

Lesson 17 Matthew 27-28

To Pilate

Matthew 27: ¹ Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; ² and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.

Jesus is taken to Pilate sometime after 6:00 a.m. He is beaten severely at this point and even though they want Him dead, they no longer have the authority to kill Him. They are under Roman rule now and the religious laws concerning blasphemy prevent them from killing Him.

Pilate is the governor of the region and he is the first in a line of governors, which will include Felix and Festus, who will interact with Christianity extensively. Pilate's chambers are considered unclean because he is a Gentile. Because it is a holy season for the Jews, they cannot enter his building or even step on his steps, so he has to come out to the porch to communicate with them. He does bring Jesus into the chamber for questioning even though, in Jewish law, it will make Jesus unclean and unable to participate in the rest of the feast of unleavened bread. The passage makes it clear that when Judas sees Jesus beaten, bound, and sent to Pilate, he becomes remorseful and changes his mind about the blood money.

Judas' Remorse

Matthew 27: ³ Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!"¹³⁸ ⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

The priests and Sanhedrin are unconcerned with Judas' repentance even though he has confessed his sin. They will not accept his confession nor will they recognize their own guilt in this incident. Their hearts are so hardened and their eyes are so blind that they are incapable of feeling and seeing their own sin. The money that Judas throws into the chambers of the priestly order that day taints the cleanness of the room. Had they accepted the money, its placement with the treasury would have defiled the entire lot, as if the treasury did not already contain defiled money as a result of ill gotten gains from the hands of the money changers in the temple.

Potter's Field

Matthew 27: ⁶ The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."¹³⁹ ⁷ And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸ For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons

¹³⁸ Exodus 21:32

¹³⁹ Deuteronomy 25:18

of Israel; ¹⁰ AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE Lord DIRECTED ME." ¹⁴⁰

Once again, prophecy must be fulfilled. The plan for the priests was set more than 450 years before. The money would be used for Potter's field as foretold by Zechariah.

Before Pilate

Matthew 27: ¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*" ¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. ¹⁴¹ ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ And He did not answer him with regard to even a *single* charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

Just as Jesus responded to questions from Caiaphas, He only answers Pilate's questions that deal with His divinity. He does not answer the frivolous charges of the priests and Sanhedrin. Why is Pilate amazed? It is because Jesus, a man in the prime of His life and with nothing substantial being said against Him, does not seek to defend His innocence; it is as if He wants to die.

Jesus or Barabbas

Matthew 27: ¹⁵ Now at *the* feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people *any* one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him *a message*, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." ²⁰ But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. ²¹ But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" ²³ And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" ²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves." ¹⁴² ²⁵ And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" ¹⁴³ ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate has nothing with which to charge Jesus at this point yet the priests and Sanhedrin are persistent in their desire for Him to die. The other gospels show that Pilate tries repeatedly to let Jesus go. He wants nothing to do with Him, especially after his wife's warning. He attempts to use a convicted criminal as a pawn to help release Jesus. He must have been surprised when Barabbas is chosen for release instead of the Lord. Letting Barabbas go free is tantamount to intentionally causing future harm to the people, yet they do not care; they want Jesus dead.

¹⁴⁰ Zechariah 11:12-13

¹⁴¹ Isaiah 53:7

¹⁴² Deuteronomy 21:6-9; Psalm 26:6

¹⁴³ Joshua 2:19

Purple Robe and Crown

Matthew 27: ²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole *Roman* cohort around Him. ²⁸ They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ They spat on Him, and took the reed and *began* to beat Him on the head. ³¹ After they had mocked Him, they took the *scarlet* robe off Him and put His *own* garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

Matthew does not tell about Pilate's sending Jesus to Herod and Herod's sending Jesus back to Pilate. It is possible that Matthew sees Jesus taken to Pilate but is distracted by Judas' interaction with the priests and his subsequent suicide. Not being an eye witness of the royal volley with Jesus, Matthew tells only what he knows and he knows that Pilate washes his hands of the situation, finding no guilt in Jesus but still allowing Jesus to be crucified. Stripped, beaten, spat upon and gouged with a crown of thorns, Jesus is covered with a purple robe and mocked as a king. They remove the robe, dress Him in His own bloody clothing and lead Him through the streets of Jerusalem.

Simon of Cyrene

Matthew 27: ³² As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

Cyrene is a region on the northwestern coast of Africa. Alexander the Great had relocated about 100,000 Jews to that area during his conquest of Egypt and Africa three hundred years before. By this time the Jewish Cyrenean population is so large that a synagogue has been built in Jerusalem just to provide a place of worship for pilgrims from that area during festivals and high holy days. Simon is on his pilgrimage and in the streets on Friday morning as the soldiers lead Jesus to Golgotha. Weakened by the beatings, Jesus is struggling to carry the cross and the soldiers enlist Simon to bear it for Him.

Golgotha

Matthew 27: ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting *it*, He was unwilling to drink. ³⁵ And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.¹⁴⁴ ³⁶ And sitting down, they *began* to keep watch over Him there. ³⁷ And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

At the place of the skull, Jesus is nailed to the cross about 9:00 a.m. His clothing is removed and He is hung on the wooden beams totally nude as is the custom. His only earthly belongings, bloody, stained and torn, are His clothes for which the soldiers gamble at the foot of His cross. Matthew is careful once again to show the fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy.

Two Robbers

Matthew 27: ³⁸ At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

¹⁴⁴ Psalm 22:18

Jesus is not alone at the cross. Matthew says two other thieves are hung with Him, one on the left and one on the right. Since the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew before James translated it into Greek, the placement of the thieves is significant as well as interesting. In Hebrew left means north and right means south. Forward means east and backward means west. Therefore, one of the thieves is crucified to the north of Jesus and the other to the south. We can only speculate, but they are most likely facing east toward Jerusalem.

Mockers

Matthew 27: ³⁹ And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *Him* and saying, ⁴² "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. ⁴³ "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ¹⁴⁵ ⁴⁴ The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

From 9:00 a.m. until noon, the worldly people make great sport of Jesus. They all have something to say. They all call for another miracle or another sign. They all speak as if they had never seen His mighty works at all. Even the thieves join in the fun as they struggle to survive their ordeal.

Sixth Until Ninth Hour

Matthew 27: ⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" ¹⁴⁶

From noon to 3:00 p.m. the whole atmosphere and attitude change at Golgotha. Astrological records indicate a full eclipse of the sun occurred at noon, bringing the midday daylight to darkness within minutes. Before the sun returns, clouds cover the sky which remains in almost total darkness for three hours. At the ninth hour, 3:00 p.m., Jesus is heard quoting a portion of Psalm 22. It is another fulfillment of Scripture prophecy.

Elijah

Matthew 27: ⁴⁷ And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. ¹⁴⁷ ⁴⁹ But the rest of *them* said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

Every Jew is expecting Elijah to return one day to fulfill Malachi's prophecy, but Jesus has already clearly stated that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist.

The offer of sour wine on the sponge is a significant indication that some of the people are beginning to wonder if He is the Messiah. Others there are still looking for a sign. Jesus

¹⁴⁵ Psalm 22:7-8; 109:25

¹⁴⁶ Psalm 22:1

¹⁴⁷ Psalm 69:21

had condemned those who were always looking for a sign as an evil and corrupt generation and those who defer to see if Elijah will come fall into that category. The crowds assembled around the cross are not ignorant of all the wonders and signs of the Lord. Lazarus, who was dead for four days, stood there watching his Lord die on the cross. Everyone knew that he was a resurrected man because of Jesus. He is one example; what more do they need? Jerusalem is filled with many sick, lame, blind, and demon-possessed people who were made whole by the Lord and they are all there looking on the scene from a distance.

Veil Torn

Matthew 27: ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. ¹⁴⁸

Matthew does not record all the history of that day possibly because of his going and coming from the scene. How does he know about the veil in the Temple being torn from top to bottom? Could he have left Golgotha to present an offering in the Temple for his sins and subsequently placed himself in a position to be an eyewitness of the veil's damage? Whatever his reason for being at the Temple at 3:00 p.m., he does see the veil torn and records the event for all time in his Gospel. The earth's shaking and the rocks' splitting at that hour are significant enough for Matthew to enter them in the record.

Bodies of Saints Raised

Matthew 27: ⁵² The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Matthew's Gospel flashes ahead to Sunday morning and the Lord's resurrection. All the saints of old are resting in Paradise or Abraham's bosom in Hades. Even the thief on the cross who is promised Paradise is there. Those who loved God and placed their hope in the coming Messiah include David, Solomon, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ezekiel, Amos, Samson, Othaniel, Rebecca, Daniel and many more. Paradise was full of saints waiting for the Lord's appearing. At His death, Jesus enters Paradise and remains there speaking to the saints and to those in torment across the great chasm. On Sunday morning, when Jesus rises from the dead in a transformed body, He clears Paradise of all the saints, resurrecting all of them with transformed, glorified bodies. In Jerusalem, everyone sees the resurrected ones who must have been struck with fear to see the faces of those whose stories they had committed to memory in their obsession with genealogical facts.

Confession of the Centurion

Matthew 27: ⁵⁴ Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Matthew returns to the events of the cross to focus on the thoughts of the people. A centurion who helped put Jesus on the cross has completed his job but in spite of his duties, he is now a believer.

¹⁴⁸ Exodus 26:31-35

Women at the Cross

Matthew 27: ⁵⁵ Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. ⁵⁶ Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The Marys in Jesus' life are at the cross as expected. Jesus' mother and her sister are there along with the Mary of Magdala who has been part of the Lord's ministry for only about 18 months.

Joseph of Arimathea's Plea

Matthew 27: ⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given *to him*.

The poor are not the only people to follow Jesus; the wealthy such as Joseph of Arimathea follow also.¹⁴⁹ He has a new tomb for himself near Golgotha and he makes it available for the Lord. As a wealthy man, Joseph probably has little fear of Pilate and is therefore the perfect person to request the body of the Lord. Pilate agrees.

Buried in the Tomb

Matthew 27: ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

Matthew does not mention the breaking of the thieves' legs or the spear in Jesus' side. Neither does he mention that Nicodemus provides the ointments used to rub down the Lord's body before it is wrapped in linen cloth. But he does mention that the women are there to watch the Lord's placement in the tomb. The new day beginning at 6:00 p.m. is approaching quickly and the rest of the story indicates that the women plan to return to complete the anointing process after the Sabbath is over, but for now, they can only watch the stone being rolled into place and wait for Sunday morning.

Pharisees with Pilate on the Sabbath

Matthew 27: ⁶² Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I *am to* rise again.' ⁶⁴ "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it *as* secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

The Sabbath means nothing to Pilate; he is not a Jew. However, the Pharisees break their own law by conducting business on the Sabbath with Pilate. They beg Pilate to secure the tomb, but he refuse to do so. He places that burden on them and their temple guard. So

¹⁴⁹ Arimathea is in Ephraim. It is the birth city of Samuel and the home of Hannah his mother.

the Pharisees send their guards to work on the Sabbath by securing the garden tomb with a seal.

Sunday Morning

Matthew 28: ¹ Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

Before sunrise on Sunday morning the two Marys are on their way to the tomb. The other Gospels tell that they purchase their supplies after 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, the beginning of Sunday for the Jews. They could go on to the tomb that night but it is dark and the tomb is outside the safety of the city walls. Matthew just tells us that they have come to look at the grave.

Earthquake and an Angel of the Lord

Matthew 28: ² And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶ "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. ⁷ "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." ⁸ And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.

The other Gospels tell that the women do not know how they will move the heavy stone. Matthew records that a severe earthquake has occurred and the soldiers are so frightened that they most likely hide when they see the stone rolling away. Surely the city felt the quake. We can only wonder why it was not recorded but we are thankful for Matthew's comment about it. The stone is removed by an act of God, an appropriate measure.

Matthew fails to record the full interaction between the women and the angel. He also fails to mention their interaction with the angel inside the tomb or with Jesus. Matthew was not there, but he is an eyewitness when the Lord recounts the scene in conversations with him over the next 40 days.

Disciples Take Hold of Jesus' Feet

Matthew 28: ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

When the believers see Jesus at this meeting, their fears turn to joy. They worship Him as they should, with their faces in the ground at His feet. From this scene, Jesus sends them on to the meeting place in Galilee.

Report to the Chief Priests

Matthew 28: ¹¹ Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we

were asleep."¹⁴ "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."¹⁵ And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is* to this day.

The women are not the only ones to leave the tomb in haste; the guards have been there all night and they have seen and experienced it all. They report the truth to the priests but they are paid to forget what they have seen and are encouraged to lie. By the time Matthew writes this Gospel, the lie is everywhere but it is not strong enough to counter all the testimonies of those who had known the Lord first hand and tell the wondrous stories of His great life and His amazing resurrection.

Eleven Go to Galilee

Matthew 28: ¹⁶ But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

Although Matthew records that the disciples fall in worship at Jesus' feet, he does not specifically tell of the meeting of the apostles with Jesus on Sunday afternoon when Thomas is absent. Nor does he tell of the visit with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road. Matthew then moves the conversation to Galilee. Paul reports that over 500 people see Jesus after the resurrection.¹⁵⁰ It is easy to understand the doubt of the people, but the stage is set in Galilee for there to be no doubt of His existence. Jesus is now their risen Lord and Savior.

Jesus' Commission

Matthew 28: ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

While on earth in His humanity, Jesus' power seemed boundless and it was. Now as He gives His commission to all the people gathered in Galilee, He declares the extent of His power. ¹⁵¹ His message and story are no longer just for the Jews; they are to go to all the nations of the world. He is not just the Savior of a select group; He is the Savior of all.

The final charge to the believers is to educate the world about Him. Jesus has changed everything. He has fulfilled the old covenant and brought in a new one that will last until He returns. The entire plan for the future has also been revealed. The education of all is crucial because it brings hope to the hopeless and help to the helpless, but most of all, it provides the knowledge of how sinful man can spend eternity with God.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 15:6

¹⁵¹ Matthew 7:29; 11:27; 21:23-24