

CONCERNING THE WAY

December 29, 2009

LESSON 87: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Chapter 18 – Christ the Prisoner (cont.)

We left off last time with Jesus on trial before the Sanhedrin (the council of 70 Jewish leaders) in high priest Caiaphas' home. They have declared Him guilty of blasphemy against God, and have sentenced Him to death. However, legally they could not execute anyone; that had to be done by the Roman authorities. So they took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, who is in Jerusalem for the Passover.

TRIAL #3 – Pilate

John 18:28 Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor's residence. (Now it was very early morning.) They did not go into the governor's residence so they would not be ceremonially defiled, but could eat the Passover meal.

The phrase “early morning” here and in the Matthew passage means it was during the 4th watch, which was from 3 to 6 A.M. It was probably just after 3, because the time of the rooster crowing was considered to be 3 A.M. They brought Jesus to Pilate just after that. All of the next trials came during the 4th watch, so they were pretty short and were running Jesus back and forth quickly, because by the end of the 4th watch, Jesus had been delivered to be crucified (John 19:14).

This is typical of legalistic, hypocritical people like these religious leaders. Here they are holding illegal hearings and abusing an innocent man and all they're concerned about is ceremony and ritual, and their stomachs! They obeyed the letter of God's Law while plotting the death of God's Son. They wanted to stay clean for Passover so they could feast, while trying to kill the One who fulfilled the Passover rituals! People love their ceremonies; they love to be faithful to their rituals, but then ignore reality.

John 18:29-32 So Pilate came outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" (30) They replied, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." (31) Pilate told them, "Take him yourselves and pass judgment on him according to your own law!" The Jewish leaders replied, "We cannot legally put anyone to death." (32) (This happened to fulfill the word Jesus had spoken when he indicated what kind of death he was going to die.)

A Roman trial normally began with this phrase in verse 29 - “What accusation do you bring against this man?” When the charge was stated, any evidence for both sides was presented and a verdict rendered. The Roman governor had the option to act as the judge in a trial of a non-Roman citizen or to delegate his authority to another officer or court.

Pilate is the governor of Judea, and responsible for keeping the peace among the Jews. This could be a difficult job. He has to both make the Jews happy so they won't cause riots and insurrections, and keep Rome happy so he can keep his job. So he is drawn into this farce. He is probably only here in Jerusalem because of potential uprisings with all the people there for Passover, so he's already busy and a little uptight. So he sees that this matter was something he didn't need or want to get involved in, and tries to hand Jesus back over to the Jewish authorities.

The Jews' reply to Pilate showed the hostility between them. (Pilate was hated by them for his harshness and the fact that he was a Gentile ruling over them. Pilate despised them and eventually in the year a.d. 36 they were able to get Pilate recalled to Rome.) He knew that envy was the cause of their accusation against Jesus (Matthew 27:18). So Pilate decided to play a game with the Jews with Jesus' life as the prize. He refused to do anything without a sufficient charge.

Why did the Jewish leaders say they couldn't legally put anyone to death? They actually had tried previously to stone Jesus (John 8:3-5, 59), and would stone Stephen later without getting Roman permission (Acts 7:58). It was probably because they didn't want to defile themselves during Passover by being involved in an execution.

The Mosaic law had stipulated that blasphemy should be punished by stoning (Leviticus 24:16), but Jesus had predicted that He would be delivered to the Gentiles for crucifixion (Matthew 20:19). So the Romans had to be involved to fulfill scripture. Some have noted that the Jewish leaders probably could have gotten away with stoning Him, which they had tried before in public and was the preferred method of execution among the Jews. But they didn't want the people to blame them, they much preferred putting the whole thing on the Romans, whom the people hated anyway. Luke fills in more details at this point:

Luke 23:2 They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man subverting our nation, forbidding us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar and claiming that he himself is Christ, a king."

The charges are:

1. Disturbing the peace of Israel
2. Starting a rebellion by telling people they shouldn't pay their taxes (which was a lie – Luke 20:20-26)
3. Claiming to be King – which would have been a political threat to Rome

You can see how the Jewish leaders had framed these accusations for Pilate, because all three are things that the Romans would be concerned about, and Pilate would be forced to do something about it.

Luke 23:3-7 So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He replied, "You say so." (4) Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." (5) But they persisted in saying, "He incites the people by teaching throughout all Judea. It started in Galilee and ended up here!" (6) Now when Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. (7) When he learned that he was from Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who also happened to be in Jerusalem at that time.

Pilate was really only concerned about the third charge, because of its political implications against Rome. Pilate doesn't find any basis for their charges, so when he learns that Jesus was a Galilean, he was only too happy to turn the problem over to Herod, who was in charge of the province of Galilee. Herod was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, and he was presumably in Jerusalem for the Passover feast, even though his father was only half-Jewish.

TRIAL #4 - Herod

Luke 23:8-12 When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some miraculous sign. (9) So Herod questioned him at considerable length; Jesus gave him

no answer. (10) The chief priests and the experts in the law were there, vehemently accusing him. (11) Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, dressing him in elegant clothes, Herod sent him back to Pilate. (12) That very day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other, for prior to this they had been enemies.

Herod treated the whole thing as a joke, dressing him in royal clothes and sending him back to Pilate.

TRIAL #5 - Pilate

Luke 23:13-16 Then Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, (14) and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. When I examined him before you, I did not find this man guilty of anything you accused him of doing. (15) Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, he has done nothing deserving death. (16) I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

Pilate still finds Jesus innocent of the charges, especially anything deserving death. The Greek word translated "flogged" here just means to discipline by punishment. This is a different word than the one used later in Matthew 27:26 for flogging, which was more specific. That implies that this first punishment was less severe - it was a beating given to prisoners that were to be released. Let's go back to John to continue the narrative:

John 18:33-38 So Pilate went back into the governor's residence, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (34) Jesus replied, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or have others told you about me?" (35) Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people and your chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" (36) Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." (37) Then Pilate said, "So you are a king!" Jesus replied, "You say that I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world – to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." (38) Pilate asked, "What is truth?"

Pilate and the Romans were only concerned about keeping the peace in Israel. If Jesus really were a king, that could threaten Roman authority and cause an uprising against the emperor. The fact that Jesus says His kingdom is not of this world seems to satisfy Pilate, because in the next verses he finds Jesus innocent. There was no threat to Rome, so he could declare this man innocent and get on with his life. In speaking of truth, Jesus is speaking here of the word of God. Pilate cynically asks "What is truth?" when The Truth is standing right before him (John 14:6).

Amillennialists like to use verse 36 to say that there is no physical kingdom of Christ on earth, but that's not what He's talking about. Notice Jesus is saying that His kingdom is not FROM here. Of course, His kingdom is from heaven. The coming physical kingdom of God is described throughout the Bible as both the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, both describing a real, literal kingdom that comes down from heaven. Jesus is saying that the origin and authority of His kingdom is not from this earth.

John 18:39-40 When he had said this he went back outside to the Jewish leaders and announced, "I find no basis for an accusation against him. (39) But it is your custom that I release one prisoner for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release for you

the king of the Jews?" (40) Then they shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" (Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Since Pilate stated that He found Jesus innocent, by Roman law he should have released Jesus immediately. But because he wanted to also placate the Jews, he offered them this deal, assuming they would choose to release Jesus rather than this dangerous criminal. Barabbas means "son of the father" in Aramaic, which is ironic. The crowd was asking for the "son of the father", while they condemned Jesus, the true "Son of the Father".

Matthew 27:15-18 During the feast the governor was accustomed to release one prisoner to the crowd, whomever they wanted. (16) At that time they had in custody a notorious prisoner named Jesus Barabbas. (17) So after they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?" (18) (For he knew that they had handed him over because of envy.)

So in addition to the irony of the meaning of Barabbas' name, both men were also named "Jesus".

Matthew 27:19 As he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him: "Have nothing to do with that innocent man; I have suffered greatly as a result of a dream about him today."

The "judgment seat" (bēma in Greek) was a raised platform with steps and usually furnished with a seat. It was used by officials in addressing an assembly or making official pronouncements, often of a judicial nature.

Matthew 27:24-26 When Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but that instead a riot was starting, he took some water, washed his hands before the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. You take care of it yourselves!" (25) In reply all the people said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (26) Then he released Barabbas for them. But after he had Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

This "flogged" is a different Greek word from the previous flogging in Luke 23:16. This word literally means "*flog, scourge*, a punishment inflicted on slaves and provincials after a sentence of death had been pronounced on them."

A Roman flogging (traditionally, "scourging") was an excruciating punishment. The person was stripped of his clothes and tied to a post with his hands fastened above him (or sometimes he was thrown to the ground). Guards standing on either side of the victim would incessantly beat him with a whip (flagellum) made out of leather with pieces of lead and bone inserted into its ends. While the Jews only allowed 39 lashes, the Romans had no limit on the lashes; many died from this type of punishment before they could be executed. The whip would literally shred a person's back.

In these events, some have found as many as forty-three specific violations of Roman or Jewish law. Among them were that no arrests or trials were allowed after sundown, capital offense trials were to be held in the Temple, formal charges must be read at the beginning of a trial, witnesses who testified had to be people of integrity and had to agree on answers to seven questions about the event, high priests could not file charges, and Roman governors could not sit in judgment by themselves. The last and most obvious was the law that said an innocent man was to be released. Pilate declared Jesus innocent twice, but did not release Him, instead turning Him over to be crucified.

Chapter 19 – Christ the Lamb of God

John 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged severely.

This is yet a third different Greek word used for flogging. The English translations just say scourged or flogging, but there were actually three different types of punishment used by the Romans:

1. fustigatio (beating) – this is the punishment Jesus received in Luke 23:16, the Greek word “paideuō”
2. flagellation (flogging) – this is the Greek word “phragelloo” used in Matthew 27:26
3. verberatio (severe flogging) – the Greek word “mastigoo” here in John 19:1 – this could rip a person’s body open or cut muscle to the bone.

So Jesus was beaten, then whipped, then severely flogged. By this time His back would have been one large open wound. It is amazing that He just stood there and took it, when He could have stopped it at any time. He allowed Himself to be beaten to a pulp.

John 19:2-3 The soldiers braided a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they clothed him in a purple robe. (3) They came up to him again and again and said, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly in the face.

After the torture the soldiers inflicted on Him, they put a crown of thorns on His head, and put a purple robe on Him. The thorns were large ones, with spikes as long as an inch and sharp as needles. The crown and purple robe were a mockery of His claim to be king of the Jews.

John 19:4-5 Again Pilate went out and said to the Jewish leaders, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no reason for an accusation against him." (5) So Jesus came outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Look, here is the man!"

We don’t know if Pilate was saying this in a contemptuous way, like “Here is your king!”, or if (because he had found him innocent) he was trying to get the people to pity him, like “look at this poor man!” Jesus would have been looking very bad by this point, even unrecognizable.

John 19:6 When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they shouted out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said, "You take him and crucify him! Certainly I find no reason for an accusation against him!"

Pilate cannot by Roman law allow the Jews to execute someone, so he’s really trying hard to avoid responsibility for this. Executions were solely carried out by the Romans. Pilate is probably just being sarcastic here, because he’s so frustrated with the Jewish people. He does not want to execute Jesus, but they keep pestering him to give the order.

Crucifixion was the cruelest form of punishment used by the Romans. Roman citizens normally would not ever be executed in this way. It was reserved for the worst crimes, like treason. It was considered cruel and disgusting, and the worst possible way to die.

John 19:7-8 The Jewish leaders replied, "We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God!" (8) When Pilate heard what they said, he was more afraid than ever,

This is interesting that Pilate became more afraid when the Jewish leaders said this? Was he afraid

because he really did not want to kill Jesus, but felt he had no choice? Was he afraid of a Jewish revolt? Or was he afraid that he might really be executing the Son of God? Perhaps Pilate at least knew something of the scriptures that foretold of the coming Messiah.

“Though Roman officials may have been cynical, they also were often deeply superstitious. In pagan ears, the designation “son of god” conjured up notions of “divine men,” persons believed to enjoy certain divine powers. Ancient pagans concluded commonly enough that “the gods have come down to us in human form” (Acts 14:11). If Jesus was a “son of god,” Pilate may have reasoned, he might incur the wrath of the gods for having Jesus flogged (Matthew 27:19).” Andreas Kostenburger

John 19:9-11 and he went back into the governor's residence and said to Jesus, "Where do you come from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. (10) So Pilate said, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know I have the authority to release you, and to crucify you?" (11) Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over me at all, unless it was given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of greater sin."

We see again who is really in charge of what's going on here. God is sovereign. But people are responsible for their actions. Even though all people involved in the death of Christ are guilty, the ones who turned Him over to Pilate are more guilty - their sin is greater. This confirms that there are varying degrees of guilt, and so there will be different degrees of punishment.

John 19:12 From this point on, Pilate tried to release him. But the Jewish leaders shouted out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Everyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!"

The Jews have put Pilate in a box, and he has no choice but to do as they ask. If he doesn't, the Jews would be able to accuse Pilate of treason against Caesar. This was a threat that hit the target, one that would terrify any Roman governor.

Some believe that Pilate was already on thin ice with the emperor. He had made several mistakes with the Jews already. The first time he visited Jerusalem he brought busts of the Roman emperor, which were considered idols by the Jews. Previous governors had removed those busts before entering the city, but Pilate refused to do so. Pilate decided to build an aqueduct to improve the water supply for Jerusalem, which was great, but he financed it by taking money from the temple treasury, which caused riots among the Jews. Then another time Pilate had special shields made with the name of the emperor engraved on them, who the Romans considered to be god, and displayed them throughout Jerusalem. This infuriated the Jews, who reported it to Rome, and the emperor ordered Pilate to remove them. So at this point he was in danger of losing his job if he made another mistake with the Jews and it got back to Caesar.

John 19:13-14 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. (14) Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" (NKJV)

Pilate now sits in his judgment seat to render his decision. I use the NKJV here because I believe the NET that I have been using makes a rare mistake here. They and a few others translate “the

sixth hour” as noon. This would be correct if it were Jewish time, because Jewish time counts from sunrise. But if you do that, then there is a big discrepancy between John and the other gospel accounts here, which say that Jesus was on the cross by the 6th hour. The way this works out is to realize that Matthew and Mark are using Jewish time, but John is using Roman time, which starts counting from midnight. So the 6th hour here was actually 6 o’clock in the morning.

John 19:15 Then they shouted out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your king?" The high priests replied, "We have no king except Caesar!"

The Jews reject their Messiah, the King that had been promised to them. Matthew tells us that Pilate, not wanting to accept the blame for killing an innocent man, washed his hands of the whole thing. He was more interested in keeping the peace and protecting his own interests than doing what was right.

John 19:16-17 Then Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, (17) and carrying his own cross he went out to the place called "The Place of the Skull" (called in Aramaic Golgotha).

It looks like the Romans attempted to force Jesus to carry His cross Himself, but He would have been incredibly weak from the trauma and blood loss of the beatings and floggings. Luke tells us that they grabbed someone in the crowd to carry the cross. By the way, it would not have been the whole cross, but just the cross beam (which would have been heavy enough). The vertical stakes would have already been in the ground there at Golgotha.

“Skull” in the Greek is *kranion* and in the Latin *Golgotha* or Calvary. Many believe that the small eighteen-foot hill recognized as “Mount Calvary” in modern Jerusalem is the actual place Jesus was crucified. It does have kind of a skull-like appearance, but who knows how much it has changed from 2,000 years ago. The traditional location for most of Christianity is where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands, built in the 4th century. But there’s actually very little evidence for either site, so we just don’t know for sure where the real Calvary was.



Luke 23:25-32 He released the man they asked for, who had been thrown in prison for insurrection and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will. (26) As they led him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. They placed the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. (27) A great number of the people followed him, among them women who were mourning and wailing for him. (28) But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. (29) For this is certain: The days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore children, and the breasts that never nursed!' (30) Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' (31) For if such things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (32) Two other criminals were also led away to be executed with him.

Many women mourned for Jesus along the way to the cross, but they should have been mourning for themselves and their families, because judgment would fall on Israel because of this. Verse 32 fulfills prophecy that the Messiah would be numbered among the criminals (Isaiah 53:12, Luke 22:37).

John 19:18 There they crucified him along with two others, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle.

Jesus would have been nailed to the crossbeam on the ground, and then the crossbeam would have been raised up to a groove in the top of one of the stakes already in the ground. His feet would have been only two to four feet above the ground.

"In Psalm 22:16 we read," . . . they pierced my hands, and my feet." This is a Messianic psalm (it has already been regarded as such), and there is an amazing accuracy in what is proclaimed here. David wrote this Psalm about 1000 B. C., and in that day stoning was the method of capital punishment. David spoke of Messiah's hands and feet being pierced. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, he described a manner of execution that was foreign to the people of his day. The period in which crucifixion was the common mode of execution was hundreds of years future, in the time of the Romans, who used this peculiar method. Not only was the death described, but the rest of Psalm 22 relates the suffering accompanying His death." Louis Goldberg

John 19:19-22 Pilate also had a notice written and fastened to the cross, which read: "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews." (20) Thus many of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the notice was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. (21) Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The king of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am king of the Jews.' " (22) Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Pilate must have been trying to get back at the Jewish leaders for how they had backed him into a corner, by wording the notice this way. It was normal to put a notice on the cross stating the charge for which the person was being executed, and Pilate made sure everyone could read it, putting it in three different languages. Pilate saw no other reason than this, that Jesus was the king of the Jews. Of course, the irony is that Christ really is the King of the Jews. Someday He will come again and truly reign over the Jews that believe in Him.

John 19:23-24 Now when the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and made

four shares, one for each soldier, and the tunic remained. (Now the tunic was seamless, woven from top to bottom as a single piece.) (24) So the soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but throw dice to see who will get it." This took place to fulfill the scripture that says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they threw dice." So the soldiers did these things.

Unlike the movies you may have seen, Jesus would have been naked on the cross, that was how it was done. It was common practice for the soldiers who performed a crucifixion to divide the possessions of the executed person among themselves. The scripture that John refers to that was fulfilled is Psalm 22:18.

John 19:25-27 Now standing beside Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (26) So when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, look, here is your son!" (27) He then said to his disciple, "Look, here is your mother!" From that very time the disciple took her into his own home.

The disciple Jesus is speaking to is, of course, John. Someone would soon need to provide for Mary since Jesus, her oldest son, would no longer be alive. What we don't know is . . . where were Jesus' brothers? They must have been back home in Galilee. It seems like they would have been responsible for their mother after Jesus was gone. But Jesus asked John to take care of her, as if John was taking His place as her first born son.

Matthew 27:39-44 Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads (40) and saying, "You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are God's Son, come down from the cross!" (41) In the same way even the chief priests — together with the experts in the law and elders — were mocking him: (42) "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He is the king of Israel! If he comes down now from the cross, we will believe in him! (43) He trusts in God — let God, if he wants to, deliver him now because he said, 'I am God's Son!'" (44) The robbers who were crucified with him also spoke abusively to him.

You can't miss the irony of what these people were saying. They wanted Jesus to come down from the cross to save Himself, but by staying on the cross He was giving them the opportunity to be saved.

Luke 23:39-43 One of the criminals who was hanging there railed at him, saying, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" (40) But the other rebuked him, saying, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? (41) And we rightly so, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did, but this man has done nothing wrong." (42) Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." (43) And Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

One of the criminals repented while he was on the cross and believed on Jesus right then and there, and Jesus promised that He would be in paradise that very day.

"They would die that day, and the soul of the unrepentant thief would descend into Hades, to await condemnation at the judgment day. The other, because of his trust in Christ, would go with

Him to paradise, or "Abraham's Bosom" (Luke 16:22). While there, the Lord would proclaim His victory to the many imprisoned evil angels confined there in chains of darkness (2 Peter 2:4; 1 Peter 3:19). He would then set free the souls of those who had died in faith (Luke 4:18), taking them and their "paradise" with Him to the "third heaven" (Ephesians 4:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4), and carrying with Him "the keys of hell (hades) and of death" (Revelation 1:18)." Henry Morris

Matthew 27:45-49 Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. (46) At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (47) When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." (48) Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. (49) But the rest said, "Leave him alone! Let's see if Elijah will come to save him."

In verse 46 Jesus quotes from Psalm 22:1. It seems obvious that at it was at this point that the Father laid the sins of the world on His son, and for the first time in eternity, left Him alone. This had to be much more painful than any physical suffering He had endured.

John 19:28-30 After this Jesus, realizing that by this time everything was completed, said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty!" (29) A jar full of sour wine was there, so they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a branch of hyssop and lifted it to his mouth. (30) When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is completed!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The scripture referred to is probably Psalm 69:21. The cheap sour wine was called in Latin "posca", and was a cheap vinegar wine very diluted with water. It was the drink of slaves and soldiers, and was probably there for the soldiers who had performed the crucifixion. His throat would have been parched from the mistreatment and then hanging in the sun for a long time, so He probably asked for something to drink both to fulfill scripture and to enable Him to say His final words from the cross.

The Greek word *tetelestai* means "It is completed". Papyri receipts for taxes have been found with the word *tetelestai* written across them, meaning "paid in full." What Jesus said here is so important! When He said, "It is finished" (not "I am finished"), He meant His redemptive work was completed. He had been made sin for people (2 Corinthians 5:21) and had suffered the penalty of God's justice which we deserved.

Notice that it was Jesus who gave up His own spirit - no one took His life from Him. He gave it up totally on His own. Jesus speaking from the cross also tells us He was completely aware of what was happening to Him, despite the pain and anguish. He had the presence of mind to say exactly what He wanted to, everything that would fulfill prophecy. Luke mentions that Jesus said something else as He died:

Luke 23:46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And after he said this he breathed his last.

Jesus is quoting Psalm 31:5, which is a psalm of trust in God. He had willingly and deliberately surrendered His life:

1. His physical suffering was over

2. The ultimate Lamb of God had been sacrificed
3. He made propitiation (took the penalty on Himself) for the sins of the world
4. He died physically
5. The plan of salvation was complete

Matthew 27:51-56 Just then the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks were split apart. (52) And tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had died were raised. (53) (They came out of the tombs after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.) (54) Now when the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were extremely terrified and said, "Truly this one was God's Son!" (55) Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and given him support were also there, watching from a distance. (56) Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The temple curtain was the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, which is where God's presence dwelled. This symbolized that now everyone could have access to God - through His son Jesus. And the fact that the curtain was torn from top to bottom tells us that it was God that accomplished this, not man.

The people that were raised to life are somewhat of a mystery. Since Christ will be the first (Colossians 1:18, 15:20,23; Revelation 1:5) to receive a permanent resurrection bodies, we can assume that these were Old Testament saints who were buried nearby whose earthly bodies came to life again, and later on died again, much like Lazarus.

John 19:31-33 Then, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not stay on the crosses on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was an especially important one), the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the victims' legs broken and the bodies taken down. (32) So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus, first the one and then the other. (33) But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

A person was nailed to the crossbeam through their wrists with heavy square nails. Their left foot was placed on top of their right foot, with the toes forced downward, and a nail driven through both arches, leaving the knees flexed. As the criminal hung there, he sagged, which put pressure on the wrists and arms, causing excruciating pain. To relieve the pain, they would try to push themselves up, which caused pain in their feet. Their arms would eventually cramp and leave them unable to push themselves up. In this position it became more and more difficult to breathe, and they would try to lift themselves up with their legs to draw in more air.

They could normally endure hours of this cycle of pain, and each time Jesus lifted Himself up, He would tear up his ruined back even more from the rough wood of the stake. Slowly carbon dioxide would build up in the lungs and blood stream, the heart sac would fill with fluid and cause crushing heart pain, and eventually the person would be unable to lift Himself to take another breath, and would suffocate. It was a long, drawn out, horrific way to die. There are records that tell us that men stayed alive on the cross for up to nine days before they died.

Breaking their legs would cause them to die quickly, because then they couldn't lift themselves up to breathe. It was done with a heavy mallet. Normally the Romans would leave the bodies on the

crosses, as a warning to others. The Jewish Law prohibiting this was based on Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where it says that the bodies of executed criminals who had been hung on a tree must not be left there overnight.

John 19:34-37 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out immediately. (35) And the person who saw it has testified (and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth), so that you also may believe. (36) For these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled, "Not a bone of his will be broken." (37) And again another scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

Some conclude that the spear must have pierced near Jesus' heart, which would account for both blood and water coming out, and lead some to say that He literally died of a broken heart. This confirmed that Jesus was dead, and that He was human, unlike the insistence of some cults (like Islam) who say that Jesus never really died. Jesus was a real human who died a real death.

John tells us in verse 35 that he was an eyewitness to what happened here. The scripture quoted in verse 36 is taken from Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and Psalm 34:20, the first two having to do with the Passover lamb. The scripture quoted in verse 37 comes from Zechariah 12:10, and this was certainly fulfilled in a way there at the cross, but it will be fulfilled again in a even greater way at Christ's second coming. That is the context of Zechariah 12-14.

John 19:38-42 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (but secretly, because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he went and took the body away. (39) Nicodemus, the man who had previously come to Jesus at night, accompanied Joseph, carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds. (40) Then they took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the aromatic spices, in strips of linen cloth according to Jewish burial customs. (41) Now at the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb where no one had yet been buried. (42) And so, because it was the Jewish day of preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus' body there.

Crucified criminals were normally just thrown into a common grave, unless the family had the power and money to request the body and have a tomb prepared. Nicodemus and Joseph, two "undercover" believers in Jesus, risked their positions in the Sanhedrin here by burying Him in a new tomb. Did you notice - 75 pounds of spices? That's a lot of spices!



The Jews did not practice embalming, so these things were used to cover the stench of decay and to slow down decomposition. Everything regarding Jesus' burial had to be finished by 6 PM Friday night, because that's when the Sabbath (and a special Sabbath, because it was Passover) began, and no work could be done on the Sabbath. Matthew gives us more details here, and confirms that these things would have happened between the hours of 3 and 6 pm.

Matthew 27:57-66 Now when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. (58) He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered that it be given to him. (59) Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut in the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away. (61) (Now Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there, opposite the tomb.) (62) The next day (which is after the day of preparation) the chief priests and the Pharisees assembled before Pilate (63) and said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' (64) So give orders to secure the tomb until the third day. Otherwise his disciples may come and steal his body and say to the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." (65) Pilate said to them, "Take a guard of soldiers. Go and make it as secure as you can." (66) So they went with the soldiers of the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

And Luke provides even more insights:

Luke 23:50-56 Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council, a good and righteous man. (51) (He had not consented to their plan and action.) He was from the Judean town of Arimathea, and was looking forward to the kingdom of God. (52) He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. (53) Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock, where no one had yet been buried. (54) It was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. (55) The women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. (56) Then they returned and prepared aromatic spices and perfumes. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Both Luke and Matthew point out that the women who accompanied Jesus watched where they were burying Jesus, which is important because some theological liberals say that the women went to the wrong tomb, and that's why they found it empty. That's ridiculous; you can see that they knew where it was.

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus' Death

Passage	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Isaiah 50:6	Beaten and spit on	John 19:1, Matthew 27:30
Psalms 69:19	Shame	Matthew 27:28
Psalms 22:18	Clothing divided among the soldiers	John 19:24
Isaiah 53:7	Silent at the trial	Matthew 27:13-14
Isaiah 53:5-6, 10	Death by crucifixion	John 19:16
Psalms 69:3	Thirst	John 19:28
Psalms 69:21	Wine vinegar to drink	John 19:29
Psalms 22:17	Stared at	Matthew 27:36
Psalms 22:16	Hands and feet pierced	John 19:18
Zechariah 12:10	Side pierced	John 19:34
Psalms 22:14	Broken heart / blood and water	John 19:34
Psalms 22:8	Mocked	Matthew 27:43
Isaiah 53:12	Prayed for others	Luke 23:34
Psalms 22:1	Cry to God	Matthew 27:46
Psalms 22:31	Victory cry	John 19:30
Exodus 12:46	No broken bones	John 19:33, 36
Isaiah 53:12	Numbered with lawbreakers	Luke 23:33
Genesis 3:15	Bruised heel	John 19:18
Isaiah 53:9	Burial in a rich man's grave	Matthew 27:57-60