flogging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left the Lamb of God in a preshock state."⁹²

The Soldiers Crucify Jesus (27:32–44)

“Matthew describes very little of Jesus' own experience on the cross, and then not until the last few minutes before his death (vv. 45–66). Instead, Matthew emphasizes how other people experienced the crucifixion: Simon, the soldiers, the passers-by, the Jewish leaders, and the two criminals on the crosses on either side of Christ.”⁹³ This passage can be charted using these individuals as outline points.

Simon

Matthew 27:32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.

Most religious art shows Jesus carrying the whole cross as one unit, the crosspiece and the vertical piece.



However, this was not common practice. “Criminals condemned to die were customarily required to carry to the scene of crucifixion the heavy wooden crosspiece (*patibulum*), on which they were to be nailed. Plutarch writes, “Every criminal condemned to death bears his own cross on his back.” The crosspiece was then secured to the vertical beam, and the entire cross was hoisted into the air with the victim attached to it. The *patibulum* usually weighed thirty or forty pounds and was strapped across the shoulders.”⁹⁴

⁹² <https://jaymack.net/english/life-of-christ-commentary/pdf/Lr.pdf>

⁹³ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 415.

⁹⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 177.



He carried it as far as his weakened body would allow.

“And they compelled a passerby, Simon⁹⁵ of Cyrene⁹⁶, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.” (Mark 15:21, ESV)

“Mark tells us that this man was “the father of Alexander⁹⁷ and Rufus.”⁹⁸ evidently people known in the church of his day, and probably Christians (would the Evangelists bother naming people like this unless they were Christians? Did what he heard and saw that day lead Simon to become a follower of Jesus?).”⁹⁹ “What it means to “bear [or “take up”] the cross” (10:38; 16:24), an important feature of Jesus’ call to discipleship, may be partly defined or at least pictured by this Simon of Cyrene incident: “Be willing to bear humiliating experiences.” God will reward such cross-bearings in surprising ways.”¹⁰⁰

“That no actual disciple of Jesus is here to perform this service of cross-bearing is incriminating; that no one but this coopted stranger is recorded as present at Jesus’ affixing to the cross underlines Jesus’ abandonment....”¹⁰¹ We here notice the glaring absence of another Simon, one called Peter.

⁹⁵ Simon: a Jewish name.

⁹⁶ Cyrene: an ancient Greek city and colony in N Africa, in Cyrenaica.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/cyrene?s=t>

⁹⁷ Alexander: a Greek name.

⁹⁸ Rufus: “a male given name: from a Latin word meaning “red-headed.””

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rufus>

⁹⁹ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 714). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁰⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 731.

¹⁰¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 731.



“Simon is a Jew. He comes from Cyrene [in Libya], where a fourth of the population was Jewish.”¹⁰²

Matthew 27:33 *And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),*

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” (Hebrews 13:12, NKJV)

Golgotha¹⁰³.... This word from the Aramaic/Hebrew is found in Matthew, Mark and John of Jesus’ crucifixion. Luke used the Greek word κρανίον (kranion) or cranium.

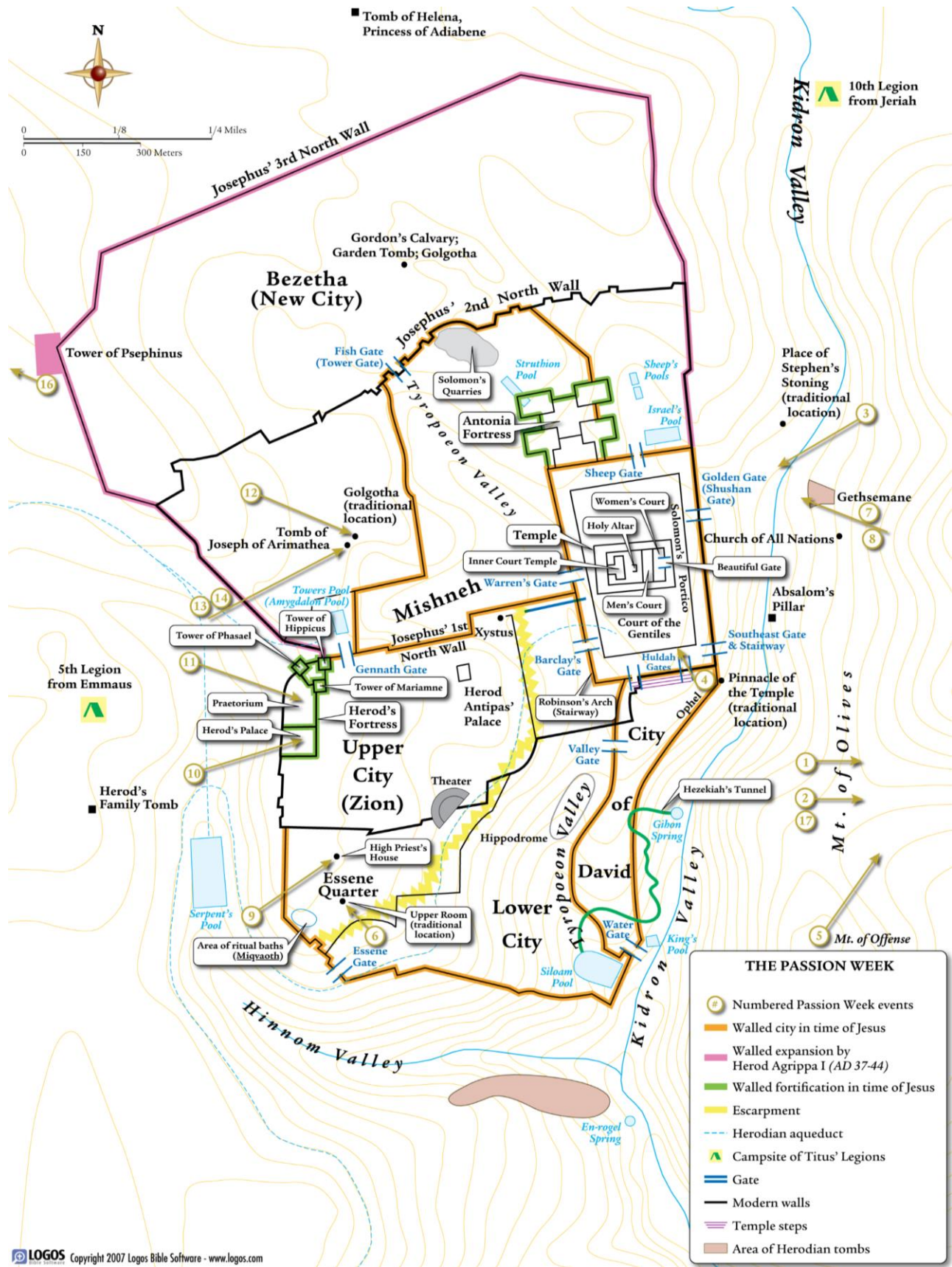
¹⁰² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 527.

¹⁰³ *Golgotha* Γολγοθᾶ “This is the transliteration of the Aramaic ... Hebrew ... meaning “skull.”” Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 714). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.



The church's construction was overseen by Helena, the mother of Constantine, in A.D. 325 and has long held prominence as the traditional location of the crucifixion of Jesus. "...excavations have shown that the traditional site in the area of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is well founded."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 530.



“The common designation “Calvary” comes from the Latin word for skull, *calvaria*.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 177.

“And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.” (Luke 23:33, ESV)

“The main thing we know is that it was on the main highway coming into Jerusalem. The Romans always executed criminals on major thoroughfares as a warning to the citizens.”¹⁰⁶

Matthew 27:34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.

they offered him wine to drink.... It is not clear who the ***they*** are or why they would do this. Logically, it would appear to be someone other than the religious leaders or the soldiers. These two groups wanted to do the most harm that they could to Jesus. But this seems to be an act of kindness. The ***they*** may have been friends not mentioned in the story line.

wine.... gall.... “Sharp wine, vinegar. It used to be cheap, poor wine which was mixed with water, common drink especially for the poorer classes and soldiers.... Mingled with myrrh or bitter herbs, it was given to persons about to be executed in order to stupefy them.”¹⁰⁷ There is also a distinct possibility that it was poison and was given as an act of mercy. “That Jesus *tasted it* but then refused to drink it seems to mean that he preferred to keep his senses undulled as he came to the supreme moment when he would give his life as a ransom for the many (cf. 20:28).”¹⁰⁸

“They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.” (Psalm 69:21, ESV)

“This appears to be a reference to a custom mentioned in the Talmud: “When one is led out to execution, he is given a goblet of wine containing a grain of frankincense, in order to benumb his senses....”¹⁰⁹

“And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.” (Mark 15:23, ESV)

The Soldiers

Matthew 27:35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.

“And it was the third hour [9 A.M.] when they crucified him.” (Mark 15:25, ESV)

When they had crucified.... “Matthew’s story of the execution of Jesus contains remarkably few details. No mention is made of the pounding of the nails into hands and feet, the racking pain, the desperate thirst. Indeed, the process of fastening Jesus to

¹⁰⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1032.

¹⁰⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 715). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 715). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

the cross does not even obtain a clause of its own....”¹¹⁰ Instead, the story is about the people at the cross.

they divided his garments among them by casting lots.... “Crucified people were normally naked.”¹¹¹

“they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”
(Psalm 22:18, ESV)

“When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom,” (John 19:23, ESV)

Matthew 27:36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

“Presumably they waited until he died and thus made sure that there was no rescue on the part of his followers. A crucified man might be taken from his cross and revived; the guard ensured that nothing of the sort occurred in the case of Jesus.”¹¹²

Matthew 27:37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

over his head.... “...“above his head,” indicates incidentally that Jesus was crucified on the traditional [t], rather than a T-shaped, cross.”¹¹³

This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.... This is the official charge; Jesus was crucified for treason. This “reflects the question of Pilate and Jesus’ affirmative answer in v. 11, and thus from the Roman perspective the crime was a political one, probably perceived as treason or insurrection....”¹¹⁴

“Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.” ’ ” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”” (John 19:20–22, NKJV)

Matthew 27:38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

robbers¹¹⁵.... They were probably put to death because they were “insurrectionists” like Jesus was perceived to be. “It is probable that some of these robbers were really zealots in rebellion against the authority of Rome, so that there was an element of

¹¹⁰ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 319.

¹¹¹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 534.

¹¹² Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 716). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

¹¹³ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, p. 835). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

¹¹⁴ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, p. 835). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

¹¹⁵ *robbers* ληστής “a person who engages in insurrection—‘insurrectionist, rebel.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

misplaced patriotism and even religion in their proceedings.”¹¹⁶ “The nature of their crimes would have more likely involved terrorism and assassination than theft or burglary.”¹¹⁷ Generally, they did not crucify people for theft or burglary. It is likely that the third cross was meant for Barabbas.¹¹⁸

crucified with him.... “...it is probable that while four soldiers were nailing Jesus to the cross, two other groups of four each were doing the same to the two robbers.”¹¹⁹

“Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:12, ESV)

one on the right and one on the left. “Ironically, the right and the left of Jesus is where James and John wished to be....”¹²⁰

“And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”” (Matthew 20:21, NKJV)

The Passers-By

Matthew 27:39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads

those who passed by.... “Crucifixions were usually held alongside well-traveled roads to remind as many people as possible of the high cost of crime, particularly treason against the empire.”¹²¹ The location of the crucifixion was “outside the gate.” This was where roads crossed and connected as they drew near the city gate. In this location a “statement” could be made by the Romans. It could be assured that in such a place a maximum number of Jews would see this execution and thereby fear the power of Rome. We should remember that this is the Passover and huge crowds would be in Jerusalem at this time. One ancient Roman writer said, “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect.”¹²²

¹¹⁶ Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

¹¹⁷ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 417.

¹¹⁸ *Barabbas* is a 1950 novel by Pär Lagerkvist. It tells a version of the life of Barabbas, the man whom the Bible relates was released instead of Jesus. The novel is built on antithesis: Jesus dies first among the three crucified – Barabbas dies last. Jesus dies among several of his friends – Barabbas dies alone. Jesus talks to God – Barabbas talks to the darkness. The novel starts with Jesus' crucifixion and ends with Barabbas' crucifixion in Rome. It starts with Jesus dying for Barabbas in Jerusalem, it ends with Barabbas dying for Jesus in Rome as a martyr of the Christian faith.

¹¹⁹ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew (Vol. 9, p. 965). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹²⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1034.

¹²¹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 417.

¹²² Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 179.

“So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.” (Hebrews 13:12, ESV)

derided him, wagging their heads.... “They taunt his apparent impotence. “Hurled insults”....”¹²³

“All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,” (Psalm 22:7, NKJV)

“Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.” (Psalm 22:12–13, NKJV)

Matthew 27:40 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

“After the false charges were made, the news apparently spread widely, and now the people at the crucifixion site are hurling it into Jesus’ face in rejection and disbelief.”¹²⁴

destroy the temple.... They knew that Jesus had said something like this and that this was a major charge against him. They think he is a fool, got trapped in his own stupid boasting.

“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.””
“But he was speaking about the temple of his body.” (John 2:19; 21, ESV)

“Now here is the temple still in its majestic place, and here is the iconoclast in this very unmajestic place. “Power over the Temple was a messianic prerogative; now the one alleged to have claimed that power is pinned ... to a cross” (Senior, 131). Isn’t this a classic case of events proving a man wrong? It looked this way in AD 30. But since AD 70 and the destruction of the temple (and another has not been built), imagine how this scene has looked to readers. Which temple stands?”¹²⁵ “Christians believe that God saw fit to end this temple because a new temple made without human hands—the Risen Christ—has taken its place, and this New Temple is not bound geographically or ethnically.”¹²⁶

If you are the Son of God.... We have heard this phrase before.

“And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God....”” (Matthew 4:3, ESV)

“and said to him, “If you are the Son of God....”” (Matthew 4:6, ESV)

¹²³ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 417.

¹²⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1034.

Senior D. P. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (1985)

¹²⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 737.

¹²⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 737.

“Through the passersby Satan was still trying to get Jesus to evade the Father’s will and avoid further suffering....”¹²⁷

come down from the cross.... “For the sake of our eternal salvation, we praise God that he chose to remain faithful despite this unspeakable and excruciating agony.”¹²⁸

The Jewish Leaders

Matthew 27:41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,

chief priests, with the scribes and elders.... The religious leaders of the nation unite in condemning Jesus. “Matthew gives the full list of the three main component groups of the Sanhedrin, so as to underline the comprehensive rejection of Jesus by the whole Jewish establishment.”¹²⁹

“Jesus had not been condemned by irreligious, immoral men but by conscientious, devout Jews who believed they were defending God’s law. It was Judaism at its best that put Jesus on the cross.”¹³⁰ It was religion at its worse that mocked him there.

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

He saved others.... This “is probably an oblique reference to Jesus’ supernatural healing ministry. “But readers of the Gospel know by now that it is not a case of *can’t* but of *won’t*. He can, but for love of the world he will not. In a way, what Jesus does not do now is more powerful than anything he ever did do.”¹³¹

“*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21, ESV)

“And it is too customary with all wicked men to estimate the power of God by present appearances, so that whatever he does not accomplish they think that he cannot accomplish....”¹³²

he cannot save himself.... “And though Jesus *could* have saved himself (26:53), he could not have saved himself if he was to save others.”¹³³

¹²⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 576). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹²⁸ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 417.

¹²⁹ France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1071). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹³⁰ Carson, D. A. (Ed.). (1992). Right with God: justification in the Bible and the world; Justification in Pauline Thought by Brian. C. Wintle (electronic ed., p. 54). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House [from G. E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids/London 1974) 368].

¹³¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 738.

¹³² John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (vol. 3; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 306.

¹³³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 577). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53, ESV)

let him come down now from the cross.... “...in the mystery of providence, if Jesus did step down, there would be no “blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins” (26:26–29), no ransom (20:28), no salvation from sin (1:21), no theological basis for healing (8:16–17), no gospel of the kingdom to be proclaimed to nations everywhere (28:19–20), no fulfillment of Scripture.”¹³⁴

and we will believe in him.... “When Jesus did not come down “now,” it proved to Israel that Jesus was a false Messiah; it proved to the church that he was the true; that he was the Immaculate Sacrifice of the Law, the Suffering Servant of the Prophets, and the Righteous Innocent of the Psalms.”¹³⁵

Matthew 27:43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”

He trusts in God.... “The Sanhedrin’s remarks pick up almost exactly the Passion Psalm’s predictions....”¹³⁶

“All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”” (Psalm 22:7–8, NKJV)

“They recognize that Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of God” was at least a claim to messiahship and perhaps more. So assuming that God must crown every effort of Messiah with success, they conclude that Jesus’ hopeless condition is proof enough of the vanity of his pretensions.”¹³⁷ They miss an important point.

“But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” (John 11:49–52, ESV)

if he desires him.... “If God really wants him!” That hurts. The implication, of course, is that God does *not* want him—look at him.”¹³⁸

For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’

¹³⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 577). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹³⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 739.

¹³⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 739.

¹³⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 577). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹³⁸ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 741.

“And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”” (Matthew 3:17, NKJV)

“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”” (Matthew 17:5, NKJV)

“do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:36, NKJV)

“The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”” (John 19:7, NKJV)

The Two Criminals

Matthew 27:44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

“The criminals also join in the mocking, so that torment comes from all sides (v. 44).”¹³⁹
But....

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”” (Luke 23:39–43, NKJV)

The Death of Jesus (27:45–53)

“In Matthew’s narrative sequence the mockery of vv. 39–44 took place in the early stages of Jesus’ time on the cross, during the morning. Now a new phase begins about noon, reaching its climax in Jesus’ death soon after the ninth hour (3 P.M.).”¹⁴⁰

Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour [3 P.M.].

darkness¹⁴¹.... From noon to 3 p.m. Darkness often demonstrates God’s displeasure on Israel and is an indication of coming or present judgement.

““And on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness”

¹³⁹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (vol. 22; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 418.

¹⁴⁰ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1073). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁴¹ *darkness* σκότος “...a condition resulting from the partial or complete absence of light...” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.” (Amos 8:9–10, ESV)

“and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.” (Deuteronomy 28:29, ESV)

“She who bore seven has grown feeble; she has fainted away; her sun went down while it was yet day; she has been shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 15:9, ESV)

Earlier Jesus used darkness as one of the signs of judgment on Israel during the days of tribulation that would soon come upon “this generation” (24:34).

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” (Matthew 24:29, ESV)

over all the land.... Translators struggle with this Greek word, here translated “land.” Sometimes they translate it “earth” when it appears to reference the land of Israel. Here it may be better to understand it as earth and not land. This would mean that the whole earth experienced this darkness, not just the land of Israel. This is more likely than not.

“As at the *beginning* Jesus was singled out in baptism with open heavens, the descending dove, and the divine Voice (3:16–17), so now at the *end* he is singled out again, but this time cosmically (“over the whole earth”), as if to say to the whole world: **“The most portentous thing ever to happen is happening now.”**¹⁴²

“Thallus, a Gentile historian who wrote around ad 52, apparently acknowledged this darkening of the sun as a factual event, but attempted to explain it away as an eclipse (as recorded in Julius Africanus, *The Extant Fragments of the Five Books of the Chronography*, section 18 (ANF 6:136) [ca. ad 221]). The *Gospel of Peter* 5:15 and *Acts of Pilate*, chapter 11, record similar references to the darkening of the sun during Jesus' crucifixion.”¹⁴³

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour [3 P.M.] Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

And about the ninth hour [3 P.M.].... Matthew has nothing to say about the three hours of darkness that is apparently across the whole earth.

Mark says that Jesus was crucified at “the third hour” which was about 9 A.M; and it is at 3 P.M. that he dies.

“And it was the third hour [9 A.M.] when they crucified him.” (Mark 15:25, ESV)

¹⁴² Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 745.

¹⁴³ Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 48:2, p. 304, (2005).

Compare these times with the morning and evening sacrifice in the Temple. We read that the morning sacrifice in the Temple was about 9 A.M. and the evening sacrifice was about 3 P.M.

“Historical testimony shows the time of the sacrifice of the morning lamb to have been about 9 a.m. (Edersheim, 143). The rabbis stated that the ‘between the two evenings’ lamb was slaughtered at 2:30 p.m. and the pieces laid on the altar at 3:00 p.m. (Edersheim, 144).”¹⁴⁴ And again, “...but did still twice each day, in the morning and about the ninth hour, offer their sacrifices on the altar....”¹⁴⁵

So, while the Jews were being very punctilious about the morning and evening sacrifice in the Temple, they are crucifying the actual lamb of God at these very hours outside the wall of the city!

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” “This is the only time in his Gospel that Matthew gives us Jesus’ *Aramaic* speech, as if to say: “What Jesus says now is so sacred that I want to give you his very words.”¹⁴⁶

My God.... “This “God-forsakenness” rather than the physical suffering is, perhaps, what he had most dreaded in Gethsemane, so that he begged for the cup to be taken away. In giving his life as a ransom for many for the forgiveness of sins he must, for the moment, be separated from his Father. But it is surely also significant that Jesus, like the abandoned psalmist, still addresses God as “*my God*,” this shout expresses not a loss of faith, but a (temporary) loss of contact.”¹⁴⁷

why.... “...the God whose presence Jesus does not feel, Jesus addresses. The God whom Jesus does not experience, Jesus invokes. The Cry of Dereliction *looks* like a cry of despair.... Yet Jesus right here, better than perhaps anywhere else, teaches us exactly what faith at its deepest level is: it is believing God even when we do not feel him.”¹⁴⁸ Feelings can be treacherous.

forsaken¹⁴⁹.... “If we ask in what ontological sense the Father and the Son are here divided, the answer must be that we do not know because we are not told. ... In this cry of dereliction, the horror of the world’s sin and the cost of our salvation are revealed.”¹⁵⁰

Here Jesus quotes the first verse of Psalm 22. When a section in the Old Testament is quoted, generally the author intends that the reader take note of the whole passage, not

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.keithhunt.com/Evensac.html>

¹⁴⁵ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 370.

¹⁴⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 746.

¹⁴⁷ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 1076–1077). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁴⁸ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 750.

¹⁴⁹ *forsaken* ἐγκαταλείπω “...to forsake, desert. To leave behind in any place or state. ... With the meaning of to leave remaining.... By implication, to leave in the lurch, forsake, desert, abandon....” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

¹⁵⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelein (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 579). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

just those introductory words. "...our evangelist and his first readers would have understood the quotation of Ps 22:2 to be like a Jewish midrash, in which the first part of a verse is quoted and the rest assumed..."¹⁵¹ It is similar to the way we use biblical citations for instance "Psalm 22." They would simply quote the first line but in doing so make reference to the whole passage. So, Jesus is drawing our attention to all of the 22nd Psalm. "...as Psalm 22 moves on from complaint to faith and praise, so should Jesus' words imply the same."¹⁵²

Psalm 22:1 **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?** Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?

Psalm 22:2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, *but You do not hear*, And in the night season, and am not silent.

Psalm 22:3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

Psalm 22:4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.

Psalm 22:5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

Psalm 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

Psalm 22:7 **All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,**

Psalm 22:8 **"He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"**

Psalm 22:9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.

Psalm 22:10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.

Psalm 22:11 *Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help.*

Psalm 22:12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.

Psalm 22:13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.

Psalm 22:14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

Psalm 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

Psalm 22:16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

Psalm 22:17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

Psalm 22:18 **They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.**

Psalm 22:19 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

Psalm 22:20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog.

Psalm 22:21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen!

You have answered Me.

Psalm 22:22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

¹⁵¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 625.

¹⁵² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 625.

Psalm 22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Psalm 22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard.

Psalm 22:25 My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

Psalm 22:26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever!

Psalm 22:27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations shall worship before You.

Psalm 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations.

Psalm 22:29 All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

Psalm 22:30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

Psalm 22:31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this.

So, we are to read the second part of the 22nd Psalm at this time as well. It is this also that Jesus is pointing us to. Because of the first section of the Psalm, we can experience the second part.

I can think of no other passage that better approaches Jesus' heart than this one in Habakkuk.

“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.” (Habakkuk 3:17–19, ESV)

When everything imaginable has gone wrong “yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” Sometimes that's all you've got.

Matthew 27:47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”

“Moreover on the lips of a dying man crying out in agony, “*Eloi*” could as easily be mistaken for Elijah as “*Eli*”....”¹⁵³

“Some Jewish tradition...held that he would come and rescue the righteous in their distress....”¹⁵⁴ This is what the bystanders are referring to. They misunderstand Jesus words and hope for a dramatic and entertaining rescue by Elijah. “This then becomes the opportunity to mock Jesus again. They joke....”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 578). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁵⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 579). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁵⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 626.

“The (deliberate?) misinterpretation is ironic because while the people wait to see if Elijah will come (v. 49), the reader knows that John the Baptist, in the rôle of Elijah, has already ministered to Jesus and confessed him Messiah (3:11–17; 11:1–19), and also that Elijah himself has borne testimony to Jesus (17:3).”¹⁵⁶

Matthew 27:48 *And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.*

sour wine.... In verse 34 we read that “*they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.*” Here the gall is missing. There, they were offering to stupefy him, here they are trying to revive him. Here “its purpose may have been to prolong life and agony, while with false piety the onlookers say they will wait for Elijah to rescue him (v. 49).”¹⁵⁷

put it on a reed.... It was common to crucify a person with his feet only inches above the ground. In such circumstances, a person would simply reach up with his arm to put the sponge to his mouth. But here we see that Jesus was in fact lifted up high enough that that was not possible, they needed a reed to reach that high. Or, it is possible the guards would not allow the crowd to get that close to Jesus, so a reed was needed to reach him.

Matthew 27:49 *But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”*

“The crowd’s mocking misunderstanding ... simply portrays, as in one last snapshot, the main way the people of God responded to Jesus during his ministry: interested, credulous, curious, but without ears to hear, without understanding, and, finally, with misled opinions (cf. 13:14–15).”¹⁵⁸

As always, the crowd looks for the spectacular and entertaining. “Maybe we’ll get lucky and there’ll be fireworks!”

Matthew 27:50 *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.*

loud voice.... John tells us what the cry was: “*It is finished.*”

“*When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*” (John 19:30, ESV)

“...*tetelestai* (Τετέλεσται, it is finished) is the victor’s shout; it is the cry of the man who has *completed his task*; it is the cry of the man who has won through the struggle; it is the cry of the man who has come out of the dark into the glory of the light, and who has grasped the crown. So, then, Jesus died a victor with a shout of triumph on his lips.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 626.

¹⁵⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 579). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁵⁸ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 751.

¹⁵⁹ Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Gospel of Matthew* (Vol. 2, pp. 369–370). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.

“Here is the precious thing. Jesus passed through the uttermost abyss, and then the light broke. If we too cling to God, even when there seems to be no God, desperately and invincibly clutching the remnants of our faith, quite certainly the dawn will break and we will win through. The victor is the man who refuses to believe that God has forgotten him, even when every fiber of his being feels that he is forsaken. The victor is the man who will never let go his faith, even when he feels that its last grounds are gone. The victor is the man who has been beaten to the depths and still holds on to God, for that is what Jesus did.”¹⁶⁰

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17–18, ESV)

“It was at this moment, when he was experiencing the abyss of his alienation from the Father and was being cruelly mocked by those he came to serve, that he chose to yield up his life a “ransom for many”....”¹⁶¹

“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28, ESV)

and yielded up his spirit. “The Messiah did not die of exhaustion, struggling for life. Of His own will He let go what He could have retained.”¹⁶²

“just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15, ESV)

Signs that Accompanied Jesus’ Death (27:51–56)

Matthew 27:51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

“After the awful divine silence at the mocking and death of Jesus (vv. 32–50), **God finally acts!** We suddenly have a veritable “explosion of the supernatural” in the verses that immediately follow Jesus’ awful death....”¹⁶³ “God, who has, for several chapters, seemingly remained aloof, now vindicates his Son with a shower of astounding miracles.”¹⁶⁴

the curtain¹⁶⁵ ***of the temple was torn in two....***

¹⁶⁰ Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). The Gospel of Matthew (Vol. 2, p. 370). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.

¹⁶¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 580). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁶² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 627.

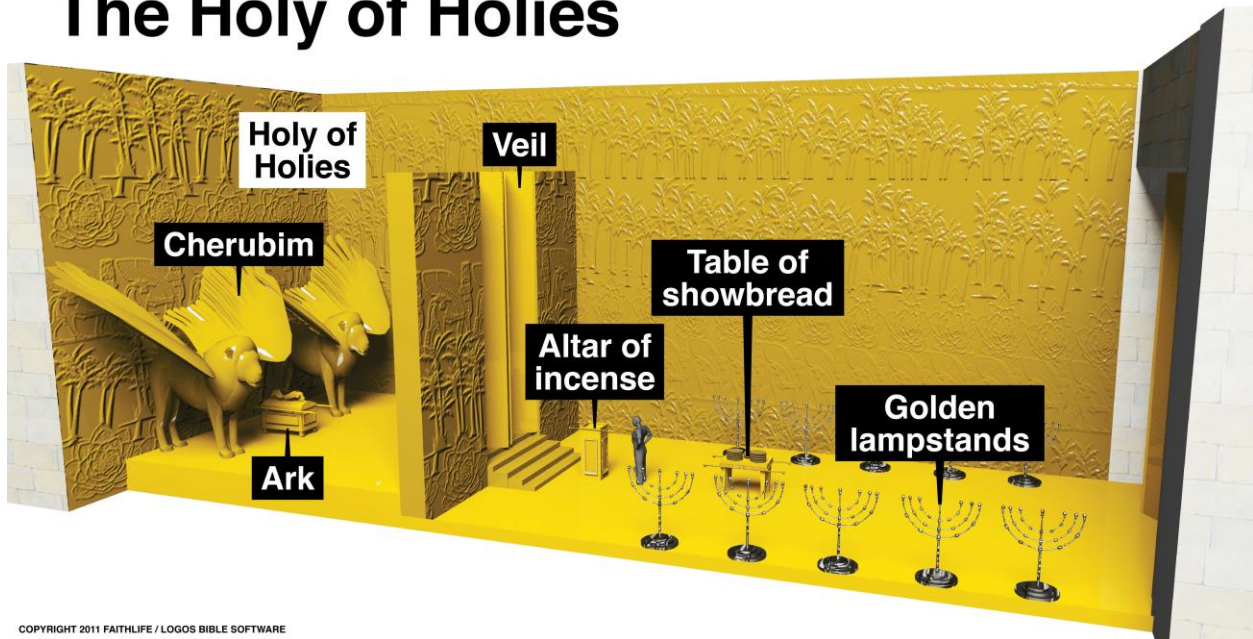
¹⁶³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 756.

¹⁶⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 629.

¹⁶⁵ καταπέτασμα “The term καταπέτασμα occurs 6x in the NT, always with the def. art. and with ref. to the inner curtain in the temple. Half of the occurrences are found in one context, namely, the description of

“Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place,”
(Hebrews 9:3, ESV)

The Holy of Holies



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But which curtain? *“There were two temple curtains, one dividing the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place and the other separating the Holy Place from the court. Tearing the latter would be more public, but tearing the inner veil could hardly be hushed up. ... The inner veil is presupposed in Hebrews 4:16; 6:19–20; 9:11–28; 10:19–22.”¹⁶⁶*

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
(Hebrews 6:19–20, ESV)

The author of Hebrews also equates this curtain with the body of Jesus which was also torn in the crucifixion. So there is a symbolism in this act, the tearing of the body of Jesus results in the tearing of the temple curtain, resulting in access to God by means of the last high priest, Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19–22, ESV)

the rending of the curtain concurrently with the death of Jesus on the cross (Matt 27:51 par. Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; some have argued, but without good reason, that the curtain in view is the one that separated the Holy Place from the court).” Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 640.

¹⁶⁶ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelen (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 580). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

“It is impossible to grapple with Matthew’s fulfillment themes (cf. esp. on 5:17–20; 11:11–13) and see how even the law points prophetically to Messiah and hear Jesus’ promise of a new covenant grounded in his death (26:26–29) without seeing that the tearing of the veil signifies the obsolescence of the temple ritual and the law governing it. Jesus himself is the New Temple, the meeting place of God and man (see on 26:61); the old is obsolete. The rent veil does indeed serve as a sign of the temple’s impending destruction—a destruction conceived not as a brute fact but as a theological necessity.”¹⁶⁷

from top to bottom.... “The fact that such a tall curtain is torn from the top rather than from below indicates that this is God’s work.”¹⁶⁸ “The size and thickness of the curtain ensured that no one would accidentally fall into the Holy of Holies as the veil was 60 feet long [tall], 30 feet wide, and was about one inch thick and was so massive and heavy that it took 300 priests to manipulate it....”

“In the light of the understanding of the Mount of Olives discourse outlined above, the tearing of the curtain suggests that as Jesus dies the transfer of authority from the old temple-focused régime (which has been responsible for his death) to the shortly-to-be-vindicated Son of Man is already taking place. The result will be that access to God will no longer be through the old, discredited cultic system but through Jesus himself, and more specifically through his death as a ransom for many.”¹⁶⁹

And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. Here we have Old Testament symbolism of God’s anger and judgment.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears. “Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry.”” (2 Samuel 22:7–8, ESV)

Matthew 27:52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,

The tombs also were opened.... “Jesus’ death is a resurrecting death: the dead are revived by his dying. As he passes from life to death they pass from death to life.”¹⁷⁰

“The tearing of the veil and the opening of the tombs together symbolize the first of twin foci in Jesus’ death and resurrection. On the one hand, Jesus’ sacrificial death blots out sin, defeats the powers of evil and death, and opens up access to God. On the other, Jesus’ victorious resurrection and vindication promise the final resurrection of those who die in him.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, pp. 580–581). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁶⁸ France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1080). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁶⁹ France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1081). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁷⁰ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 633.

¹⁷¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 581). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

“Matthew is telling us, among other things, that the resurrection of people who lived before Jesus Messiah is as dependent on Jesus’ triumph as the resurrection of those who come after him.”¹⁷²

the saints The resurrection of the saints “remains extraordinarily difficult for two reasons. ...its extreme brevity and lack of parallels raise many unanswered questions: What kind of bodies do these “holy people” have? Do they die again? How many people saw them? How public were these appearances?”¹⁷³

Matthew 27:53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Typically, it suited Matthew more to record this scene at the point of where the Temple curtain was torn, the rocks were split—at the point of Jesus death, although the actual event took place “**after his resurrection.**” Matthew was making an eschatological point, an age had concluded. These are the symbols of an ending of an age. Jesus life, death and resurrection are the greatest of all age-ending events.

after his resurrection.... “His resurrection is the first, theirs the consequence (cf. 1 Cor 15:20–23; 1 Thes 4:14).”¹⁷⁴ **Only as Jesus conquered death were others able to do so.** This story both looks into the past, raising saints from the Old Testament, and into the future as a taste of Jesus’ power to raise us from the dead.

many¹⁷⁵.... “Many’ in ‘*appeared to many*’ is designed to create confidence: multiple appearances of many different figures from the past mean that more than private imaginings are involved.”¹⁷⁶

Extra Biblical Comments on Unusual Temple Phenomena Around A.D. 30

“So, in summary, at the death of Jesus, the Gospel authors report at least four supernatural phenomena that were possibly related:

1. the darkening of the sun from the sixth until the ninth hour;
2. the tearing of the temple curtain;
3. the resurrection of dead saints;
4. an earthquake....”¹⁷⁷

“*Jerusalem Talmud.* Possibly the most significant corroborating sources for unusual phenomena in the temple around the time of Christ's crucifixion are the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud. These sources are important because they explicitly indicate a time reference that corresponds to the date of Jesus' crucifixion. Also, as sources preserved by rabbinic Judaism, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud do not face the

¹⁷² Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 582). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁷³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 581). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁷⁴ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1082). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁷⁵ *many* πολὺς “...a relatively large quantity of objects or events—‘many, a great deal of, a great number of.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

¹⁷⁶ Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (p. 1217). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

¹⁷⁷ *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 2 (2005): 305.

charge of being tainted by later Christian interpolations. We will look first at the Jerusalem Talmud.

In Tractate *Yoma* 6:3 we read:

It has been taught: Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. Said [to the Temple] Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, "O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, 'Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!'" (Zech 11:1).

Several things should be noted about this significant passage. First, the unusual events reported in the temple are dated to "forty years" before the temple was destroyed—that is, around ad 30—the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Second, the tradition in the Talmud identifies four supernatural phenomena that seem to indicate that the temple is malfunctioning or that God's blessing has been withdrawn. We will now briefly list and comment on these four phenomena:

- a. The "western light" went out on its own in an uncanny manner. According to the Talmud, this "western light" or "western lamp" (*נר מערבי* or *נר אלהים*, 1 Sam 3:3) was the center lamp of the Menorah (or candelabrum). According to rabbinic tradition, this "western lamp" remained lit long beyond the normally expected time—miraculously indicating God's blessing and/or presence. Accordingly, the regular self-extinguishing of the main lamp in the temple we find described in the Jerusalem Talmud above would seem to indicate a departure of God's presence or lack of his blessing.
- b. A thread which supernaturally changed from a crimson color to white on the Day of Atonement (as recorded in post-OT Jewish tradition) ceased to do so. The thread's miraculous change in color was thought to display symbolically God's fulfillment of his promise in Isa 1:18, "*Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.*" The cessation of this miraculous event seems to imply that the rituals on the Day of Atonement were not effectively dealing with people's sins.
- c. On the Day of Atonement, when lots were cast (one lot for the Lord and one for the scapegoat—see Lev 16:8), the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. Over a number of years, this consistently inauspicious result was recognized as a disturbing variance from the normal statistical expectation. Significantly, rabbinic tradition also reports that at an earlier time, the lot for the Lord always came up in the right hand as a sign of God's favor.
- d. The gates of the temple opened at night on their own in an inexplicable manner. This unusual pattern seems to demonstrate either a departure of God's presence, an invitation to invaders, or both. The Talmudic tradition clearly presents the event as a portent of coming destruction, as the following passage indicates, where we read that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai addresses the temple with these words: "*O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, 'Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!'" (Zech 11:1).*¹⁷⁸

"The Lives of the Prophets. The *Lives of the Prophets* is a document in the OT Pseudepigrapha dated to roughly the first quarter of the first century ad. In chapter

¹⁷⁸ Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 48, no. 2 (2005): 306–308.

twelve of this document we find a prophecy falsely written under the name of Habbakuk, which is presented as addressing a post-Babylonian exile situation. The text reads:

He gave a portent to those in Judea, that they would see a light in the Temple and so perceive the glory of the Temple. And concerning the end of the Temple he predicted, "By a western nation it will happen." "At that time," he said, "the curtain of the Dabeir [that is, the temple curtain separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies] will be torn into pieces"

If this passage is correctly dated to roughly the first quarter of the first century, a number of the details are noteworthy. Most significantly, we find an explicit mention of the curtain in the temple being torn. This tearing is presented as either a portent of the temple's impending destruction or a symbolic act representing God's departure. The lack of explicit details as to what actually happened to the temple in ad 70 provides further evidence that this passage was written prior to the temple's destruction."¹⁷⁹

"We began this study by noting the description of supernatural phenomena at the death of Jesus as reported in the canonical Gospels. We went on to survey six early non-biblical Jewish sources that also report unusual phenomena in the temple prior to its destruction. Some of these traditions (e.g. an earthquake, the temple curtain tearing, and temple doors opening on their own) seem to correlate closely with the Gospel traditions. One of the most significant details in some of the sources is the explicit dating of these odd events to "forty years before the temple was destroyed"—the time of Jesus' crucifixion."¹⁸⁰

Josephus records other similar miracles that occurred just prior to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

"Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night."¹⁸¹

Matthew 27:54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

centurion¹⁸².... Up to this point we could not be sure how many Romans were present. A centurion is in charge of a company of 80 to 100 men. However, it is not clear that the whole company was present. Potentially as few as 4 soldiers per prisoner, or in this case 12, would be present. I suppose the number would depend on how threatened Rome would feel at a given time.

¹⁷⁹ Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 48, no. 2 (2005): 314.

¹⁸⁰ Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 48, no. 2 (2005): 316.

¹⁸¹ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged. Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹⁸² *centurion* ἑκατοντάρχης "...a Roman officer in command of about one hundred men—'centurion, captain.'" Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

and those who were with him.... “Mark and Luke speak of the reaction of *the centurion*, but only this Evangelist includes his associates, evidently the soldiers who had actually performed the crucifixion and who were watching the sufferer.”¹⁸³

earthquake.... This is not likely the first earthquake the soldiers have seen. Therefore, their reaction would not be limited to the fact of a simply earthquake. But this earthquake was a part of the whole story they had been observing for the last several hours. They would have known that Jesus was crucified for identifying himself as the son of god. The earth had turned dark for three hours. And this earthquake, along with Jesus’ comments and actions on the cross would have occurred at such a time and in such a way as to specifically identify him in this way.

Truly this was the Son of God.... “...for Matthew’s readers this declaration is a climactic theological moment. God has twice declared that Jesus is his son (3:17; 17:5); demons have recognized him as such (4:3, 6; 8:29); Jesus has said so himself (11:25–27; cf. 24:36), has frequently referred to God as his “Father,” and has even on two occasions hinted publicly that he is God’s “Son” (21:37–39; 22:42–45); the disciples have hailed him as “God’s son” in a moment of crisis (14:33 a declaration very similar to this one), and Peter has included this title in his considered estimate of Jesus (16:16). But right up to the time of Jesus’ trial no human observer outside the disciple group has used such language of Jesus, and at the Sanhedrin hearing it has formed part of the basis of his condemnation (26:63), subsequently providing the ammunition for Jewish mockery of this preposterous claim (27:40, 43). Now, however, people right outside the community of faith have recognized and declared the truth, and so reversed that mockery, and the fact that they are not even Jews reinforces Matthew’s message that the new *ekklēsia* [Church] is not to be restricted to the children of Abraham. Like the other centurion we met earlier in the gospel, this officer and his men have displayed faith beyond that of “anyone in Israel” (8:10), and so they too represent the many who will come from east and west to join the Jewish patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven (8:11–12).”¹⁸⁴

“There is both irony and tragedy in the fact that the statement is made by Roman soldiers (cf. 8:10–11) and not the Jews to whom Jesus had come—just as in 2:2, 11 it is Gentiles who acknowledge the truth and not the Jews, anticipating the salvation-historical shift that will be articulated in 28:19. The soldiers in their fear mouth words whose real significance they could hardly have known. What they had seen was enough to make them receptive to Jesus’ claim (which they would have heard from the Jewish authorities [see 27:43]), and ultimately their confession does not differ greatly from that of Matthew’s church. On the other hand, the very claim made here was largely responsible for the Jewish rejection of Jesus (cf. 26:63; 27:40, 43).”¹⁸⁵

The Women at the Cross Matthew 27:55-56

Matthew 27:55 *There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him,*

¹⁸³ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (pp. 725–726). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁸⁴ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 1084–1085). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

¹⁸⁵ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, pp. 852–853). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

“And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.” (Luke 23:49, ESV)

Luke adds “his acquaintances” to Matthew’s “many women.”

Matthew 27:56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

many women.... Nothing is said of men—except John:

“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”” (John 19:26, ESV)

It is possible that some men are to be included in “*his acquaintances*.”

The other apostles were in hiding, probably thinking that the Jews and Romans were looking to kill them as well. The women were not the objects of the Jewish and Roman effort to stamp out this movement. The felt safe being there.

Many women are there, three are given special mention: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Of Mary Magdalene we read earlier:

“and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,” (Luke 8:2, ESV)

Mark adds Salome as being there as well but this is probably the mother of the sons of Zebedee (27:56)—James and John.

“There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.” (Mark 15:40, ESV)

Although not mentioned, it is possible that these others were present among the many as well:

“and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.” (Luke 8:3, ESV)

But we also know that Mary, Jesus’ mother was there along with Jesus’ aunt, Mary, the wife of Clopas (Mark 15:4).

Mary, the wife of Clopas, was probably Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses.

All in all, **Mary was a popular name and it is sometimes rather confusing as to who these women were.**

looking on from a distance.... The Centurion and his many soldiers would make it impossible for those present to get too close. “They stood “afar” because of necessity. The soldiers kept a space free about the crosses....”¹⁸⁶

“They kept their distance (v. 55), whether through timidity or modesty; and **last at the cross, they were first at the tomb** (28:1).”¹⁸⁷

We should also note that Mary the Mother of Jesus was also at the cross. Why?

“but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” (John 19:25, ESV)

At Jesus’ birth a prophet had said:

“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”” (Luke 2:34–35, ESV)

That prophecy has come to fulfillment this day. But still why? Why would the Father do this to Mary? I wish I could answer that question, but I cannot. But it does seem that the one person on earth that God would keep out of Jerusalem this day would be Mary. He did not.

It is most difficult to imagine the pain that Mary endured as she watched her son brutalized to the delight of the crowds. I can almost hear her prayers— “You God, gave me this child, You not Joseph, not any man, You gave me this child, and now he is dead. *I Don’t Understand!*

Prayers without answers.

Perhaps Mary suffered this for us, for the things in our life that make no sense. For our prayers that go without answers. And for the example of God’s eventual and ultimate answer in the resurrection. But an answer that came after much suffering.

In Summary

“...the crucifixion narrative nicely balances the infancy narrative. In both chapters 2 and 27 Jesus is called the king of the Jews, he is passive, and people seek to kill him. Further, whereas in chapter 2 Jesus’ birth is signaled by a light in the sky, in chapter 27 his death is accompanied by a heavenly darkness. And if, after Jesus’ birth, Gentile foreigners, who otherwise play no role in the story, testify to his messianic status and worship him, after he dies Roman soldiers, who appear only in the crucifixion narrative, attest that Jesus is Son of God.”¹⁸⁸

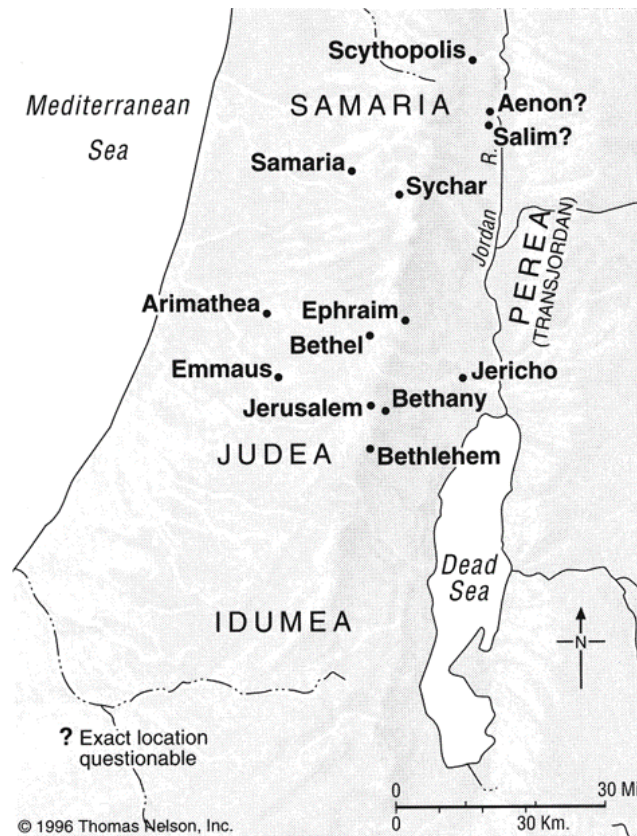
¹⁸⁶ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (p. 1134). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

¹⁸⁷ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 583). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹⁸⁸ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 640.

The Burial of Jesus (27:57–61)
(Mark 15:42–47)

Matthew 27:57 *When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.*



When it was evening.... Amazingly, it was only 24 hours earlier that Jesus celebrated the Lord's supper with his disciples. Now, one day later, their world has changed in ways they never anticipated. "The *phrase "when it was evening" repeats exactly 26:20's "when it was evening" just before the Lord's Supper, reminding us that everything that happened between that Supper and this burial happened in one twenty-four-hour period.... My Lord, what a day.*"¹⁸⁹

Matthew 27:46 tells us that Jesus died at the ninth hour or about 3 P.M. Sometime after this the question arises, what to do with Jesus' body? Normally, the disciples of a Rabbi would provide for this. But there was only one disciple at the cross, John, and he now seems to be gone. So, what was John's plan or the plan of any of the disciples?

The other two criminals would have also been buried that day. They would have been dumped into a common hole and covered up; because they were criminals, they would not have been allowed a burial. That was the normal fate of enemies of Rome. Jesus would have been dumped into that hole with them if someone had not stepped forward and requested the right to provide him a proper burial.

a rich man.... Matthew tells us he was rich which again reminds us of Isaiah 53.

¹⁸⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 769.

“And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:9, ESV)

That *“they made his grave with the wicked”* would be fulfilled by the fact that Jesus was buried in a public cemetery and probably not that far from the other men on those crosses that he died with.

named Joseph.... In all four Gospels a Joseph of Arimathea reports for duty at the burial of Jesus. ***Then he slips as quietly and quickly out of history as he slipped into it.***

“It is a curiosity of the Gospel that another quiet Joseph attended to Jesus’ earliest needs at the beginning of the story (Matt 1 and 2.... Neither Joseph says a word (of direct discourse) in the Gospel....”¹⁹⁰

To Our Blessed Lord upon the Choice of His Sepulcher

by *Richard Crashaw*

“How life and death in Thee
Agree!
Thou hadst a virgin womb,
And tomb.
A Joseph did betroth
Them both.”

Luke tells us Joseph was a member of the council or Sanhedrin.

“Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 23:50–51, ESV)

who also was a disciple of Jesus.... This is new information, the when and how are not part of the story. “That Joseph is rich and a disciple proves that, although it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, with God all things are possible (19:23–6). Joseph, who gives to the poor, is the antithesis of the rich young ruler.”¹⁹¹

...but secretly for fear of the Jews.... But now, at this point of supreme agony, his love for Jesus burst forth in his heart and his fear dissipates, it is no longer secret.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18, NKJV)

Joseph had been made perfect in love, he no longer fears.

¹⁹⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 769–770.

¹⁹¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 649.

Matthew 27:58 *He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.*

This was a risky thing to do, "...only a courageous ally would identify himself before the governor as "friend" or patron of one condemned for conspiracy against Rome...."¹⁹²

He went to Pilate.... "Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate shortly after Jesus died, probably about 4:00 p.m., since the body had to be prepared for burial and buried by dusk."¹⁹³

It is not uncommon for rich people to have access to political figures. "The "rich man" here, at a more worldly level, may help to explain why Pilate was moved, with surprising alacrity, to give Joseph the body. **Money talks; the monied have influence....**"¹⁹⁴

"Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph." (Mark 15:43–45, ESV)

There were many ways to crucify a man. One was to provide a small seat for him to set on. This insured that the period of suffering would last three or four days. In Jesus case, and that of the criminals with him, this was not possible for the Sabbath was but hours away. On the other hand, if you wanted to produce a quick death you broke the legs of the ones you were crucifying. With broken legs, they could not push up with their legs to fill their lungs with air. So, they died quickly. This they did to the criminals crucified with Jesus.

"Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away." (John 19:31, ESV)

But in Jesus case, he had already given up his spirit.

"But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." (John 19:33–34, ESV)

The spear would have most likely pierced Jesus heart. Piercing Jesus with a spear demonstrates that Jesus is already dead—he did not flinch or groan and the water had already begun to separate from the blood, a condition that exists only in death. The gospel writers make sure the reader knows Jesus is dead.

¹⁹² Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 693.

¹⁹³ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1049.

¹⁹⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 771.

Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. Pilate was careful to ensure the death of Jesus. No one could better answer that question than the man who killed him, a professional in killing people.

“Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time.” (Mark 15:44, NKJV)

Matthew 27:59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud

“Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” (John 19:40, NKJV)

To these linen cloths, “a single long sheet wrapped around the body several times to “shroud” Jesus’ mutilated body, and with the spices added to stave off the developing stench of the decay.”¹⁹⁵

John tells us that Nicodemus came with Joseph. Nicodemus may also have been rich for he, or he and Joseph, brought seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes to prepare his body for burial.

“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.” (John 19:38–39, ESV)

“In today’s market the 75 pounds of aloes and myrrh would sell for \$150,000-\$200,000.”¹⁹⁶ “...75 pounds of it was used, making it a virtual royal burial!”¹⁹⁷ That gives us an idea of their own personal wealth—and their estimate of Jesus.

Matthew 27:60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

and laid it in his own new tomb.... “To bury Jesus in his own tomb (27:60) fits the situation of haste and location, but also suggests a special love normally reserved for family members or those equally esteemed (cf. 1 Kings 13:30–31).”¹⁹⁸

“John the Baptist received better treatment from his disciples (14:12: “And [John’s] disciples came, took [John’s] corpse, and buried him”).”¹⁹⁹ None of Jesus’ disciples showed up to honor him in this way. Without Joseph, it is not unlikely that Jesus body would have been dumped in some hole, perhaps along with the other criminals on those crosses.

¹⁹⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1050.

¹⁹⁶ <http://footstepsineden.blogspot.com/2009/04/joseph-from-arimathea-was-one-of-jesus.html>

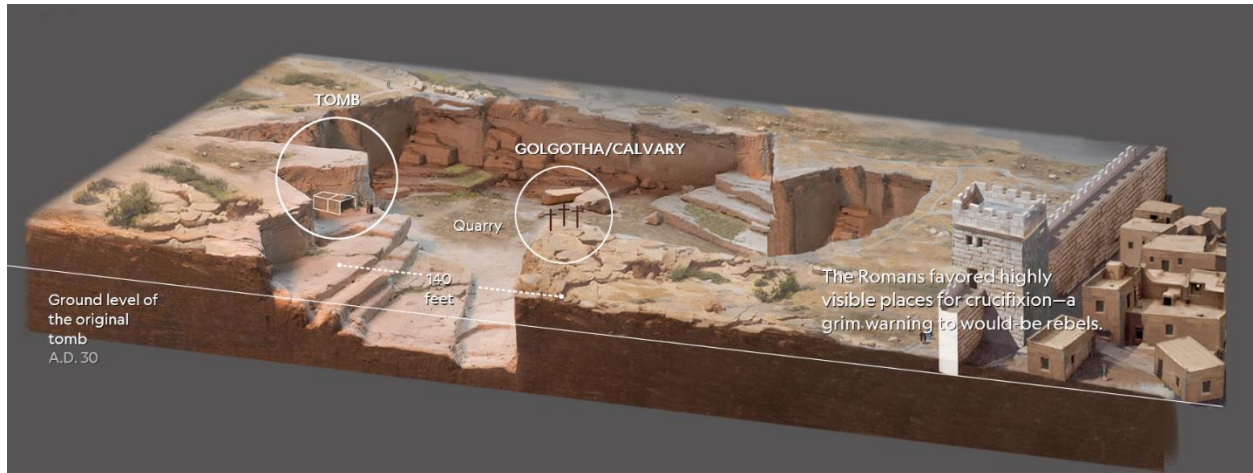
¹⁹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1050.

¹⁹⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 694.

¹⁹⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 771.

We learn from John that “*the tomb was nearby.*” (John 19:42, NKJV).

“Tombs were usually found in abandoned stone quarries, where stonecutters had already cut their way into the hillside—cave tombs. They had several chambers for the generations of the deceased, with the front room having a two-to-three foot high doorway....”²⁰⁰



new tomb.... “Tombs were of various kinds. Many were sealed with some sort of boulder wedged into place to discourage wild animals and grave robbers. But an expensive tomb consisted of an antechamber hewn out of the rock face, with a low passage (cf. “bent over,” John 20:5, 11) leading into the burial chamber that was sealed with a cut disk-shaped stone that rolled in a slot cut into the rock. The slot was on an incline, making the grave easy to seal but difficult to open: several men might be needed to roll the stone back up the incline. This sort of tomb is presupposed in the Gospel records....”²⁰¹ In keeping with Joseph’s financial status, this was a very large family tomb. Later we find several women and two angels in the tomb without any apparent issues related to size.

“And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:2–5, ESV)

rolled a great stone to the entrance.... “That the rock is ‘large’ [great] means that the tomb itself is large and impressive.”²⁰² This would be expected as it was made for a rich man.

Jews made sure that the entrance was fully covered down to the smallest fissure. If not, animals would enter the tomb and devour the bodies of their family members. This

²⁰⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1050.

²⁰¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 584). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²⁰² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 652.

stone would have been chiseled to a perfect fit for the entrance and mud and mortar may have been added to the seams. Air might enter the tomb, but not much more.

“The typical Jewish tomb also had: (1) a heavy wheel-shaped stone four to six feet in diameter rolled into a shallow trough and kept in place by a short wall on both sides of the opening; (2) a burial chamber with a preparation room encircled with a stone bench on which the body was readied; (3) burial niches (six feet long and two feet high) cut into the wall either above the bench or in a separate chamber; (4) a decorated limestone “bone box” (ossuary) on the floor to gather the bones after the body had decomposed. A wealthy tomb especially would have a groove sloping down into the doorway, with the heavy stone rolled into it; while it was easy to roll in, it would take several men to roll it up the slope.”²⁰³



“Jerusalemites buried their dead outside their city, often in caves or tombs intended to hold multiple corpses; they were cut into the soft limestone rock. Archaeology confirms

²⁰³ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (vol. 1; Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1050.

that often a body was placed on a shelf (cf. Jn 20:5–6) or recess and a rounded stone or disc (like an upright millstone) was rolled in the groove before the entrance. This stone kept out animals and, when heavy enough, discouraged theft.”²⁰⁴

and went away.... Joseph of Arimathea first appears in Matthew 27:57, in 27:60 he goes away not to be heard of again in the Bible.

Interestingly, ““Jefferson’s Bible,” ... *ends* with this verse, Matt 27:60: “and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.””²⁰⁵ Thomas Jefferson was a Deist²⁰⁶ with no belief in the deity of Jesus Christ and no hope in a resurrection from the dead.

In the preaching of the gospel in the years that followed, the burial of Jesus is a critical point of doctrine.

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, NKJV)

“Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.” (Acts 13:29, NKJV)

The Apostle’s Creed also stresses this point:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

It appears “***laid it in his own new tomb***” is made to reinforce the fact of Jesus’ death. Jesus did not simply get better later, “he was crucified, died, and was buried.” “The burial is further confirmation of the reality of Jesus’ death; together they provide the necessary prelude to the resurrection itself.”²⁰⁷

Matthew 27:61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The “many women” of 27:55 is now reduced to two. John and Jesus’ mother have left.

²⁰⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol. 3; International Critical Commentary; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 651.

²⁰⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 773.

²⁰⁶ "Deism" is a belief in a deity or god based on observance of natural laws and phenomena, while simultaneously rejecting miracles, divine revelation, and prophecy of all kinds, including the idea of inerrant scriptures or holy books. A Deist is not a Christian. https://www.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_deist

²⁰⁷ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 860.

sitting opposite the tomb. "...it might be paraphrased, "but the women stayed on there after he had gone."²⁰⁸ Those must have been difficult hours for them filled with confusing thoughts and prayers without answers.

However, their attention to Jesus' burial allowed them certain knowledge as to where Jesus was buried.

A Guard of Soldiers Is Set at the Tomb (27:62–66)

Matthew 27:62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate

the day of Preparation.... "The Preparation was the day when people prepared for the Sabbath, that is, Friday."²⁰⁹ This was the day Jesus was murdered. The "next day" would be Saturday, the Sabbath.

the chief priests and the Pharisees.... These are not always friendly to each other but on this day they act with common cause.

The last time we saw these two groups working in concert was when they were listening to Jesus tell the story of the landowner.

"But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."²¹⁰ (Matthew 21:38–41, NKJV)

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them."²¹¹ (Matthew 21:43–45, NKJV)

Matthew 27:63 and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.'

Sir (κύριος).... Sir or Lord. "...a title of respect used in addressing or speaking of a man—'sir, mister."²¹⁰ "Only Jesus, God, or figures in parables who stand for Jesus or God are called "Lord" in this Gospel—but now the enemies of Jesus give *Pilate* that august name!"²¹¹ "...there's irony in the chief priests' and Pharisees' using this word for

²⁰⁸ France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 1091). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

²⁰⁹ Morris, L. (1992). The Gospel according to Matthew (p. 730). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

²¹⁰ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains. New York: United Bible Societies.

²¹¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 774.

Pilate in one breath and in the next breath calling Jesus “that deceiver.”²¹² “Lord” is the word that the Church will refuse to call Caesar—and will die because of it.

we remember.... “Why didn’t Jesus’ *own disciples* remember? The irony is that “the opponents took Jesus’ words about rising from the dead more seriously than did the disciples....”²¹³

“The disciples disbelieved Jesus’ words about rising again, not because they could not understand the plain words, but because they had no frame of reference capable of integrating a dying and rising Messiah into their own messianic expectations.”²¹⁴ **They could only imagine a conquering king, not a suffering servant.** Christians still suffer from this affliction. Jesus must come back to Israel, rebuild the Temple and reign as King in this material sense or for them the Bible has failed.

impostor²¹⁵.... To Pilate they say “Sir/Lord.” Jesus they call “imposter.”

Although the disciples never seemed to “get it” these his enemies are quite aware that in his teachings, his resurrection was often mentioned. However, by calling him an imposter they show that they did not believe it.

‘After three days I will rise.’ Although the Pharisees do not believe it, they know exactly what he said.

“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
(Matthew 12:40, ESV)

They “feared that the disciples might attempt to stage a mock resurrection by causing Jesus’ body to disappear. They had taken notice of exactly what Jesus had said, they recalled the interval of *three days* that he had mentioned....”²¹⁶ “It is interesting that not even the disciples recall this prediction....”²¹⁷ “And when they have no explanation for what happened to the body of Jesus, ironically they invent the very lie they attempted to protect against (28:13).”²¹⁸

Matthew 27:64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.”

²¹² Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 132.

²¹³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 775.

²¹⁴ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 586). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²¹⁵ *impostor* πλάνος “...to deceive. Deceitful, deceiving, seducing (1 Tim. 4:1); as a subst., a deceiver, impostor (Matt. 27:63; 2 Cor. 6:8; 2 John 1:7).” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

²¹⁶ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (p. 730). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

²¹⁷ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 914.

²¹⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 863.

The Pharisees “have witnessed Jesus’ miraculous powers, and they want to make certain that whatever power is behind Jesus is not liberated. The cataclysmic events at the crucifixion, with the fearsome darkness, the tearing of the temple curtain, and the earthquakes portend ominous powers. The Jewish religious leaders sense that things may get out of control, so they enlist Pilate’s aid in keeping the tomb secure.”²¹⁹

order the tomb to be made secure.... “The great quest of anti-Christian power is *securing Jesus’ defeat*. If the grave of Jesus can be secured three days, the teaching of Jesus will be wiped from the face of the earth. Everything depends on this security operation.”²²⁰

lest his disciples go and steal him away.... “They wanted Pilate “to put the tomb under guard” ... not to prevent the resurrection but to keep the disciples from stealing the body, as is clearly stated here.”²²¹ “The incongruous, ironical result is that the opponents took Jesus’ words about rising from the dead more seriously than did the disciples.”²²²

“The assumption of these Jews is that, of course, Jesus could not possibly make good his word.... But these deceivers and liars imagine that other people are like themselves. They fear that the disciples of Jesus may also recall the promise of Jesus to arise; and since Jesus would be unable to do so, they may try to play a trick by stealing the body out of the tomb and by disposing of it secretly while they fool the people by spreading the report that he was raised from the dead.”²²³

and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead’.... And here is the gospel—*first heard in the mouths of Jesus’ murderous enemies!* And only later by a Holy Spirit empowered Church.

the last fraud will be worse than the first.... “And the fear expressed in the words ... “and the last deception will be worse than the first” ... proves ironically true in the sense that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus brought forth a more positive response to Jesus than his actual ministry, limited in space and time, could ever have produced.”²²⁴

In the providence of God, these men provide critical proof of the actual resurrection of Jesus from the grave. “By having the tomb guarded they made certain that no deception had been perpetrated, that the body most certainly had remained in the tomb, and that, therefore, Jesus truly arose on Sunday.”²²⁵ “Jesus’ enemies work *for* his truth, *against* their will, for by their very precautions they make the resurrection more sure **Christ’s resurrection would have been more obscure or, at any rate, their ability to deny**

²¹⁹ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 914.

²²⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 775.

²²¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 862.

²²² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (vol. 33B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 863–864.

²²³ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (p. 1144). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

²²⁴ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 14–28* (Vol. 33B, pp. 862–863). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

²²⁵ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (pp. 1144–1145). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

it would have been all the greater, if they had not taken [such] care to place witnesses over the tomb....”²²⁶

Matthew 27:65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.”

You have a guard of soldiers.... This statement is actually ambiguous; it could mean “I’m giving you a guard” or “You already have a guard, use that.” Scholars are equally divided on it. But, it appears to me that in this statement Pilate is authorizing the Sanhedrin to use the temple police to guard the gravesite. Without his authorization, they could not be used outside the temple complex.

“The Jewish leaders want Pilate to deploy his own troops, but he prefers to leave the responsibility to them; “you have a guard” refers to the Jewish temple guards.... It is their problem; let them take care of it with their own resources.”²²⁷

“This explains why, after the Resurrection, the guards reported to the chief priests, not to Pilate (28:11).”²²⁸

If they had reported the empty tomb to Pilate, then this is what would have happened: This is the story of Peter’s arrest and imprisonment—and escape. This is how it ends.

“So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.” (Acts 12:4, NKJV)

“But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.” (Acts 12:19, NKJV)

This would have also been the outcome if the guards at the tomb had been Romans. Only the fact that they were Temple police saved them, and then only because they served the interest of the Sanhedrin in telling the story of the disciples stealing Jesus’ body. A story with no witnesses or dead witnesses is weak. The Sanhedrin needed them to be alive to tell their story.

make it as secure as you can.... “So guards are posted and the stone sealed with cord and an official wax seal (v. 66).”²²⁹ “There is a detectable cynicism in Pilate’s command, reinforced by his “as well as you can.” It is almost as if Pilate now believes his wife’s dream about “this righteous man”—“leave him alone” (27:19).”²³⁰

²²⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 776.

²²⁷ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 1094). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

²²⁸ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 586). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²²⁹ Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 586). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²³⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 776.

Matthew 27:66 *So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.*

sealing.... The sealing was effected by stretching a cord across the stone at the mouth of the sepulcher, and then fastening it to the rock at either end by means of sealing-clay....²³¹ The official seal would have been pressed into a mortar like substance or perhaps wax.

In the story of Daniel we have another illustration of the sealing of a stone.

“So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.” Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.” (Daniel 6:16–17, NKJV)

Daniel was not supposed to get out. Neither was Jesus.

Rome, the Temple police and the Pharisees, without intending to do so, “provide another witness to the factuality of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus, to their own judgment.”²³²

²³¹ Meyer, H. A. W. (1884). *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew*. (P. Christie, Trans., W. Stewart, Ed.) (Vol. 2, p. 284). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

²³² Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 915.

