

Luke 23 Commentary

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THE ARREST, THE TRIALS, AND THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Map of Jerusalem Retracing Christ's last footsteps on earth: Here is a map of "Passion Week". Here is another similar map of [Jesus' Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion](#) Hint: Locate the "**Upper Room**" (found on left side of picture) in the diagram and then follow the arrows which retrace the footsteps of the Messiah, steps which had been foreordained in eternity past "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23+, cp Acts 4:27-28+) taking Him from the Upper Room to the excruciating agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the tragic betrayal by a friend resulting in His unfair arrest, leading to 6 unjust trials (see table below) which culminate in the central event in all eternity, Christ on the Cross on Calvary. The numbers below correlate with the **numbers** on the map with the **arrows** on the lines signifying the direction of Jesus' movement)

- (1) Jesus left the **Upper Room** (see left side of picture just below Caiaphas' Residence) and walked with disciples out of the city, across the Kidron Valley and up to the **Mount of Olives** and from there to the nearby **Garden of Gethsemane** (see right upper side of picture)
- (2) He was arrested in the Garden and taken back into the city, first to an informal "trial" before Annas (who apparently lived next to Caiaphas) and then to **Caiaphas' Residence** (the location is an approximation) where the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin) were gathered.
- (3). After His first night time "trial" before the Sanhedrin at Caiaphas' residence, Jesus was tried at daybreak before the Sanhedrin, probably at the Temple (see Herod's Temple) as shown in the diagram above.
- (4) Jesus is taken from the trial before the Sanhedrin
- (5) Next, he was taken to Pontius Pilate (admittedly this is difficult to follow on the map above)
- (6), Pilate sent Jesus to the palace of Herod Antipas (location uncertain). Herod Antipas returned Jesus to Pilate (admittedly this is difficult to follow on the map above)
- (7), Pilate handed over Jesus for scourging (possibly at Fortress of Antonia but this is not depicted on the map) and then delivered over for crucifixion at Golgotha (note there are two possible locations - The "Traditional Golgotha" and "Gordon's Calvary")

Related Resources:

- [Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus](#) - Nice depiction of Gordon's Calvary (Golgotha) which was outside of the holy city when and where Jesus was crucified.
- See also Detailed Discussion of 3 Religious Trials

Luke 23:1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

KJV Luke 23:1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

- Lk 23:66; Mt 27:1,2,11-14; Mark 15:1-5; John 18:28-38
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Roman Law and the Trial of Christ - R Larry Overstreet](#) - excellent background
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Comparing all 4 gospels we discover Jesus endured 6 hearings or "trials" (used only loosely for these were hardly fair trials!) in a matter of hours, the first three were **Religious Trials** before the Jewish authorities and the last three were **Civil Trials** before the Roman political authorities, Pilate and Herod Antipas (Mt 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19). (The following chart is adapted and modified from Constable's Expository Notes)

THE SIX MOCK TRIALS OF THE MESSIAH				
JESUS' THREE RELIGIOUS TRIALS				
See also Detailed Discussion of 3 Religious Trials				
	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN

Before Annas (Nighttime ~1-3 AM)				Jn 18:12-14,19-24
Before Caiaphas (Nighttime - ~1-3 AM)	Mt 26:57-68	Mk 14:53-65	Lk 22:54, 63-65	
Before Sanhedrin (Daybreak ~5 AM)	Mt 27:1	Mk 15:1	Lk 22:66-71	
JESUS' THREE CIVIL TRIALS				
Before Pilate	Mt 27:2, 11-14	Mk 15:1-5	Lk 23:1-5	Jn 18:28-38
Before Herod Antipas			Lk 23:6-12	
Before Pilate	Mt 27:15-26	Mk 15:6-15	Lk 23:13-25	Jn 18:39-19:16

SUMMARY OF PILATE'S MOVEMENTS IN JESUS' TRIAL

One aspect of Jesus' trial before Pilate that can be confusing is that Pilate moved in and out of the Praetorium in various phases of the trial.. Here is a summary of Pilate's movements into the Praetorium (where Jesus was) and out of the Praetorium (where the Jewish accusers stood). You will notice that Pilate's movement are keyed to John's account, as John reports far more details of this trial before Pilate than do the three Synoptists combined.

1. Jesus led **INSIDE** the Praetorium or judgment hall (John 18:28).

While all four Gospels record that Jesus is delivered to Pilate, only John includes the detail that Jesus is taken **INSIDE** the Praetorium while His accusers remained outside. This fact sets up multiple movements by Pilate as he addressed the two parties involved in the trial.

D A Carson comments that the failure of the Jews to enter the Praetorium "sent Pilate scuttling back and forth, acting on two stages as it were, a front stage and a rear stage. This simultaneously enhances the drama of the narrative, ensures that the Jews do not hear Jesus' self-disclosing claims before Pilate, and 'portrays the human predicament in which one must choose between Jesus and the world'. (Pillar Commentary - John)

2. **Movement 1:** Pilate comes **OUTSIDE** of the Praetorium to Jesus' accusers to hear their charges. This begins the formal trial. (John 18:29-32).

John records their more general charges against Jesus and tells them to take Jesus and judge Him themselves. This forces them to concoct three specific charges recorded only in Lk 23:2.

3. **Movement 2:** Pilate goes back **INSIDE** the Praetorium to Jesus to hear His defense (John 18:33-38).

All four Gospels record that Pilate focuses on the third charge that Jesus is a King and asks Him "Are You the King of the Jews?" (Mt 27:11, Mk 15:2, Lk 23:3, Jn 18:33).

Only John 18:34-38 records the details of this phase of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus.

4. **Movement 3:** Pilate goes back **OUTSIDE** to the people to declare Jesus' innocence (John 18:38).

Only John 18:38 and Luke 23:5 record Pilate's **FIRST** of 3 not guilty verdicts (Jn 19:4, 6, cf Lk 23:22).

Pilate's not guilty verdict incites the Jews to a barrage of accusations at Jesus. Only Mt 27:12-14 and Mk 15:3-5 record Jesus' refusal to answer the accusations by the chief priests and elders against Jesus.

Only Luke 23:5 records the Jew's accusation that Jesus stirred up the people in Galilee, which prompts Pilate to send Jesus to the wicked ruler Herod (Antipas) who had jurisdiction over Galilee and was in Jerusalem at the time.

Only Luke 23:6-12 records the transfer of Jesus from Pilate to Herod and the mistreatment Jesus received in the second phase of the civil trial.

Only Luke 23:11 records that Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

Only Luke 23:13 records that "Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people." Apparently the gathering before the Praetorium had either broken up or decreased in size while Jesus was before Herod. And it is

clear that the religious leaders followed Jesus and spoke out again when He appeared before Herod (Lk 23:10). Note that since Pilate summoned the religious leaders and began to sp

Only Luke 23:14-15 record Pilate's statement before the Jews (who had been summoned) that he found no guilt in Jesus nor did Herod.

Only Luke 23:16 records Pilate's conclusion "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him." The Gospels do not record the reaction of the Jews to this announcement, but Pilate's subsequent mention of the custom of releasing a prisoner implies that their reaction prevented him from following through and forced him to try another ploy.

John 18:39 records Pilate's attempt to release Jesus "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" The interchange regarding Barabbas is recorded in John 18:39-40, Matthew 27:15-18, 20-21, and Mk 15:6-11.

5. **Movement 4:** Pilate goes back **INSIDE** the Praetorium to scourge Jesus (John 19:1-3).
6. **Movement 5:** Pilate goes back **OUTSIDE** to the Jews to offer a compromise (John 19:4-7).
7. **Movement 6:** Pilate goes back **INSIDE** to Jesus to investigate the possibility of a supernatural being (John 19:8-11).
8. **Movement 7:** Pilate goes back **OUTSIDE** to the Jews to release Jesus (John 19:12).
9. **Movement 8:** Pilate brings Jesus **OUTSIDE**, sits on the Judgment Seat and gives his verdict of crucifixion (John 19:13-15).

Parallel Passages - The following table is an attempt to line up parallel passages from the 4 Gospel accounts on the same row and to identify the passages found only in one Gospel with **yellow highlighting**. In some cases it is difficult to state with certainty which passage in a particular Gospel comes next in time sequence. If you see a passage you do not think fits in the sequence please send an email with your explanation.

- Here is [another good parallel](#) by Wil Pounds in which he correlates events and approximate times.
- See also a related but more complete chart all on one page - Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
THE THIRD RELIGIOUS TRIAL OF JESUS BEFORE SANHEDRIN Approximate Time: 6:00 AM			
Mt 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;	Mk 15:1 Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation.	Lk 22:66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying.	JOHN'S GOSPEL DOES NOT DISCUSS THE SECOND AND THIRD PHASES OF THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL OF JESUS.
		Lk 22:67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 "But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD." 70 And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." 71 Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."	

THE JEWS DELIVER JESUS TO PILATE

(Approximate Time 6:30 AM)

<p>Mt 27:2 and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor. (N1)</p>	<p>Mk 15:1b and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.</p>	<p>Lk 23:1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate</p>	<p>Jn 18:28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas I N T O the Praetorium,</p>
			<p>Jn 18:28b and it was early; and they themselves DID NOT ENTER into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.</p>

COMMENTS ON MATTHEW

Note 1 on "delivered Him to Pilate" - **Delivered** is [paradidomi](#) which means to give one over to the power or authority of another. This was a clear fulfillment of prophecies by Jesus Himself Who had predicted "**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day...Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered ([paradidomi](#)) into the hands of men.**" (Lk 9:22, 44+, Lk 18:32+)

COMMENTS ON MARK

MacArthur's comments on **Mark** help establish the timing of the events of the three phases of the religious trial on Friday morning -

Having taken Jesus prisoner about **1:00 a.m.** on Friday morning, the Jewish religious heads brought Him to the house of the high priest where He was first questioned by Annas (Described only in John 18:19-24)(**ED: RELIGIOUS TRIAL #1**) and then tried before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55-65)(**ED: RELIGIOUS TRIAL #2**). When the council (SANHEDRIN) failed to produce consistent testimony against Jesus, they resorted to accusations of blasphemy and subsequently condemned Him to death. The trial before Caiaphas likely ended about **3:00 a.m.**, at the time when Peter's denials also ended (cf. Mk 14:66-72, Lk 22:56-62). For the next couple hours, Jesus would have been held prisoner by the Temple police, who continued to mock and mistreat Him (cf. Mk 14:65). At daybreak, near **5:00 a.m.**, the Sanhedrin reconvened (**ED: RELIGIOUS TRIAL #3**). (See context in [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) and [Next page](#))

COMMENTS ON JOHN

Recall that the Gospel of John is the only Gospel to describe the **first religious trial of Jesus before Annas** (Jn 18:12-14,19-23). After Annas interrogated Jesus he "sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest" (Jn 18:24) which would lead to the second and third religious trials, neither of which are described by John.

John has just described Peter's denial in John 18:25-27. John does not describe Jesus' trial before Caiaphas nor before the Sanhedrin but only mentions that Annas had Jesus bound and taken to Caiaphas the high priest .(Jn 18:24) For the details of Jesus' first nighttime trial before Caiaphas see Mt 26:57-68, Mk 14:53-65 and Lk 22:54, 63-65+. While all 3 Synoptic Gospels mention Jesus' third religious trial before the Sanhedrin in the morning (Mt 27:1, Mk 15:1, Lk 22:66), only Luke gives us the details of the third trial (Lk 22:67-71+).

John 18:28: On Passover the Jewish leaders had ceremonially cleansed themselves in preparation for the meal they would eat that Friday evening. We have explained how Jesus and His disciples could eat the Passover meal on Thursday evening and these leaders could eat the Passover meal on Friday (See explanation in notes on Luke 22:7). Since the Mishnah declared all Gentile homes unclean, the Jews would not enter Pilate's residence, but they could enter the courtyard and not be defiled. What hypocrites! They fastidiously avoided any external ceremonial defilement, but cared nothing about internal defilement in their own hearts! Notice that Jesus went into the Praetorium of Pilate but the Jews remain outside. As **D A Carson** says "The Jews take elaborate precautions to avoid ritual contamination in order to eat the Passover, at the very same time they are busy manipulating the judicial system to secure the death of him who alone is the true Passover." (The Gospel According to John - Pillar).

The [Praetorium](#) ([Pix 1](#), [Pix 2](#)) describes the headquarters of the commanding officer of a Roman military camp or a Roman military governor's headquarters (in this case Pilate) and is derived from "*Praetor* (Latin, "leader") was originally the title of the highest-ranking civil servant in the [Roman Republic](#), but later became a position directly below the rank of [consul](#)." (Wikipedia) The Praetorium was formerly the headquarters or barracks of a Roman camp; however, in the provinces as well as in Rome, praetorium came to be used in reference to the governor's or emperor's official residences. The Romans accommodated themselves with such buildings by seizing and appropriating the palaces of conquered royalty of the local area. The Praetorium was also the location of Pilate's judgment seat (Mt 27:19, Jn 19:13)

Notice that John records Jesus appearing before Pilate **early**, which is most likely around 6-7 AM (DAYBREAK WOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT 5 AM, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN WHEN THE SANHEDRIN CONVENED THEIR OSTENSIBLY "LEGAL" TRIAL OF JESUS. AFTER THEIR SPEEDY VERDICT JESUS WAS TAKEN TO PILATE.). Roman officials would normally begin their work at day break so that they could be finished by 10-11 AM. On this fateful day Pilate would accomplish his "business" before 9 AM so that there would time for Jesus to die on the Cross ([Ref](#)).

THE DEATH OF JUDAS

Matthew 27:3-10

The episode describing what happened to Judas is recorded only by Matthew.

Mt 27:3 Then ([THIS TIME PHRASE MARKS SEQUENCE](#) - so the following transpires sometime in the early morning. Although not clearly stated in Scripture, it appears that after his betrayal of Jesus, Judas followed Jesus to three mock trials before Annas and Caiaphas including the third mock religious trial at daybreak.) when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, **he felt remorse** ([metamelomai](#) - SORROW BUT NOT A GODLY SORROW LEADING TO REPENTANCE - 2 Cor 7:10, 11+) and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." (THE TORMENT OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE - THEY CLEARLY COULD NOT USE JUDAS AS A WITNESS!) But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the Temple sanctuary ([naos](#) = THE HOLY PLACE WHERE ONLY PRIESTS COULD ENTER! THUS JUDAS FORCED THE PRIESTS TO TAKE BACK THEIR "BLOOD MONEY!") and departed; and **he went away and hanged himself**. (SEE RELATED NOTES ON HOW JUDAS DIED IN Acts 1:16-20+) 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." 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 of Israel; 10 AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."

MacArthur on remorse versus repentance - True biblical repentance is not psychological, emotional human remorse, seeking merely to relieve stress and improve one's circumstances. Though it inevitably produces the fruit of a changed life (cf. Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20), it is not behavioral, but spiritual. The sorrow of the world—remorse, wounded pride, self-pity, unfulfilled hopes—has no healing power, no transforming, saving, or redeeming capability. It produces guilt, shame, resentment, anguish, despair, depression, hopelessness, even, as in the case of Judas (Matt. 27:3-5), death. (See context in [2 Corinthians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#)) See also 2 Cor 7:10, 11+

Related Resources on Judas:

- [John MacArthur's sermon](#) on Luke 23:1-3
- [John MacArthur's sermon](#) on Mt 27:1-10 The Traitor's Suicide
- [Who was Judas Iscariot?](#)
- [Why did Judas betray Jesus?](#)
- [How did Judas die?](#)
- [Was Judas Iscariot forgiven / saved?](#)
- [What is the significance of Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss?](#)
- [Who is the son of perdition?](#)

THE FIRST CIVIL TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

Note on the sequence of events - The third phrase of the religious trial is an early morning formal trial before a quickly assembled Sanhedrin to secure the verdict of the full Sanhedrin and to formulate the charge against Jesus. This "legal" gathering is completed early in the morning, probably before 6 AM because daybreak was about 5 AM. The Gospel of John does not describe this third phase of the religious trials. Matthew and Mark give a summary description (Mt 27:1, Mk 15:1) but only Luke 22:67-71 gives details of the interchange between Jesus and the Sanhedrin (see yellow highlight in chart above). This brings us to Luke's description in Lk 23:1 which parallels the descriptions in Mt 27:2, Mk 15:1, and Jn 18:28. John 18:28 alone tells us that Jesus entered the Praetorium minus the "religious" Jews.

Then - This expression of time marks the move of Jesus' trial from the Jewish phase to the Roman phase. This picks up the succession of events from Lk 22:70-71 where the Sanhedrin heard what they interpreted as blasphemy which by their laws warranted death by stoning. The problem of course was that the Romans prohibited any but their government from carrying out the death penalty. Note from the preceding chart of the 6 "trials" of Jesus, the one before the Sanhedrin is the only one that took place in the day, providing some semblance of legality. Of course, it was still grossly unjust, for the Sanhedrin had arrived at their "verdict" at night in the second phrase before Caiaphas. This daytime trial was a total ["sham."](#)

Recall that the events in Luke 23-24 were predicted by Jesus who had declared **"Behold**, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." (Matthew 20:18-19, cf Jn 12:32)

John also alludes to the mode of Jesus' death by crucifixion recording His prophecy "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth (I.E., CRUCIFIXION), will draw all men to Myself." (Jn 12:32)

The whole body of them got up - This phrase suggest they acted in unanimity. In other words the Jewish Sanhedrin arose from their seats in their official [Hall of Hewn Stones \(PICTURE\)](#) and brought Jesus before Pilate. The same word "body" (plethos) is **assembly** in Acts 23:7+ which definitely refers to the Sanhedrin in context (see Acts 23:1+) We do know from Luke 23:50-51 that Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin but "had not consented to their plan and action." Mt 27:57 tells us that Joseph "had also become a disciple of Jesus." John adds that while he was a disciple of Jesus, he was "a secret one for fear of the Jews." Was he absent when the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus? We cannot state with certainty.

[A T Robertson](#) however suggests that **the whole body** is "All but Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who were probably not invited to this meeting." (Ed: This is speculation.)

The verb "got up" is [anistemi](#), which is the same verb used to describe resurrection from the dead. In this passage the Sanhedrin **got up** but were still dead (in their trespasses and sins - Eph 2:1+), while the Savior would rise from the dead (predicted in Mk 8:31+, Mk 9:9+) that all dead men might live eternally through Him (1 Jn 4:9+, cf 1 Pe 1:3+) and in Him (1 Jn 5:11+, cf "life in His Name" = Jn 20:31).

And brought Him before Pilate - This first "trial" before Pilate in the early morning hours was **INSIDE** Pilate's residence, for John 18:28 tells us "Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas **INTO** the Praetorium, and it was early; and they (JEWS) themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover." Keep in mind that Pilate "and his predecessors and successors made it a point to be in Jerusalem on the high feasts, to be available to quell any untoward disturbance." (Carson, Pillar Commentary) Commenting on the irony Carson adds "The Jews take elaborate precautions to avoid ritual contamination in order to eat the Passover, at the very time they are busy manipulating the judicial system to secure the death of him who alone is the true Passover."

Pilate's normal residence was in [Caesarea Maritima \(aerial photo, pix\)](#), (this was the palace Herod the Great had built for himself) but he came to Jerusalem during the Jewish feasts to keep an eye on the Jews because Jerusalem was flooded with pilgrims (some say up to 2 million). [Wikipedia](#) says that Caesarea Maritima "is the location of the 1961 discovery of the [Pilate Stone \(pix\)](#), the only archaeological item that mentions the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, by whose order Jesus was crucified. It is likely that Pilate used it as a base, and only went to Jerusalem when needed."

KJV Study Bible has an interesting note - Since Jesus was crucified along with two criminals (Lk 23:32-33), a punishment that only the Romans could render, it seems that a couple of executions were already scheduled even before Jesus' sentencing. Thus Pilate came to town planning to execute genuine criminals, **but he left town having executed an innocent man** (See context in [KJV Study Bible](#)) (Bolding added)

Pilate (governor of Judea AD 26 to AD 36) ([4091](#)) (**Pilat** - of Latin origin) "Roman governor of Judea remembered in history as a notorious anti-Semite and in Christian creeds as the magistrate under whom Jesus Christ "suffered" (1 Tim 6:13). The NT refers to him as "governor," while other sources call him "procurator" or "prefect" (an inscription found in Caesarea in 1961). Pilate came to power about A.D. 26, close to the time when two of his contemporaries, Sejanus in Rome and Flaccus in Egypt, were pursuing policies apparently aimed at the destruction of the Jewish people." (Holman Dictionary) Pilate was hated by the orthodox Jews and never really understood them (see [4 interactions that made him odious to the Jews](#)).

As shown in Luke 23 Pilate's handling of the trial of Jesus would show him to be [indecisive](#) and vacillating, characterized by lack of decision and firmness. As we might say today Pilate had no "[backbone](#)" or "[intestinal fortitude](#)!"

Warren Wiersbe adds that "The Gospel of John records seven different moves that Pilate made as he went out to meet the people and then went in to question Jesus. He kept looking for a loophole, but he found none. Pilate has gone down in history as the man who tried Jesus Christ, three times declared Him not guilty, and yet crucified Him just the same." (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

James M Boice on **Pilate** - Pilate was not a noble character. In fact, if it were not for his influential connections through marriage, he would never have come even to the relatively insignificant post he held as procurator of Judea. He came from Spain, being a native of Seville. He had joined the legions of [Germanicus](#) in the wars on the Rhine. After peace had been secured, he went to Rome to make his fortune. There he met and married [Claudia Procula](#), the youngest daughter of Julia who was the daughter of the emperor [Augustus](#). From the perspective of Pilate's future this was a wise move. Claudia had connections with the highest levels of Roman government. But morally it was a disgrace; for Julia, who thereby became Pilate's mother-in-law, was a woman of such depraved and coarse habits that even in decadent Rome she was notorious. Augustus, her father, avoided her presence and eventually banished her. It is reported that afterward, whenever someone would mention the name of his daughter to him, Augustus would exclaim, "*Would I were wifeless or had childless died*" Unlike Pilate, a man of nobler instincts would not have married into such a family. Nevertheless, through his new connections Pilate applied for and was awarded the procuratorship of Judea, which post he assumed in a.d. 26. He was the sixth [procurator](#) (Ed: But see [prefect](#)). Those before him were: Sabinus, Caponius, Ambivus, Rufus, and Gratus. ([The Gospel of John: Triumph Through Tragedy](#)).

[Philo](#), the ancient Jewish scholar from Alexandria, described **Pilate**: “His corruption, his acts of [insolence](#), his [rapine](#), his habit of insulting people, his cruelty, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never-ending gratuitous and most grievous inhumanity.” ([Reference - XXXVIII. 299](#))

Pilatos - 55x in 53v - Matt. 27:2; Matt. 27:13; Matt. 27:17; Matt. 27:22; Matt. 27:24; Matt. 27:58; Matt. 27:62; Matt. 27:65; Mk. 15:1; Mk. 15:2; Mk. 15:4; Mk. 15:5; Mk. 15:9; Mk. 15:12; Mk. 15:14; Mk. 15:15; Mk. 15:43; Mk. 15:44; Lk. 3:1; Lk. 13:1; Lk. 23:1; Lk. 23:3; Lk. 23:4; Lk. 23:6; Lk. 23:11; Lk. 23:12; Lk. 23:13; Lk. 23:20; Lk. 23:24; Lk. 23:52; Jn. 18:29; Jn. 18:31; Jn. 18:33; Jn. 18:35; Jn. 18:37; Jn. 18:38; Jn. 19:1; Jn. 19:4; Jn. 19:6; Jn. 19:8; Jn. 19:10; Jn. 19:12; Jn. 19:13; Jn. 19:15; Jn. 19:19; Jn. 19:21; Jn. 19:22; Jn. 19:31; Jn. 19:38; Acts 3:13; Acts 4:27; Acts 13:28; 1 Tim. 6:13

Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Pilate or Pontius Pilate](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Pontius Pilate](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Pontius Pilate](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Pilate Pontius](#)
- Whyte's Bible Characters [Pontius pilate](#)

NET Note on **Pilate** - Pilate was the Roman prefect (procurator) in charge of collecting taxes and keeping the peace. His immediate superior was the Roman governor (proconsul) of Syria, although the exact nature of this administrative relationship is unknown. Pilate's relations with the Jews had been rocky (v. 12). Here he is especially sensitive to them.

J C Ryle makes an interesting comment - The mere fact that the Jews were obliged to apply publicly to a foreign ruler to carry out their murderous plan was a striking proof that the 'sceptre had departed from Judah' (Genesis 49:10) when the Messiah came. (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Pilate's Stone

As alluded to above it is clear that **Pilate** was a historical figure as documented by the [Limestone block discovered in 1961 with Pilate's tribute](#) in Latin to [Tiberius](#). The words [...]TIVS PILATVS[...] can be clearly seen on the second line. The translation from Latin to English for the inscription reads:

*To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum
...Pontius Pilate
...prefect of Judea
...has dedicated [this]*

Overstreet on Pilate -

PILATE'S FOUR MISTAKES IN GOVERNING JUDEA

It is clear from historical records that Pilate was the fifth procurator of Judea, appointed by the emperor Tiberius, that he was procurator cum potestate (having civil, military, and criminal jurisdiction), that he held office for ten years (A.D. 26–36), and that in some way, not clearly known, he was subject to the legate of Syria, which was not uncommon at that time. **It is also known that Pilate created much antagonism between himself and the Jews on at least four different occasions.**

(1) The first of these was immediately after his being appointed governor when he and his soldiers brought their standards into Jerusalem, bearing the emperor's image, and placed them within sight of the Temple. This so enraged the Jews, who regarded it as idolatry, that Pilate yielded to them and had the standards returned to Caesarea.

(2) A second occasion is recorded in Luke 13:1+ which states that Pilate apparently killed some Galileans while they were offering sacrifices.

(Luke 13:1 - Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.)

(3) On a third occasion he used revenues from the Temple to construct an aqueduct. The Jews also objected to this sacrilege, but Pilate had his soldiers beat the complainers into subjection with staves.

(4) On the fourth occasion he hung golden shields, apparently bearing the name of the emperor as a deity, in Herod's palace. The Jews objected so strenuously to this that the emperor himself rebuked Pilate and ordered them removed.

This event has been dated at A.D. 32. **It can thus be seen that Pilate had yielded to Jewish pressures on at least one occasion, and that the emperor himself had intervened to reprimand Pilate on another occasion; this latter event carries special significance since it occurred only about a year before the death of Christ.**

These historical events form an important background for Pilate's dealings with Christ.

(**ED COMMENT:** Specifically Pilate could hardly afford to have a major Jewish riot over his handling of Jesus, for to do so would risk Rome removing him from his position as procurator. He had worked too hard to get this position and as we shall see was willing to do whatever it took to preserve that position!)

The Governor and Roman Law

Four factors have a bearing in Pilate's dealing with Christ: (1) Pilate's authority, (2) the rights of Roman citizens in a province contrasted to those of noncitizens, (3) the relationship of Roman law to the local law of provincials, and (4) the punishment for the crime of treason.

(1) Local Provincial Law -

Generally speaking, Roman law allowed the local law of each province to be exercised without much interference. Kunkel has pointed out that "local administration, the administration of justice as between the natives of the provinces, and many other tasks were in general simply left to the political organs of the subject people." One significant exception to this was jurisdiction on matters involving capital punishment which was reserved to the procurator. This exception has been set forth by Lyall: "The Romans did, for example, reserve the right to impose capital punishment, as in the case of Christ, but the day to day administration was none of their concern." (Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul—Aliens and Citizens," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 48 January-March 1976)

This particular exception is critically important in the trial of Christ before Pilate, since the Jews expressly declared, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7); but they also said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). While it is true that some time later the Jews did exercise the power of capital punishment, illegally, in the stoning death of Stephen (Acts 7:58), there was a great deterrent in the case of Christ, and that was the involvement of Annas (John 18:13, 24). In A.D. 15, while Annas was the Jewish high priest, he led the Sanhedrin to violate this law when there was temporarily no procurator in Judea. That action resulted in his being deposed by Valerius Gratus that same year. It seems reasonable that Annas would have had a great influence on the decision of Caiaphas, the high priest during Christ's trial, since he was Caiaphas's father-in-law, and the case of Christ was one that involved great popular opinion.

(2) Rights of Individuals -

The rights of individuals within a province varied depending on whether the person was a Roman citizen or a noncitizen, an alien. The state of the noncitizen has been explained by Lyall: "The [peregrini](#) were subjects of Rome, but not Romans, because they were not citizens. They were not liable to military service, but were subject to supervision, and to the heavy burden of Imperial taxation. In terms of strict Roman law they were rightless and dutiless, existing as objects and not subjects of law." Concerning this same subject Garnsey has given a specific time when citizens were distinguished from aliens in a crucial area, that of corporal punishment. "Corporal punishment was traditionally used against slaves and aliens. This was written into the laws from the early second century, B.C., when a [lex porcia](#) granted to Roman citizens the right of appeal against beating as well as execution." The only time a Roman citizen was supposed to be subject to execution without a properly constituted trial was if he had been declared an enemy of the state. In other instances there was a clear difference between aliens and citizens in the empire. "Discrimination in favour of citizens as opposed to aliens was thus a permanent feature of the Roman judicial system. It was practised in all spheres of law where aliens were technically excluded, as from the *ius civile*, and where they were not, as in criminal law." However, it should also be noted that from the time of the Republic onward aliens were supposed to be allowed "natural principles of equity which are common to all nations." It may be concluded then that aliens—and Christ was one of these in relation to Roman law—had no direct legal standing at all; however, ethically and morally the natural principles of equity should have been applied to His case, but there was no legal compulsion to do so.

(3) Authority of the Governor -

Since Judea was a province subject to Rome, "the governor exercised the unlimited jurisdiction of the military imperium." The governor of a province like Judea would exercise military, financial, and judicial functions.¹⁸ In relation to his judicial functions, the provincial governor "exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction among Roman citizens, and also among foreigners, so far as such cases came before him by virtue of the province's statute (*leges provinciae*) or by the operation of his discretion." While it is clear that the governor's judicial activity would mainly concern Roman citizens, it is also clear that "if the interests of Roman sovereignty were involved, no doubt he would also at all times have summoned provincials to his court."

The extent of the governor's authority is manifested in the types of punishment he could legally mete. There is no question but that he had the power of capital punishment over noncitizens, and he could also "execute humbler citizens

or send them to the mines.” Indeed, the evidence indicates that the governor could inflict capital punishment on any Roman citizen, but “custom seems to have directed that the governor should remit capital cases of Roman citizens to the home government.”

It may be concluded, then, that the Roman governor had absolute legal authority to deal with noncitizens, such as Christ, and to prescribe the death penalty, without fear of having his authority challenged. As far as the procedure which a governor would follow is concerned, it is documented that he could “deal with crime inquisitorially, i.e., by investigating on his own initiative and by any means at his disposal.” It is clear that “judicial administration in the provinces was much less precise and technical than that which was required in Rome itself.” It is this fact which enables the flexibility and informality in Pilate’s dealings with Christ to be understood. There was nothing improper or unusual about it.

(4) Crucifixion as a Punishment

Since Christ was crucified as a result of Pilate’s final decision, it is needful to examine this mode of punishment and the people on whom it was used. In general, the mode of crucifixion was adopted by the Romans “to inflict the death penalty upon rebellious slaves and seditious provincials.” Concerning crucifixion, Garnsey wrote, “Crucifixion was the standing form of execution for slaves. Furthermore, in the reign of Nero, Gessius Florus scourged and crucified some Jews in Jerusalem, including some equestrians. On other occasions, Jewish rebels suffered crucifixion. A political charge was at least aired in the trial of Christ.”

It is obvious from the Gospels that Christ was charged with sedition or treason (Luke 23:2; John 19:2). The law on treason was not specifically delineated but was capable of wide interpretation. Indeed, in the time of the empire, “the law was extended not only to all attempts on the life of the reigning prince, but to all acts and words which might appear to be disrespectful to him,” and it was regarded as a capital crime. In the case of Christ, the evidence indicates that He “was on trial for his life before the Roman governor and the basis of the prosecution was his danger to the Roman state. The very means of execution shows that Jesus died as an offender against Rome, not the Jewish nation.”...

Overstreet on Pilate’s later life - It is known from history that Pilate was removed from his position as governor in A.D. 36. The event that led directly to this was Pilate’s leading his troops against some restless [Samaritans](#) on [Mount Gerizim](#), and conducting a needless massacre (**ED: HE FALSELY VIEWED THEM AS INSURRECTIONISTS AND KILLED MANY RELIGIOUS PILGRIMS**). The Samaritans complained to Vitellius, the legate of Syria (**ED: HE WAS PILATE’S IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR**), concerning this, and he immediately deposed Pilate and sent him to Rome to answer the accusations before the Emperor [Tiberius](#). However, by the time Pilate had reached Rome, Tiberius was dead, and [Caligula](#) was on the throne. What happened to Pilate following this is a matter of some conjecture. Though there are many traditions, Eusebius stated that Pilate committed suicide (**ED: BUT THIS IS NOT DEFINITIVE**)....Pilate’s character is not to be envied: he appears as a vacillating, compromising individual more concerned with political expediency than with equity at the trial of Christ. His actions may not be condemned because they were illegal; however, his actions may justly be condemned because he acted against his own conscience (Matt. 27:24), and also against what was morally and ethically correct. ([Roman Law and the Trial of Christ - R Larry Overstreet](#))

Rich Cathers - If it weren’t for the trial of Jesus, Pontius Pilate would be considered a minor figure in history. He is mentioned by ancient historians Josephus, Philo, and Tacitus, besides the four gospels. Yet sixty years ago, he was considered by some scholars to be nothing more than a myth. In 1961, archaeologists turned over one of the stones in the ancient amphitheater at Caesarea, and found the name of Pilate carved into it. The inscription, translated from Latin, is: “To the Divine Augusti this Tiberieum ... Pontius Pilate ... prefect of Judea ... has dedicated this”

Illustration - A Sunday school teacher asked her students to draw a picture of the Holy Family. After the pictures were brought to her, she saw that some of the youngsters had drawn the conventional pictures....the Holy Family and the manger, the Holy Family riding on the mule, etc. But she called up one little boy to ask him to explain his drawing, which showed an airplane with four heads sticking out of the plane windows. She said, “I can understand that you drew three of the heads to show Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. But who’s the fourth head?” “Oh,” answered the boy, “that’s Pontius the pilot!”

Rod Mattoon - Some of the frustrating characteristics of our judicial system today are the influences that public opinion and the media will have on the verdict of a case. Threats of rioting or violence tend to pressure or blackmail juries into making a popular decision instead of a just one. The O.J. Simpson case is a classic example of such pressure. The verdict of that case continues to be mocked to this day.

It is also frustrating when judges do not abide by the law, but use their authority to hinder or overturn the votes or legislation of a state in order to implement their political preferences. The state of Wisconsin is dealing with this right now. Corrupt judges will ignore or distort the Constitution of the United States and use their bench to legislate, a problem our Founding Fathers cautioned us about and warned us to avoid.

What do you think would happen if a famous, well-liked person in this country was tried on national television and declared innocent by the judge, but then, the person was sentenced to death and executed after being declared "Not Guilty" because of public opinion and peer pressure? Do you think people would be a little upset? I would think so. Such actions would be unjust, unfair, and outrageous.

This is what we find in this portion of Luke. We come to the trial of the Lord Jesus Christ and find it was a Kangaroo Court. A Kangaroo Court is a court that is characterized by irresponsible, unauthorized, or irregular procedures. The principles of the law and justice are perverted or disregarded. The punishment is given outside legal procedures.

This was also a Kangaroo Court because the leaders or judges had Jesus jumping from one court to another. Those who were in charge kept passing the buck when it came to dealing with Jesus because of the fear they had of the opinions of others. This trial will provide insights into what happened to the Lord and practical insights for living the Christian life. . (Treasures from Luke)

QUESTION - [Who was Pontius Pilate?](#)

ANSWER - Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 26-36, serving under Emperor Tiberius. He is most known for his involvement in condemning Jesus to death on a cross.

Outside of the four Gospels, Pontius Pilate is mentioned by [Tacitus](#), Philo, and Josephus. In addition, the "Pilate Stone," discovered in 1961 and dated c. A.D. 30, includes a description of Pontius Pilate and mentions him as "prefect" of Judea. Pilate is also mentioned in the apocryphal writings, but these were all written at much later dates.

In the Bible, Pontius Pilate is mentioned solely in connection with the trials and crucifixion of Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) portray Pilate as reluctant to crucify Jesus. Pilate calls the charges against Jesus "baseless" (Luke 23:14) and several times declares Jesus to be not guilty: "What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty" (Luke 23:22).

Pilate's conscience was already bothering him when his wife sent him an urgent message concerning Jesus. The note begged him, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19).

John's Gospel offers some more detail of the trial, including an additional conversation between Pilate and Jesus. Jesus acknowledges Himself as a king and claims to speak directly for the truth. Pilate responds with the famous question, "[What is truth?](#)" (John 18:38). The question intentionally communicated multiple meanings. Here was a situation in which truth was compromised in order to condemn an innocent man. Pilate, who is supposedly seeking the truth, asks the question of the One who is Himself "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). A human judge, confused about the truth, was about to condemn the Righteous Judge of the world.

In the end, Pilate sought a compromise. Knowing Jesus had been handed over by the religious leaders out of envy, he appealed to the crowds at the Passover, asking which "criminal" should be set free, Jesus or Barabbas? The leaders convinced the crowd to cry out for Barabbas (Matthew 27:20-21). Giving in to political pressure, Pilate authorized both the flogging and crucifixion of Jesus: "Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:15).

Pilate had the charge against Jesus posted on the cross above Jesus' head: "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37). As soon as Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus in order to bury Him, and Pilate granted the request (John 19:38). The last glimpse we have of Pontius Pilate is when he assigns guards for Jesus' tomb (Matthew 27:64-66).

Pontius Pilate's brief appearance in Scripture is full of tragedy. He ignored his conscience, he disregarded the good advice of his wife, he chose political expediency over public rectitude, and he failed to recognize the truth even when Truth was standing right in front of him. When given an opportunity to evaluate the claims of Jesus, what will we decide? Will we accept His claim to be the King, or will we follow the voice of the crowd?[GotQuestions.org](#)

- [Wikipedia Article on Pontius Pilate](#)

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

KJV Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

- **And they began to accuse Him** Zechariah 11:8; Mark 15:3-5; John 18:30
- **We found this man misleading our nation** Lk 22:5; 1 Kings 18:17; Jeremiah 38:4; Amos 7:10; Acts 16:20,21; 17:6,7; 24:5
- **forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar** Lk 20:20-25; 1 Kings 21:10-13; Ps 35:11; 62:4; 64:3-6; Jeremiah 20:10; 37:13-15; Mt 17:27; 22:21; 26:59,60; Mark 12:17; 14:55,56; Acts 24:13; 1 Peter 3:16-18
- **saying that He Himself is Christ, a King** Lk 22:69,70; Mark 14:61,62; John 18:36; 19:12
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Note: The following table is an attempt to line up parallel passages from the 4 Gospel accounts on the same row and to identify the passages found only in one Gospel with **yellow highlighting**. In some cases it is difficult to state with certainty which passage in a particular Gospel comes next in time sequence. If you see a passage you do not think fits in the sequence please send an email with your explanation. From a cursory glance at the table below, it should be apparent that in order to get a complete account of Jesus before Pilate, one must read John's account.

- See also a related but more complete chart all on one page - Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
JESUS' FIRST CIVIL TRIAL BEFORE PILATE INSIDE THE PRAETORIUM (Approximate Time - 6:30 AM)			
Mt 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. (N2)	Mk 15:1+ Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.		John 18:28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the <u>Praetorium</u> , and it was early ;
			Jn 18:28b and they themselves did not enter into the <u>Praetorium</u> , so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. (N1)
Mt 27:3-10 PARENTHESIS ONLY MATTHEW DESCRIBES THE FATE OF JUDAS (N)			
			Jn 18:29 Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, " What accusation do you bring against this Man? " (N1) (see pix) 30 They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." 31 So Pilate said to them, " Take Him yourselves, and j u d g e Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," 32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die, (N3)

		Lk 23:2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man (#1) misleading our nation (#2) and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, (#3) and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King "	
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**THE FIRST CIVIL TRIAL CONTINUES
WITH PILATE QUESTIONING JESUS
INSIDE THE PRAETORIUM**

Mt 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. "	Mk 15:2+ Pilate questioned Him, " Are You the King of the Jews? " And He answered him, " It is as you say. "	Lk 23:3+ So Pilate asked Him, saying, " Are You the King of the Jews? " And He answered him and said, " It is as you say. "	Jn 18:33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, " Are You the King of the Jews? " (N4)
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			Jn 18:34 Jesus answered, " Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me? " 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" (N5) 36 Jesus answered, " My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm. " 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, " You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth (Jn 14:6, cf gospel). Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice (cf Jn 10:27, 8:31-32). " 38 Pilate said to Him, " What is truth? " (Pix)
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**THE FIRST CIVIL TRIAL CONCLUDES
PILATE REACHES HIS VERDICT INSIDE THE PRAETORIUM.
THEN HE GOES OUT TO THE JEWS
TO ANNOUNCE HIS FIRST "NOT GUILTY" VERDICT**

		Lk 23:4+ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, " I find no guilt in this man. "	Jn 18:38b And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, " I find no guilt in Him. " (N6)
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<p>Mt 27:12 And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer .</p> <p>13 Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?”</p> <p>14 And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed. (N7)</p>	<p>Mk 15:3+ The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly (Imperf-repeatedly).</p> <p>4 Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, “Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!”</p> <p>5 But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.</p>	<p>Lk 23:5+ But they kept on insisting, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.”</p>	
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**THE SECOND CIVIL TRIAL
BEFORE HEROD ANTIPAS**

(Only in Luke)
(Approximate Time 7:00 AM)

		<p>FRIDAY - EARLY MORNING BEFORE 9 AM</p> <p>Lk 23:6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time....</p> <p>Lk 23:8+ Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. (THIS LEADS TO THE THIRD CIVIL TRIAL BELOW) 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.</p>	
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**THE THIRD CIVIL TRIAL
JESUS’ SECOND APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE**

(Approximate Time: 7:30 AM)

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Luke 23:13-16+ Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, **I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.** 15 **"No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us;** and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. 16 **"Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."** ([See Note](#))

[CLICK HERE](#) TO GO TO NEXT SECTION
WHO DO YOU WANT ME TO RELEASE?

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Note 1 - John 18:28 says the Jews **"themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled"**. When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, it seems clear that Jesus Himself was taken inside the Praetorium to face Pilate, while the Jews remained outside. Then when Pilate went out to them he formally commenced the legal proceedings (the first civil trial) as he asked **"What accusation do you bring against this Man?"** ([see pix](#)) (Jn 18:29). It is interesting that the Jews did not at first give a specific accusation declaring "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." (Jn 18:30) They mistakenly presumed this would be sufficient for Pilate to condemn Jesus to death. For after all Pilate would have had to give the order for a Roman cohort to go with the Jews to arrest Jesus (Jn 18:3). Probably to their shock Pilate told them to judge Him (Jn 18:31). Of course their problem was they wanted Him dead and had no authority to carry out capital punishment. Therefore they came up with three accusations calculated to force Pilate to condemn Jesus to death, for high treason and insurrection. Pilate was a weak man of fickle character but he was still smart enough to discern that the reason the Jews had delivered Jesus into his hand was because of **envy!** (Mt 27:18). So the Jews in essence forced Pilate's hand with their triple accusation in Lk 23:2.

How tragically deceived (and hypocritical) were these "religious" Jewish leaders who regarded ceremonial defilement a much more serious matter than moral defilement! (cf Lk 11:39+)

THOUGHT - Are we not often like them, maintaining a "spiritual" exterior, while at the same time internally harboring unclean thoughts, unrepentant sins, etc? O Lord, acquit us of hidden faults and keep us from presumptive sins, lest they come to rule over us. Amen (Ps 19:12-13).

Augustine - O impious blindness! They would be defiled, forsooth, by a dwelling which was another's, and not be defiled by a crime which was their own. They feared to be defiled by the praetorium of an alien judge, and feared not to be defiled by the blood of an innocent brother.

Matthew Poole "Nothing is more common than for persons overzealous about rituals to be remiss about morals."

John Trapp - "Putrid hypocrisy! they stand upon legal defilements, and care not to defile their consciences with innocent blood. What is this, but to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel?"

Note 3 on to fulfill the word of Jesus (Jn 18:32) - Specifically Jesus had predicted **"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."** (Jn 12:32) In John's Gospel the Greek word **lifted up** ([hupsou](#)) always refers to the cross (Jn 3:14; 8:28, 12:34, Mt 20:19, cf OT prophecy in Ps 22:16). On the cross He became a curse (Dt 21:23, Gal 3:13). Notice also that Pilate's response in John 18:31 (for them to **"take Him yourselves..."**) forces the Jews to offer up the three specific charges recorded only in Lk 23:2.

Note 4 - John 18:33 on "Are You the King of the Jews?" - First note that Pilate **"entered again into the Praetorium"** from which he had come out initially to address the Jews. Now Pilate goes back inside apparently this time taking Jesus with him. In the Greek text, the **"You"** is emphatic and so more literally it reads *"You, are You the King of the Jews?"* Clearly of the 3 Jewish accusations against Jesus (recorded only in Luke 23:2), the one that aroused Pilate's attention was the statement that Jesus claimed to be a King. Pilate's question is recorded in all four Gospels (Mt 27:11, Mk 15:2, Lk 23:3). Note also that this is the **FIRST** question Pilate asked Jesus. And while the synoptic Gospels all record Jesus' answer as **"It is as you say,"** John adds a more lengthy interchange in Jn 18:34-38a. In sum this extended discourse (1) is found only in John's Gospel, (2) occurs in private within Pilate's residence, the Praetorium, and (3) represents Jesus' explanation to Pilate that He is not a King in the usual sense that Pilate might expect of a typical earthly king. In view of this revelation, Pilate interpreted Jesus as no threat to the Roman empire and for that reason found **no guilt in Him.** (Jn 18:38b, Lk 23:4).

MacArthur adds that "Jesus could not answer Pilate's question with an unqualified "Yes" or "No" without first defining

exactly what His kingship entails. His counter question, "**Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?**" was intended to clarify the issue (I.E., TO CLARIFY PILATE'S QUESTION). If Pilate was saying this on his **own initiative**, he would be asking if Jesus was a king in the **political sense** (and hence a threat to Rome). Jesus' answer in that case would be "**no**," He was not a king in the sense of a military or political leader. He had earlier rejected the crowd's attempt to make Him such a king (Jn 6:15). But neither could the Lord deny that as the Messiah He was Israel's true king. (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

James Stalker adds that Jesus "desired to learn in what sense the question was asked—whether from the standpoint of a Roman or from that of the Jews; because of course His answer would be different according as He was asked whether He was a king as a Roman would understand the word or according as it was understood by the Jews....Jesus at once proceeded, however, to answer Pilate's question on both sides, both on the Roman political and then on the Jewish religious side. First, He answered negatively, "My kingdom is not of this world!" He was no rival of the Roman emperor....It was not a kingdom of force and arms and worldly glory He had in view....Yet, even in making this denial, Jesus had used the words, "**My kingdom.**" And Pilate broke in, "**Art Thou a king then?**" "**Yes,**" replied Jesus; "**to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.** This was His kingdom—the realm of Truth. It differs widely from that of Caesar. Caesar's empire is over the bodies of men; this is over their hearts. The strength of Caesar's empire is in soldiers, arms, citadels and navies; the strength of this kingdom is in principles, sentiments, ideas. The benefit secured by Caesar to the citizens is external security for their persons and properties; the blessings of Christ's kingdom are peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost (**ED: "[ETERNAL SECURITY!](#)"**). The empire of Caesar, vast as it was, yet was circumscribed; the kingdom of Christ is without limits, and is destined to be established in every land. Cæsar's empire, like every other earthly kingdom, had its day and passed out of existence; but the kingdom of Truth shall last for evermore."[\(THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST: A DEVOTIONAL HISTORY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION](#) - see III)

Stalker - In the silence, then, of this interior hall He (Jesus) and Pilate stood face to face—He in the prisoner's lonely place, Pilate in the place of power. Yet how strangely, as we now look back at the scene, are the places reversed! **It is Pilate who is going to be tried**—Pilate and Rome, which he represented. **All that morning Pilate was being judged and exposed**; and ever since he has stood in the pillory of history with the centuries gazing at him. In the old pictures of the Child Christ by the great masters a halo proceeds from the Babe that lights up the surrounding figuraes, sometimes with dazzling effect. And it is true that on all who approached Christ, when He was in the world, there fell a light in which both the good and the evil in them were revealed. It was a search-light, that penetrated into every corner and exposed every wrinkle. Men were judged as they came near Him. Is it not so still? We never show so entirely what is in us as by the way in which we are affected by Christ. We are judging ourselves and passing sentence on ourselves for eternity by the way in which we deal with Him.

Note 5 on what have You done? - The Roman laws allowed the accused to be questioned in detail. So while Pilate understands why the Jewish leaders had delivered Him over (i.e., envy - Mt 27:18), he is uncertain what Jesus has done to stir up such anger and hostility.

Note 6 on I find no guilt in Him - MacArthur explains that "In this context, "**find**" represented a judicial verdict. Pilate acquitted Jesus of any civil or criminal wrongdoing. In modern parlance, He threw the case out of court for lack of evidence. He exercised "[summary judgment](#)." (Ibid)

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Note 7 - Mt 27:12-14 (parallel with Mk 15:3-5, Lk 23:5) - Although Matthew and Mark do not record Pilate's first not guilty verdict against Jesus, they do record a barrage of repeated accusations against Jesus in an attempt to force Pilate to reverse his verdict. In stark contrast to the angry lying accusations of the Jews, Jesus is majestically silent! And Pilate's reaction was that he was **amazed** ([thaumazo](#))! Pilate is marveling that the Jews are falsely accusing Him of crimes that would warrant the death penalty and yet He offered no self-defense! In truth, He did not have to because Pilate had already declared Him not guilty (Lk 23:4, Jn 18:38). In His silence Jesus fulfilled OT prophecies

Isaiah 42:1-2 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 "He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street.

Isaiah 53:7+ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

Comment: In Acts 8:32+ Luke records the last part of Isaiah's passage "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH." This was a portion of the passages of Scripture the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading which led to his salvation as Phillip preached Jesus to him beginning with Isaiah's prophecy (Acts 8:34, 35+)

GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke begins to describe the sixth and final phase of the illegal trial of Jesus in Lk 23:13-16, a description that is unique to Luke's Gospel (like the previous section on the trial before Herod - Lk 23:6-12). Herod has just sent Jesus back to Pilate and Pilate summons the religious leaders (had they dispersed after Jesus was sent to Herod?) and gives his second not guilty verdict, this time adding that Herod also found Him not guilty.

THREE FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST JESUS

Note on the sequence of events - From the preceding chart, note that Pilate **went out** of the Praetorium to meet the Jews and hear their initial accusation against Jesus (Jn 18:29-30), which was not convincing. This prompted Pilate to tell the Jews **to take Him...and judge Him according to your law** (Jn 18:31-32). Pilate's response in turn prompted the Jews to present 3 specific accusations against Jesus (recorded only in Lk 23:2). Upon hearing their charges Pilate went into the Praetorium and **summoned Jesus** for questioning (Jn 18:33). The accusation that aroused Pilate's concern was that Jesus was a King and so he focuses his question on whether Jesus was "**the King of the Jews**" (Mt 27:11, Mk 15:2, Lk 23:3, Jn 18:33). Jesus' full reply is recorded only by John (Jn 18:34-38). Apparently Pilate reaches his conclusion that Jesus is not guilty of this charge (nor the other two charges). At this point he goes back outside to announce his verdict (Jn 18:38a), telling the Jews Jesus is not guilty. While it is not clearly stated, it is implied from comparing the four accounts that Pilate brought Jesus with him, so that the Jews could see Him when they heard the verdict against Him. Not surprisingly, Pilate's first not guilty verdict stirred up the Jews to begin to make more accusations against Jesus (Mt 27:12, Mk 15:3, Lk 23:5), Who remained silent. Note the fact that Jesus did not answer (Mt 27:12) supports that Jesus was before His accusers (i.e., outside the Praetorium or at the very least at the entrance to the Praetorium where the Jews could see Him and level their charges against Him).

Introductory Comments - The Jews knew that the religious crime of blasphemy would not be regarded by Rome as sufficient ground for the death penalty, so that had to concoct a false political crime that would force Pilate's hand to act in defense of Rome. And note that in all their protestations and accusations they make no mention of the charge on which they had condemned Him themselves! They did not condemn Jesus for any of these three accusations they put forth but for blasphemy! Liars to the core! Children of their father the devil (Jn 8:44)! The Jews knew the charge of blasphemy would not achieve the end they desired. Pilate would most likely reacted to a charge of blasphemy the way Gallio the Roman proconsul of Achaia reacted to the Jewish religious disputes in Acts 18:14-16. ("if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters." And he drove them away from the judgment seat.")

As an aside, let me say dogmatically and emphatically that I am NOT anti-Semitic and any comments that place the Jews in general or the Jewish leaders in a bad light are based on the Scriptural record. (See Peter's words directed at his Jewish audience in Acts 2:36-37+). One can hardly condemn the Jews and not see that it was my sin and your sin which ultimately put Jesus on the Cross ([See note](#)). The Jews, Pilate, religious leaders and Romans were all guilty participants in God's great redemptive drama!

And they began to accuse Him, saying - **They** refers to the Jewish Sanhedrin. Note that the Jewish Sanhedrin made three basic accusations against Jesus, which might be aptly summed up as charges of [sedition](#). **Sedition** is defined as an illegal action inciting resistance to lawful authority and seeking to cause the disruption or overthrow of the government. The Sanhedrin were deceptive and crafty and knew that Pilate would never accept a "religious" charge of blasphemy as grounds for condemning Jesus to death, to they concocted three [trumped up](#) charges. James Stalker says "They had to [extemporise](#) crimes (ED: THERE IS NO BIBLICAL RECORD THAT THEY HAD "PLAN B" READY IF "PLAN A" FAILED.), and they were not scrupulous about it."

To accuse (2723) ([kategoroo](#) from **kata** = against + **agora** = market place, place of public speaking) means to speak openly against a person, to condemn them before a public tribunal or bring an accusation in court. To accuse formally by bringing a charge publicly. The idea is to speak openly against, to condemn or accuse mainly in a legal sense. The cognate word [kategoria](#) was a legal technical term that referred to the content of the accusation or charge made against someone. Note that all of the Gospel uses involve accusing Jesus (except John 5:45).

Katagoreo is in the [present tense](#) indicating their lying accusations were continually being leveled against Jesus! "They went at it and kept it up." (Robertson)

All four Gospel writers used **kategoroo** earlier in Jesus' ministry, John for example recording

They (scribes and Pharisees - Jn 8:3) were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for **accusing** Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. (John 8:6, cf Mt 12:10, Mk 3:2, Lk 6:7+).

As an aside, who is "motivating" (so to speak) the members of the Sanhedrin? Surely Satan the ultimate Adversary of Jesus was "shooting" **flaming missiles** of hatred and murder into the minds of these godless Jewish men (cf Eph 6:16+). And so "[like father, like son](#)", and who was their "father?" (see Jn 8:44)! Thus it should not surprise us to find this same verb "**accuse**" ([kategoroo](#)) in John's description of Satan in Revelation...

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the **accuser** (Satan - [kategoros](#)) of our brethren has been thrown down, he who **accuses** ([kategoroeo](#) in the present tense = continually) them before our God day and night. (Rev 12:10_±)

Comment: The Greek word for "**accuser**" ([kategoros](#)) is the name given to Satan by the rabbis! Here the Jewish religious leaders are before Herod and in the irony of ironies they are carrying out the devil's dirtiest deed! It's amazing how we can deceive our own hearts! (cf Jer 17:9).

Overstreet explains 'The Jews brought Christ to Pilate because they were forbidden by law to put Him to death themselves. Second, it should be remembered that a provincial governor (LIKE PILATE) had the legal freedom to conduct a trial as informally and with as little set procedure as he wished. Several observations may be made concerning Pilate and the legality of the trial of Christ. **First**, since Pilate was governor of Judea, and this was to be a capital offense, he was the proper person to conduct the trial of Christ. **Second**, he was quite correct in initially declining to hear the case, since the first charge was so vague (see John 18:30). **Third**, he acted in accordance with Roman law when there was an indictment for treason leveled against Christ (Luke 23:2), and he questioned Christ privately concerning this matter, deciding He was innocent. At this point Pilate had the legal authority to release Christ, but he did not. Instead, he once again went to the Jews, for which he has been criticized as acting illegally. However, when it is remembered that under Roman law a non-citizen, such as Christ, had **no legal rights** to begin with, then Pilate could not have acted illegally. He may be accused of being unethical or immoral (and rightly so), but he may not be accused of acting illegally under the Roman legal system. He had every legal authority to continue or not, as formally or informally as he pleased. **Fourth**, Pilate did not act in an unusual manner when he sent Christ to Herod (Luke 23:6–12). Greenidge has pointed out that a provincial governor had the power to ask anyone he wanted to be his adviser, and that "it was even possible in an important prosecution to summon expert advice from another province—nay, even a neighboring provincial governor himself." Herod's refusal to try Jesus indicates that in his opinion Jesus was innocent; Pilate used this in his argument for Christ's release (Luke 23:15). The remainder of Pilate's legal dealings with Christ may be considered from the legal basis of a non-citizen having no legal rights in Roman law." ([Ref](#))

ACCUSATION #1

We found this man misleading our nation - Accusation #1 - Lie #1 - "This man" is used in a derogatory sense. They could have spoken His great Name, but instead choose to disparage Him! One might paraphrase their charge as disturbing the peace, in this case not against Rome but against Israel, "our nation." All Jesus has done for 3 years was speak truth to the **nation**, truth summed up in His famous I Am statement "**I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father but through Me.**" (Jn 14:6). But as John wrote "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own (THE JEWS), and those who were His own (ISRAEL) did not receive Him. (John 1:10-11+)" So instead of **misleading** them, He was leading the nation to the truth about righteousness attained by grace through faith, but they would have none of His truth and so they spewed these hateful lies before Pilate.

Ryle on accusation #1 - The duplicity and dishonesty of this charge are evident. When the enemies of our Lord wanted to bring him into disfavour with the Jews, they had asked him 'Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor or not?' (Luke 20:22). But now when they want to make him out to be an offender before the Roman Governor, they accuse him of forbidding paying taxes to Caesar the Roman Emperor. This false charge is as striking as it is dishonest. (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Misleading ([1294](#))([diastrepho](#)) is an interesting word which literally means to turn this way and that and speaks of an object on the potter's wheel that becomes misshapen. Figuratively it means to pervert and of course the Jews are saying Jesus was perverting and distorting their teaching, probably teaching that the way of righteousness was not by keeping the law but by believing in Him (cf Jn 1:11-13)! **Diastrepho** is in the **present tense** indicating the Jewish leaders are saying Jesus continually misled the nation! As noted below Pilate essentially brushes off this accusation.

Diastrepho was used by Saul (Paul) in his rebuke of "Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease **to make crooked** (diastrepho) the straight ways of the Lord? (Acts 13:9-10) Jesus on the other hand was making straight the crooked ways of the Jewish teachings and legalistic practices. Finally, it is interesting that these wicked Jewish leaders use the same word Jesus had used to describe the nation of Israel declaring "You unbelieving and **perverted** (diastrepho) generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." (Lk 9:41+)

ACCUSATION #2

Forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar - Accusation #2 - Lie #2 - Forbidding is **koluo** (again in the **present tense** = continually doing this) which more literally means he was continually hindering or making it difficult for them to pay taxes. This is a flagrant, bold-faced lie, for in fact Jesus had done just the opposite. [A T Robertson](#) quips "Their bright young students had tried desperately to get Jesus to say this very thing, but they had failed utterly." Dr Luke describes the scene...

So they (scribes and chief priests - Lk 20:19) watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that

they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor. 21 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. 22 "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 23 But He detected their trickery and said to them, 24 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." 25 And He said to them, "**Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**" (Lk 20:20-25+)

ACCUSATION #3

Saying that He Himself is Christ, a King - Accusation #3 - Lie #3 - Saying is present tense suggesting that Jesus was continually making this claim. This charge was political implying that Jesus was a rival King and thus invoked the idea of insurrection against Rome, which was of course was also a lie.

Notice what Jesus' Jewish accusers **DID NOT SAY** - They did not say that Jesus said "I am King of the Jews." This is fascinating because in all four Gospel accounts Pilate's question to Jesus is "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" (Mt 27:11, Mk 15:2, Lk 23:3, Jn 18:33). It is as if the Jews go to great lengths to distance themselves from the Kingship of Jesus, while Pilate zeroes in on that point. And as described later we see the Jewish leaders were motivated by **envy** of Jesus (Mt 27:18, Mk 15:10).

James Stalker describes the bitter irony of their accusation of Jesus' claim to be a **King** - "They (JEWS) were eagerly looking for a king, of splendor and military renown, to break the Roman yoke and make Jerusalem the capital of a worldwide empire; and it was because the spirit and aims of Jesus were alien to such ambitions that they despised and hated Him." Truth be told, Jesus could have turned the tables on these malicious men, for it was indeed they who wanted a conquering Messiah and King!

A T Robertson - This charge is true, but not in the sense meant by them. Jesus did claim to be the Christ and the king of the kingdom of God. But the Sanhedrin wanted Pilate to think that he set himself up as a rival to Caesar. Pilate would understand little from the word "Christ," but "King" was a different matter. He was compelled to take notice of this charge else he himself would be accused to Caesar of winking at such a claim by Jesus.

Illustration (from [Rich Cathers](#)) - [Jan Hus](#) (see [youtube video](#) or [another video](#)) ([Watch John MacArthur speak of John Hus](#)) was born in 1369 and became a priest in the country of Bohemia, modern Czechoslovakia. He was a reformer of the church a hundred years before Martin Luther. He taught against the practice of [indulgences](#) and the immoral state of the church leaders. He taught that Jesus was the Head of the church, not the pope. Guess what? The pope wasn't happy with Jan Hus. He was eventually put on trial and ordered to recant all the charges brought against him. The problem was that most of the charges were made up and Hus refused to recant things that he had never said. He was convicted and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. Be careful about becoming a "people pleaser". We all want people to like us. When we compromise our faith for the sake of people liking us, we are not only causing harm to ourselves, but especially to those very people who need to hear the truth about Jesus, even if it offends them.

Luke 23:3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "It is as you say."

KJV Luke 23:3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

- **So Pilate asked Him** Mt 27:11; Mark 15:2; John 18:33-37; 1 Timothy 6:13
- **Are You the King of the Jews** Lk 22:38; 1:32,33; 19:38-40; Mark 15:18,32; John 1:49; 19:3,19-21
- **And He answered him** 1 Timothy 6:13 = Jesus "made the good confession."
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?

Note on the sequence - Comparing the four Gospels, it is clear that Pilate is now inside the Praetorium as focuses his interrogation on whether or not Jesus is a King. As noted below the three synoptic accounts lack the more extensive interchange recorded in John's Gospel. [See chronological chart all on one page.](#)

Parallel Passages to Luke 23:3 - Note that the other three Gospels (especially John) give us a number of details not found in Luke 23 regarding the first interchange between Jesus and Pilate.

Mt 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. 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.

Mark 15:2 Pilate questioned Him, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" And He answered him, "It is as you say." 3 The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. 4 Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" 5 But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

John 18:33-38 (THE LONGEST INTERCHANGE) Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate *said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.(John 18:33-38)

As you study Pilate's interactions with Jesus, remember who was really on trial - to be sure in one sense it was **Jesus** in the context of **TIME** but ultimately in the context of **ETERNITY** it was **Pilate** who was on trial (AS WELL AS THE JEWISH LEADERS AND NATION WHO LARGELY REJECTED HIM - Jn 1:11-13+)! Pilate stands in the place of every man who has ever lived who has rejected God's offer of amazing grace, beginning with the entire world of Noah's day (Ge 6:13-14)! All rejected the words of this righteous man Noah (Ge 7:1) who was a preacher of righteousness, "by which he condemned the world" (Heb 11:7+, Mt 24:38-39)! All had an opportunity to hear from Noah about the way of righteousness, but like Pilate they rejected the Way, the Truth and the Life and earned their wages which is eternal death (see 2Pe 2:5-6+)!

After the Jewish Sanhedrin had presented their three charges (Lk 23:2+) it appears that the next thing Pilate said to the Jews was **Take** ([aorist imperative](#)) Him yourselves, and **judge** ([aorist imperative](#)) Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die (Mt 20:19, Mt 26:2, Lk 18:32-33+)." (Read Jn 18:31-32) As **Ryrie** explains "Jewish execution was by stoning; the Roman method was crucifixion. Jesus had to be crucified (1) so that no bone would be broken (Jn 19:36; Ps. 34:20), (2) to include both Gentiles and Jews in the responsibility for His death (Acts 4:27+), and (3) so that He would literally be lifted up in fulfillment of Jn 3:14+ (**ED**: cf Jn 8:28, Jn 12:32, 33, 34)." ([Ryrie Study Bible](#) or borrow [Expanded Edition](#))

So Pilate asked Him, saying - The question is where is this interrogation taking place? Luke does not give the location, but from the parallel passages this is almost certainly the Praetorium (see [Pontius Pilate](#)), for John records the same question as Luke 23:3 writing "Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" (Jn 18:33)

Are You the King of the Jews? - It is interesting that the members of the council (Sanhedrin) had made 3 charges, but the one Pilate focuses on is that He has stated **that He Himself is Christ, a King**

NET Note - Pilate was interested only in the third charge, because of its political implications of sedition against Rome.

David Guzik writes - We can only wonder what Pilate thought when he first saw Jesus, when he saw this beaten and bloodied Man before him. Jesus didn't look especially regal or majestic as He stood before Pilate, so the Roman governor was probably sarcastic or ironic when he asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ([Luke 23](#))

F F Bruce adds "Pilate was evidently not alarmed by the charge brought against Jesus. Why? Apparently at first glance he saw that the Man before him was not likely to be a pretender to royalty in any sense that he need trouble himself about...The [**you**] in an emphatic position in Mt 27:11 suggests this = **You** the King of the Jews!" ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

And He answered him and said, "It is as you say." (same answer Mt 27:11, Mk 15:2) - In Mt 26:25 Jesus gave a similar answer to Judas who asked "Surely it is not I (WHO WAS BETRAYING JESUS), Rabbi?" to which Jesus replied "You have said it yourself." In other words Jesus was saying that Judas had condemned himself out of his own mouth. In the present context Pilate's question (similar to Judas')

Are You the King of the Jews? is an affirmation of Pilate's inference that Jesus is in fact a King. John's account (below) leaves no doubt that Jesus' somewhat enigmatic answer is in fact an affirmation that He is a King.

John describes the dialogue between Pilate and Jesus in considerably greater detail than the three synoptic accounts ([See Chart of Parallel Passages](#)). If one reads only Luke's account, it would seem very strange that Pilate would still declare Jesus not guilty even though He admits to being a King. The answer is found in John 18:34-38 for as described below Jesus explains to Pilate that His Kingdom is not an ordinary kingdom and thus He is not an ordinary king. If He were an ordinary King, Pilate would have seen Him as a political threat to the Romans and would not have declared Him innocent.

And so we see that Jesus' reply that **My kingdom is not of this world** is an unequivocal affirmation that He is in fact a **King**, but not a king like other earthly kings.

Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you saying this (Jn 18:33) on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You

done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom (A KINGDOM IMPLIES A KING) is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. (Jn 18:33-38)

Comment: Pilate called Jesus **King** at least four times during His trial, and then had that title written on the sign on the Cross over Jesus' head! (John 18:39; 19:3, 14-15, 19).

Warren Wiersbe explains that "Jesus did not say that He had no kingdom in this world, or that He would never rule on earth. He does have a kingdom in this world, wherever there are people who have trusted Him and yielded to His sovereignty. One day He shall return and establish a righteous kingdom on earth (Da 7:13-28+). (Borrow [Be transformed](#)) (See related discussion on Kingdom of God)

Jesus' reply to Pilate's question recalls His reply earlier to the Jewish leadership

And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, **Yes, I am.**"(Lk 22:70)

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure (CHARGE UNDER OATH TO FORCE AN ANSWER) You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "**You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.**" (Mt 26:63-64) (THAT SHOULD HAVE SENT A SHIVER DOWN THE SPINE OF THE HIGH PRIEST!)

It is as you say - This was the most solemn mode of affirmation used by the Jews. It is this statement and His confession in John's Gospel that He was truly the King and Messiah (Jn 18:34-37, cf Jn 19:11) which Paul describes in his letter to Timothy writing "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, **who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate** that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,." (1 Ti 6:13-14).

THOUGHT - In short, Jesus' "good confession" is an example for the believer's good confession before the "Pilates" of this world! Of course, the only way we can accomplish this confession is by continual dependence on and filling with the Spirit of Christ (Eph 5:18+), who enables supernatural boldness (see Acts 4:31+) in proclaiming Christ and His Gospel to a lost, adversarial world.

Ryle agrees writing that "Paul refers to this saying when he tells Timothy that our Lord 'in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession' (1 Timothy 6:13). (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Luke 23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this Man."

KJV Luke 23:4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

- **I find no guilt in this Man** Lk 23:14,15; Mt 27:19,24; Mark 15:14; John 18:38; 19:4-6; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

PILATE'S FIRST NOT GUILTY VERDICT

Pilate's first "not guilty" verdict is recorded only by Luke and John, John recording that after asking Pilate "What is truth?" he went OUTSIDE the Praetorium to pronounce "I find no guilt in Him." (Jn 18:38)

Then Pilate said to the chief priests ([archiereus](#)) and the crowds - As explained below ([see note](#)) **the crowds** (or **the people**) were the Jewish laity or Jews in general. Recall there are many pilgrims in Jerusalem at this time (upwards to 1-2 million), but what percentage of the crowd was composed of pilgrims versus native inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot be stated. The crowds were undoubtedly stirred up by the evil **chief priests** ([archiereus](#)). Were there some in this crowd who only 5 days earlier "Hosanna" (Mt 21:9) and "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD" (Lk 19:38)? Probably there were, but by now the crowd had been stirred up by the wicked Jewish religious leaders/

HCSB Study Bible - Pilate had undoubtedly heard about Jesus, and he saw right through the Sanhedrin's "rush to judgment." [CSB Study Bible](#)

I find no guilt (aitios) in this man - ([See comments](#) of similar phrase in Lk 23:22) The Gospel of John adds that before he said "NOT GUILTY," Jesus had declared to Him that His kingdom was not of this world (Jn 18:36, 37). And then "Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, Pilate went out (OF THE PRAETORIUM) again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him." (John 18:38) So it is interesting that after Jesus tells Pilate His Kingdom is not of this world that Pilate declares Him not guilty. Clearly he now saw Jesus' Kingship as a threat to the Roman Empire.

Pilate's "not guilty" verdict is the first of three times he plainly gives a "not guilty" verdict (Lk 23:4, Lk 23:14, Lk 23:22). In addition Pilate made other efforts to release Jesus...

(Lk 23:15) "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, **nothing deserving death has been done by Him.**

(Lk 23:16) "Therefore **I will punish Him and release Him.**"

(Lk 23:20) Pilate, **wanting to release Jesus**, addressed them again,

Life Application Bible Commentary – REACTIONS TO JESUS - You can walk into any room in this country and say, "I believe in God," and the majority of people in that room will respond positively. But if you then add, "And I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was his one and only Son, and the only way to God," you will quickly find yourself in the minority. **Jesus** provokes a reaction in people. He did then, and He does now. People are not neutral about Jesus. Next time you find yourself in a heated discussion with a nonbeliever who objects to the exclusive nature of Jesus' claims, ask the person why he or she feels so strongly about it. If Jesus is wrong, after all, He should simply be dismissed and forgotten like all of history's other false prophets. If He's right, then He deserves to be worshiped and obeyed. **Either way, He provokes a response.** ((BORROW [Life application New Testament commentary](#))

Luke 23:5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

KJV Luke 23:5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

- **But they kept on insisting** Lk 22:23; 11:53; Ps 22:12,13,16; 57:4; 69:4; Mt 27:24; John 19:15; Acts 5:33; Acts 7:54,57; 23:10
- **starting from Galilee** Lk 4:14,15; Mt 4:12-16,23; Mark 1:14; John 1:43; 2:11; 7:41,52; Acts 10:37
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

MORE FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF SEDITION BY THE JEWS AGAINST JESUS

Note on the sequence - Pilate is standing outside the Praetorium having just announced his not guilty verdict, which prompts the Jewish chief priests and crowd to begin hurling further accusations at Jesus. As discussed, it appears that Jesus is before the Jews at this time, and able to clearly hear their false accusations. And yet Jesus remains silent before their accusations which causes Pilate to ask Him why He did not respond, and then becoming amazed that Jesus offered no defense to their charges (Mt 27:13, 14, Mk 15:4, 5) The Jewish aggressive response to the not guilty verdict must have caused Pilate concern, but he saw a way to "pass the buck" when they mentioned the region of Galilee (see Lk 23:6).

But they kept on insisting saying - The Jews strongly rejected Pilate's **first not guilty verdict** and began **insisting**. The verb for **insisting** (epischuo - [2001](#) - epi = upon or intensifies meaning + **ischuo** = be strong) is used only here and literally means give additional strength or make stronger and figuratively as used in this passage means to keep pressing a point with persistence and emphasis. The **imperfect tense** pictures the Jews as making their accusations over and over, again and again. As we might say today the Jews "**went ballistic!**" One can just picture this scene, as one Jew would finish his angry accusation, another would bring a similar accusation. It was a veritable "**cacophonous chorus**" of maliciously fabricated false charges against Jesus, the blameless, innocent Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19).

Ryle adds that **insisting** "literally, means, 'they grew more strong, more violent, more urgent: they persisted in their accusation.' (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

He stirs up the people - **Stirs up** ([383](#)) is the rare verb (found only here and Mk 15:11+ = where ironically the Jews were guilty of what they accused Jesus!) **anaseio** which literally means shaking up and down, and figuratively (as here) to incite, often with the sense of inciting a crowd to mob action or of causing an uproar. The Jews used the present tense which pictures Jesus as continually seeking to **foment** a riot among the Jewish populace. An absurd charge!

Vincent on **stirs up** - The increased urgency is shown by the use of a stronger word (**anaseio**) than **perverteth** (**diastrepho**) (Lk 23:2KJV).

Teaching all over Judea - Well, in one sense the Jews were correct, for Jesus' teaching was radical, such as His Sermon on the Mount, where He repeatedly declared to the Jews **"You have heard..."** (referring to the OT Law - e.g., Mt 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43, etc) and then adding **"But I say..."** as He taught them that God was not interested only in external obedience to the Law but desired internal obedience, obedience which is possible only in a renewed, regenerate (Spirit enabled) heart. And so Jesus did indeed get a "reaction" from the crowd for "when Jesus had finished these words (Sermon on the Mount), the multitudes were **amazed** (ekplesso - struck out of their senses, struck with astonishment.) But His teaching was never to **stir up the people** to rebellion or **insurrection** as the Jews **insinuated** but to stir them to a recognition of their inability to keep the Law in their own power and to show them their desperate need to be born again (Jn 3:3-8).

Teaching (present tense) (1321)(**didasko**) means to teach a student in such a way that the will of the student becomes conformed to the teaching taught. So the teacher teaches in such a way that as the student is taught, he or she now changes his or her mind saying in essence "I won't do it this way, but I will do it this way because I've learned this doctrine or this teaching." **Doctrine** determines direction of our behavior, either conformed to this passing world or to conformed to the image of Jesus and transformed by the Spirit (cf Ro 12:2+) ? **Teaching** that Scripture finds significant (which pleases the Father) is not that which provides only correct information but that teaching which leads to correct behavior, supernaturally transforming disciples enabling them by the Spirit to be responsive and obedient to God's will, which is good and acceptable and perfect. Note that in their accusation, the Jews used the present tense which is appropriate and accurate because **teaching** was Jesus' continual activity (and should be ours as imitators of Him, 1 Cor 11:1+, 1 Jn 2:6+), Luke recording that even in the last days of His earthly life **during the day He was teaching in the Temple.**" (Lk 21:37+) O God, grant us each the amazing necessary grace by Your Spirit to be found continually teaching (or preaching) the Word of truth (with out lips and our lives) up to the very last moment when You come to take us home in Christ. Amen

Starting from Galilee even as far as this place (See [Jesus' Ministry in Galilee](#)) - The mention of Galilee was intended to excite Pilate's prejudice against Jesus, because Galilee was noted as a hotbed of **insurrection**. The Jews were accurate in their assertion that Jesus' teaching had started in Galilee, just as they were accurate in accusing Jesus of **teaching all over Judea**. But they distorted the truth by adding falsehood (i.e., **He stirs up the people**), lies that were aimed at "stirring up" Pilate to prosecute Jesus! In mixing their lies with the truth, they were imitating their father, for as Jesus had explained to the **"believing"** (Jn 8:30-31) Jews (who were actually **unbelieving** - Jn 8:45-47)...

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning (JESUS WILL SOON BE MURDERED), and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (Jn 8:44)

J C Ryle adds - False witness and slander are two favorite weapons of the devil. He was a liar from the beginning, and is still the father of lies. (John 8:44.) When he finds that he cannot stop God's work, his next device is to blacken the character of God's servants, and to destroy the value of their testimony. With this weapon he assaulted David: "False witnesses," he says, "did rise against me: they laid to my charge things that I knew not." With this weapon he assaulted the prophets. Elijah was a "troubler of Israel!" Jeremiah was a man who "sought not the welfare of the people but the hurt!" (Psalm 35:11; 1 Kings 18:17; Jer. 38:4.) With this weapon he assaulted the apostles. They were "pestilent fellows," and men who "turned the world upside down." (Acts 24:5; 17:6.) With this weapon he assaulted our Lord all through His ministry. He stirred up his agents to call Him a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a Samaritan and a devil. (Luke 7:34; John 8:48.) And here, in the verses before us, we find him plying his old weapon to the very last. Jesus is arraigned before Pilate upon charges which are utterly untrue. The servant of Christ must never be surprised if he has to drink of the same cup with his Lord. When He who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, was foully slandered, who can expect to escape? "If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call them of his household?" (Matt. 10:25.) Nothing is too bad to be reported against a saint. Perfect innocence is no fence against enormous lying, calumny, and misrepresentation. The most blameless character will not secure us against false tongues. We must bear the trial patiently. It is part of the cross of Christ. We must sit still, lean back on God's promises, and believe that in the long run truth will prevail. "Rest in the Lord," says David, "and wait patiently for Him."—"He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." (Psalm 37:6, 7.) (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Luke 23:6 But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

KJV Luke 23:6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

- **a Galilean** Lk 13:1; Acts 5:37
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

**"GOOD NEWS" TO THE EARS
OF PILATE!**

Note on the sequence - The first trial is over and the verdict from Pilate is not guilty. Luke alone describes the second phase of Jesus' civil trial before **Herod**. (Lk 23:6-12). Recall that it is still relatively early in the morning (between 6-9 AM).

But when Pilate heard it - Pilate's not guilty verdict had only energized the crowd to cry out new accusations against Jesus. Pilate must have felt trapped. He could not risk another major problem with the Jews, lest he be relieved of his post by Rome. But when Pilate, ever the shrewd politician, heard that Jesus had begun His ministry in Galilee, it was like "music to his ears," for now he could send Him to Herod and let Herod give the verdict on Jesus. It was not an unusual procedure in Roman law to transfer a prisoner from the territory where he had been arrested to his place of origin. And while this was "good news" to the ears of Pilate, sadly he lacked the heart to perceive the true "good news" that was standing in front of him in Jesus.

He asked whether the man was a Galilean - Matthew recorded the testimony of the Jews regarding Jesus writing "**And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee ([map](#))".**" (Mt 21:11, cf Mt 2:23, Mt 26:69, Mt 27:55, Mk 1:9, etc) This was Pilate's opportunity to get Jesus off his hands.

Related Resource:

- [Who were the Galileans in the Bible?](#)
- [What trials did Jesus face before His crucifixion?](#)

Luke 23:7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

KJV Luke 23:7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

- **Herod** Lk 3:1; 13:31
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

THE SECOND CIVIL TRIAL BEFORE HEROD

And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction - Pilate saw the opportunity to make his "problem," Herod's "problem!" Most likely all of us have carried out similar actions so that we could avoid the difficulty or responsibility of a certain action or decision.

Learned (1921)([epiginosko](#)) means Herod had gained a thorough knowledge about Jesus' origin in Galilee and the fact that He was subject to Herod.

Jurisdiction (1849)([exousia](#)) in simple terms refers to the "right" and the "might," which fits perfectly with the English definition of [jurisdiction](#) which means the right and power to interpret and apply the law. Jurisdiction is the practical authority granted to a formally constituted legal body or to a political leader (HEROD ANTIPAS) to deal with and make pronouncements on legal matters and, by implication, to administer justice within a defined area of responsibility.

He sent Him to Herod - Pilate [shirks](#) his personal responsibility. This is a classic example of the American idiom known as [passing the buck](#)." Pilate was attempting to rid himself of his pesky problem by passing over this "presumptive [Potentate](#)" to the palace of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Festus did a similar thing bringing Paul before Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:23-27).

Vincent on sent Him - Lit., sent him up ([ana](#)). Used of sending up to a higher court. Compare Acts 25:21, of sending Paul to Caesar. It also means to send back, as in Lk 23:11, and Philemon 11.

James Stalker comments that Pilate "acted at once on this idea; and, under the escort of Pilate's soldiers, Jesus and His accusers were sent away to the ancient palace of the Maccabees, in which Herod used to reside on his visits to the Holy City. Thus was Jesus, on this day of shame, tossed, like a ball, from hand to hand—from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, with more to follow; and these weary marches in chains and in the custody of the officers of justice, with His persecutors about Him, are not to be forgotten in the catalogue of His sufferings." ([Jesus and Herod](#))

Who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time - Although Herod's father, Herod the Great, was only half Jewish ([Josephus Antiquities 14.15.2](#)), he may have come to Jerusalem because of the Jewish Passover (the Scriptures do not specifically state otherwise why Herod was in Jerusalem). It is interesting that the Jewish historian Josephus does mention that Herod Antipas was in Jerusalem during one feast ([Josephus Antiquities 18.5.3](#)).

J C Ryle comments on **Herod** - This **Herod** was Herod Antipas the same Herod who killed John the Baptist. He was son of Herod the Great, who had all the children of two years and younger to be killed in Bethlehem. He was uncle of Herod Agrippa who killed the apostle James with the sword, and would have killed Peter if he had not been miraculously rescued from prison. The family of the Herods was [Idumaeans](#).

They were all descended from Esau, the father of Edom. The detail is worth noting, when we see their constant opposition against Christ and his followers. The seed of Esau seems to carry on the old enmity against the seed of Jacob. (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Hendriksen has an interesting comment - The accusers must have regarded their remark that Jesus was a man from Galilee as being a [coup de maître](#) (master stroke). **Was not Galilee always the very hotbed of revolution?** Think of Herod the Great's battle against the guerrillas (N.T.C. on Matthew, p. 159), and of the "Zealots" and the "patriots" who since that time were always making trouble for the Roman government. Well, that was the region to which Jesus belonged, and He Himself was one of the troublemakers! Little did they realize that exactly when they thought they had scored a point against Jesus and had probably persuaded Pilate to take the necessary action, they, at least for the time being, were being defeated. For Pilate, consistent with his purpose almost to the very end of the trial, saw in this link between Jesus and Galilee the very opportunity he was looking for to get rid of this annoying case. We can, as it were, hear him say, "Well, since this man is from Galilee, and since Roman law allows an accused person to be tried either in the province where his crime is said to have been committed [which in the present case could be anywhere from Galilee to Jerusalem] or in the province to which he belongs, and finally since the ruler of this Galilean is right now in Jerusalem, I remand his case to the ruler of Galilee, namely, Herod (Antipas), for adjudication." (Baker New Testament Commentary – [Gospel of Luke](#);) (**Bold added**)

[Herod Antipas in Wikipedia](#) - Herod Antipater (Greek: ῥοδης ντιπατρος, Hērōdēs Antipatros; born before 20 BC – died after 39 AD), known by the nickname Antipas, was a 1st-century ruler of Galilee and Perea, who bore the title of tetrarch ("ruler of a quarter") and is referred to as both "Herod the Tetrarch" and "King Herod" in the New Testament although he never held the title of king.[3] He is widely known today for accounts in the New Testament of his role in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.

Herod the tetrarch of Galilee (Mt 14:1, Lk 3:19, 9:7, Acts 13:1, aka "**Herod Antipas**," "**King Herod**" - Mk 6:14 but not officially a king) - [Picture of Herod](#), [Map of Territory Ruled](#) [Map of Division of Herod the Great's Lands](#) - Herod Antipas, son of [Herod the Great](#). Herod Antipas was step-brother of Philip the tetrarch, who was also a son of Herod the Great. He ruled from 4 B.C.–A.D. 39, sharing the rule of his father's realm with his two brothers ([purple regions in map](#)). One brother, [Archelaus](#) (Mt 2:22 "But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,") was banished in A.D. 6 and died in A.D. 18; the other brother, [Herod Philip](#) died in A.D. 34.

Herod the tetrarch of Galilee is the Herod referred to in the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' ministry. It was this Herod (Antipas) who imprisoned John the Baptist (Luke 3:20) and later had him executed (Luke 9:9).

Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Antipas](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Antipas Herod Antipas](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Antipas](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Antipas](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Antipas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Antipas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Antipas Antipas \(2\) Antipas](#)
- [Who are the various Herods mentioned in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Herodias in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Salome in the Bible?](#)
- [What can we learn from the life of John the Baptist?](#)

Luke 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

KJV Luke 23:8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

- **for he had wanted to see Him for a long time** Lk 9:7-9; Mt 14:1; Mark 6:14
- **because he had been hearing about Him** Lk 4:23; 2 Kings 5:3-6,11; Acts 8:19
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Below is James Tissot's sinister looking picture of Herod Antipas! Click on the picture and look at his eyes! What a depiction of evil!

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

Luke 23:6-12

The description of the second phase of the Roman trial with Jesus before Herod is found only in the Gospel of Luke.

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus - It is amazing (and tragic) what will give one passing, earthly joy. **Glad** ([chairo](#)) means to be in a state of happiness with a sense of well-being, which is an amazing definition considering the fact that Herod would soon see Jesus and reject Jesus, the only One Who can provide a human soul with an eternal sense of well-being! And notice Herod is "very" ([lian](#)) **glad** which means he did not just have a touch of temporal joy, but that he was exceedingly (beyond measure), extremely glad. He would **drue** this day when he was **exceedingly glad**, for one day would be his "pay day" and he would find himself **exceeding sad** for all eternity! (cf Eternal punishment)

James Stalker - Herod's reception of Jesus was thoroughly characteristic. Had he had the conscience even of a bad man, he might have been abashed to see the Baptist's Friend. Once he had been moved with terror at the mere rumor of Jesus; but that was all past; these emotions had been wiped out by newer ones and forgotten. He was "exceeding glad" to see Him....His delight, however, arose chiefly from the hope that he might see Jesus working a miracle. For two or three years his own dominions had been ringing with the fame of the Miracle-worker, but Herod had never seen Him. Now was his chance; and no doubt entered his mind that Jesus would gratify his curiosity, or could count it anything but an honour to get the opportunity of displaying His skill. Such was Herod's estimate of Christ. He put Him on the level of a new dancer or singer; he looked on His miracles as a species of conjuring or magic; and he expected from Him the same entertainment as he might have obtained from any wandering professor of magical arts. (Jesus and Herod)

Glad ([5463](#))([chairo](#)) means to be in a state of happiness with a sense of well-being. 1. rejoice, be glad Mt 2:10; 5:12; Mk 14:11; Lk 15:32; 22:5; J 3:29; 16:20, 22; Ac 5:41; Ro 16:19; 2 Cor 7:9, 16; Phil 1:18; 3:1; Col 1:24.—2. as a formula of greeting—a. as a form of address *cai/re*, *cai,rete* welcome, good day, hail (to you), I am glad to see you Mt 26:49; 27:29; Mk 15:18; Lk 1:28; J 19:3; 2 J 10f; good morning Mt 28:9 and possibly others.—b. elliptically at the beginning of a letter *cai,rein* greetings Ac 15:23; 23:26; Js 1:1.

For - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining?

He had wanted ([thelo](#)) **to see Him for a long time** - Herod was desiring to see Jesus the "Miracle Worker," to satisfy his curiosity, not to speak to his heart.

THOUGHT - Many want to see Jesus or even so-called "remnants" of Jesus like the (false)[Shroud of Turin](#) ([see pictures](#)), but they don't really desire a personal encounter that would change (circumcise) their heart. Knowing *about* Jesus and knowing Jesus (and Him knowing us) are eternal worlds apart, as far as heaven is from hell! Don't be deceived by the false belief that because you know *about* Jesus and even respect Him as a miracle worker and prophet and great Man, for there are many people in Hell who have had this deceptive belief. No, we must not just know *about* Jesus, but we **MUST RECEIVE** Jesus as our Savior and Lord (John 1:11, 12, 13+, Ro 10:9,10+, Acts 16:31). Anything short of that is false teaching and false belief and is a sure ticket to Hell. And remember that while faith alone saves, the faith that truly saves is NOT alone! In other words, faith without works, without obedience (which is not a legalistic obedience but an obedience that emanates from a "new heart" [Ezek 36:26,27+, 2 Cor 5:17+] and is supernaturally enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit [Php 2:13NLT+]). (See comments on James 2:14-17)

Ryle - Herod had an uneasy conscience. The blood of God's murdered saints, no doubt, rose often before his eyes, and destroyed his peace. The fame of our Lord's preaching and miracles had penetrated even into his court. It was said that another witness against sin had risen up, who was even more faithful and bold than John the Baptist, and who confirmed his teaching by works which even the power of kings could not perform. These rumors made Herod restless and uncomfortable. No wonder that his curiosity was stirred, and he "**wanted to see Christ.**" (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Because - Another term of explanation. What is Luke explaining?

He had been hearing about Him - For example in Mt 9:24-25 when Jesus raised the girl from the dead "this news spread throughout ALL the land." (Mt 9:26, cf Mt 4:24, Mk 1:45+) Matthew writes "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news (cf Mt 13:54) about Jesus." (Mt 14:1+, cf Mk 6:14+)

And was hoping to see some sign ([semeion](#)) **performed by Him** - He wanted to see a miraculous sign from this "Miracle Worker." Herod reminds me of some I have spoken with about the Gospel who said they would believe if they just saw some sign or miracle. Such focus is not on the Man and His plain, simple, saving Gospel, but on the signs and wonders which do not save a person. Sadly Herod was only interested in the sign or miracle but not the "Miracle Worker." There are many today like Herod who are more interested and intrigued by "signs and wonders" then they are about the God-Man Christ Jesus and so they missed one of the greatest of all miracles, the new birth.

Sign ([4592](#))([semeion](#)) means a distinguishing mark by which something is known, in this case a sign by which SOMEONE (Jesus) is known. The sign serves like a pointer to aid perception and/or insight. sign—1. the sign or (distinguishing) mark by which something is known, token, indication Mt 16:3; 24:3, 30; Mk 13:4; Lk 2:12, 34; 11:29f; 21:7; Ro 4:11; 1 Cor 14:22; 2 Th 3:17. Signal Mt 26:48.—2. a sign consisting of a miracle or wonder—a. miracle of

divine origin Mt 12:38f; 16:1, 4; Mk 8:11f; 16:17, 20; Lk 11:16, 29; 23:8; J 2:11, 18; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2, 14; 7:31; 9:16; Ac 2:22, 43; 4:16, 22; 14:3; Ro 15:19; 1 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 12:12a; Hb 2:4.—b. miracle of a demonic nature Mk 13:22; 2 Th 2:9; Rv 13:13f; 16:14; 19:20.—c. portent Lk 21:11, 25; Ac 2:19; Rv 12:1, 3; 15:1. [semio-, combining form as in semiology, semiotic] [

Luke records

Now **Herod** the tetrarch (HEROD ANTIPAS) heard of all that was happening (Lk 9:1-6+); and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. 9 Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded (Read Mt 14:1-13, Mk 6:17-28, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28); but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" **And he kept trying to see Him** (JESUS). (Luke 9:7-9+)

Ryle - Let us learn from Herod's case to pity great men. With all their greatness and apparent splendor, they are often thoroughly miserable within. Silks and satins and official robes, often cover hearts which are utter strangers to peace. That man knows not what he is wishing, who wishes to be a rich man.—Let us pray for rich men, as well as pity them. They carry weight in the race for eternal life. If they are saved, it can only be by the greatest miracles of God's grace. Our Lord's words are very solemn, "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." (Matt. 19:24.) (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

Luke 23:9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

KJV Luke 23:9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

- **but He answered him nothing** Lk 13:32; Ps 38:13,14; 39:1,2,9; Isaiah 53:7; Mt 7:6; 27:14; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 2:23
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Related Passage:

Isaiah 53:7+ (He was oppressed and He was afflicted, **Yet He did not open His mouth**; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, **So He did not open His mouth**.)

HEROD INTERROGATES JESUS WHO REMAINS SILENT

And he questioned Him at some length - The ESV is probably a better translation here - "**So he questioned Him.**" The "**so**" functions as a term of conclusion. Based on the widespread news about Jesus' miracle working power and Herod's desire to see Him, Herod began to question or interrogate Jesus. **Questioned** is in the imperfect tense indicating that he questioned Jesus over and over, again and again.

Stalker adds that "At once he addressed Him in the friendliest manner and questioned Him in many words. Apparently he quite forgot the purpose for which Pilate had sent Him."

Questioned (imperfect tense = over and over)(1905)(**eperotao**) is a legal technical term meaning to interrogate. This same verb is used in Acts 5:27 where Peter, et al "stood them before the Council (and) The high priest **questioned** them." The high priest was interrogating the apostles, just as Jesus was being interrogated by Herod. Recall that this is a "trial" and presumably Herod is looking for some evidence to convict Jesus of a crime.

But He answered him nothing - So just as Jesus had remained silent in the face of a barrage of false accusation from the Jews before Pilate after his first "not guilty" verdict (Mt 27:12-14, Mk 15:3-5, Lk 23:5), and once again He remained silent in the face of continual questioning by Herod. Try to picture this scene -- Herod tossing question after question at Jesus, but Jesus standing moot and majestic. Herod was not a nice man, and Jesus' reaction was sure to cause Herod to resort to an angry response, which in fact he did as described below.

Stalker - It may be thought that Jesus ought to have spoken to Herod—that He missed an opportunity. Ought He not to have appealed to his conscience and attempted to rouse him to a sense of his sin? To this I answer that His silence was itself this appeal. Had there been a spark of conscience left in Herod, those Eyes looking him through and through, and that divine dignity measuring and weighing him, would have caused his sins to rise up out of the grave and overwhelm him. Jesus was silent, that the voice of the dead Baptist might be heard. If we understood it, the silence of Christ is the most eloquent of all appeals. Can you remember when you used to hear Him—when the words of the Book and the preacher used to move you in church, when the singing awoke aspiration, when the Sabbath was holy ground, when the Spirit of God strove with you? And is that all passed or passing away? Does Christ speak no more? There is such a spiritual insensibility. It means that the Spirit is ceasing to strive, and Christ to call. If it is creeping over you, it is time to be anxious; for it is for your life.

J C Ryle comments that "Herod had heard the truth often from John the Baptist's mouth. What he wanted (LACKED) was not more knowledge, but a heart and a will to act upon what he knew." (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

As **Wiersbe** quips Herod in effect "silenced the voice of God. It was not Herod who was judging Jesus; it was Jesus who was judging Herod." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

Jesus' silence again recalls the prophecies in Isaiah mentioned earlier ([see notes](#)).

Life Application Bible Commentary – A DEAFENING SILENCE People often approach the Christian faith with questions. There is nothing wrong with that; honest questions lead to honest faith. Often, however, the inquirer's questions are merely "[smoke screens](#)." When that happens, it is pointless to try to answer the objections. **That person isn't interested in answers; he or she is merely interested in excuses not to believe.** When you are in a situation like that, save your breath. Just as Jesus didn't dignify Herod's superficial inquiries (Luke 23:8-9), Christians should refuse to engage anyone in such empty chatter. Sometimes the best answer you can give is silence.

This note reminds me of Jesus' command

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." (Mt 7:6+)

W A Criswell - This verse does not mean that the blessings of the Gospel are not to be offered to the Gentiles, but rather that spiritual mysteries should not be pressed upon those who are either unready or unwilling to accept or appreciate their value. The verse continues logically in the train of thought developed in the sayings which immediately precede it. While judging others is not the prerogative of man, there are, nonetheless, those whose uncleanness and violence prevent the sharing of the sweetest and most noble insights of the Christian faith.

Henry Morris - It is counter-productive to try to teach the treasures of Biblical truth to those who reject and ridicule the Scriptures. Their hearts must first be prepared by the Holy Spirit, supplemented by a gracious presentation of Christian evidences (Acts 17:15-34).

Luke 23:10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

KJV Luke 23:10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

- **accusing Him vehemently** Lk 23:2,5,14,15; 11:53; Acts 24:5
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

RELIGIOUS LEADER CONTINUE TO ACCUSE JESUS

And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there- While the exact locations are not known, Herod's palace was undoubtedly near Pilate's Praetorium ([See map above](#) - #3 on diagram is presumptive site of Pilate's praetorium) so the implication is that these "snakes" had slithered along following Jesus as Pilate had Him transferred from the Praetorium to Herod's residence. One can see them following the soldiers, continuing their [cacophony](#) of loud and [vitriolic](#) false accusations against the blameless Lamb of God!

Note their sham legalism - they won't enter the Praetorium because Pilate is a Gentile who would defile them for the Passover. But they appear to be willing to enter Herod's residence for even though he is despicable and evil man, he is still half Jewish, and so they are not concerned about being defiled in his presence! O, the deception of hypocrisy!

J C Ryle agrees writing "It is clear that these bitter enemies of our Lord followed Him from place to place, and from court to court with their accusations. The great additional fatigue which this going backwards and forwards from one ruler to another must have entailed on our Lord, should be remembered in estimating the whole amount of **His sufferings** (cf Heb 2:10+, 1 Pe 1:11+, 1 Pe 4:13+)." (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

High priests (749) ([archiereus](#) from [arche](#) = first in a series, the leader or ruler, idea of rank or degree + [hierous](#) = priest - [hieros](#) is that which is determined, filled or consecrated by divine power) in the plural (as here) denotes members of the Sanhedrin belonging to high priestly families (Mt 2:4, Lk 23:13, Acts 4:23).

Scribes (1122) ([grammateus](#) from [grápho](#) = write) literally is a **writer** and was the word used to describe a clerk, a scribe, especially recognized experts in Jewish law including both Scripture and traditional laws and regulations. Their knowledge of the law and their overt breaking in the mistreatment of Jesus makes them even more accountable for their evil deeds. Indeed, as Jesus had warned the Jews "it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for" men like these scribes who knew what was right, but nevertheless did what was wrong! (cf [degrees of punishment in hell](#))

Accusing Him vehemently - Their impassioned, aggressive accusations had begun after Pilate's first **not guilty** verdict (Mt 27:12-14, Mk 15:3-5, Lk 23:5). Can't you see their red faces, their flaring nostrils, the veins bulging from their foreheads! Our English word **vehemently** means to be marked by extreme intensity of emotions or convictions, even be inclined to react violently. One gets the sense, that if they thought they could have gotten away with it, they would have essentially "lynched" (or stoned like they did Stephen Acts 7:58, 59, 60+) Jesus right there in Herod's presence (Recall Herod was half-Jew and may have approved of stoning) . At the very least, their violent accusations were clearly, but providentially, "driving" the drama closer to the culmination at the Cross, for nothing short of crucifixion would satisfy their thirst for Jesus' blood!

Accusing - [see notes](#) on **kategoreo** in Luke 23:2. Recall that this verb was almost always used as a legal technical term to describe bringing of charges in court, and indeed, Jesus before Herod was a "court" of sorts, representing the second phase of His civil trial.

Vehemently (2159) (**eutonos** from **eu** = good + **teino** = stretch) is an adverb which has the picturesque literal meaning "at full stretch," and figuratively means powerfully (Acts 18:28), forcibly, vigorously (as used in Lxx of Josh 6:8 where the priests blew the seven ram's horns vigorously and loudly). In the only other NT use in Acts 18:28 **eutonos** describes Apollos who "**powerfully** (**eutonos**) refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Apollos was "powerful" in the Word of God, while the Jews were "powerful" in the words from their wicked heart! (cf Mk 7:21, 22, 23, cf Mt 15:19, 20).

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

KJV Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

- **Herod with his soldiers** Acts 4:27,28
- **after treating Him with contempt** Lk 22:64,65; Ps 22:6; 69:19,20; Isaiah 49:7; 53:3; Mt 27:27-30; Mark 9:12; Mark 15:16-20
- **dressed Him in a gorgeous robe** John 19:5
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

HEROD'S HARDENED HEART

Note that only Luke 23:11 records that Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate (which of course makes sense as Luke has the only record of Jesus' trial before Herod.)

And - This is a continuation of the previous Greek sentence Lk 23:10. Since there is no miracle, even no word, from this Man, Herod loses interest. The result is that there is now clearly no fear of God before Herod's eyes, despite the fact that the **very God of God** was before his very eyes! (Ro 3:18+). It now becomes obvious that Herod's curiosity about Jesus was only a thin veneer veiling his contempt for our Lord. And now that his "fear factor" has [dissipated](#) he is emboldened to show His true colors of his evil heart regarding the Christ of God!

THOUGHT - Beware! When our holy fear of God begins to [dissipate](#), we are on a slippery slope which may end in our committing some unholy act against the Holy One of Israel which heretofore we thought was wholly impossible! Remember "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9) "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor 10:12+), for "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41+).

Herod with his soldiers - This may refer to his personal bodyguard, but whoever they were, they willingly joined the mockery of the God-Man! Woe!

After treating Him with contempt - **Contempt** is an ugly word in English which means a lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike. The Greek verb [exoutheneo](#) means they treated Jesus as of no account ("count Him as nothing!"), making light of Him as One who had no merit or worth! (contrast Rev 5:9,12+) They [disdained](#) the Holy One of Israel! They had no use for Jesus (or so they thought), Who they regarded as beneath them. O, how wrong they were! And they will have all eternity to experience the gnawing feelings of regret and remorse for their horrid contempt of the One Who could have been the Savior of their souls!

Had these [reprobates](#) known the Scriptures, they might have seen that their treatment of Jesus had been prophesied hundreds of years earlier in Isaiah when he wrote "**He was despised** ([bazah](#) = treated with contempt, as worthless, [despicable](#)!) and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like One from Whom men hide their face **He was despised** ([bazah](#)), and we did not esteem Him ("considered Him insignificant")." (Isa 53:3+) **Despised** is repeated in Isaiah's passage, giving us a sense of the degree of disdain the Jews

would have for their Messiah! Woe!

Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Note the contrast in the verse. Herod sat there as King "with his men of war" surrounding him, and Jesus stood there beaten and battered in torn, ragged clothes. Herod, judging by appearance, counted the Man who claimed to be the Son of God as nothing. This Man and His claim did not matter, not to Herod. (Borrow [Luke Commentary](#))

And mocking ([empaizo](#)) Him - They apparently were **mocking** Jesus with both words and actions (**dressed Him...**) The Greek verb [empaizo](#) pictures these fools as subjecting the Lord of Glory to derision and ridicule. The tragic irony of these abominable creatures making fun of their Creator! And Jesus allowed them their transient triumph over Good, but their payday will be some day! This ([empaizo](#)) is the same verb Luke uses to describe the Roman soldiers mocking Jesus on the Cross (Lk 23:36+). As as aside this mockery underscores the fact that Herod surely did not take the charges against Jesus (such as being a King) seriously.

Most of the NT uses of **empaizo** (Matt. 2:16; 20:19 27:29; 27:31;27:41; Mk. 10:34;15:20;15:31; Lk. 14:29; 18:32; 22:63; 23:11; 23:36) describe the **mocking** of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make fun of by pretending that He is not what He is or by imitating Him in a distorted manner. It is therefore little surprise that if evil men mocked Him at His first coming, they would mock the sure promise of His Second Coming (Jn 14:3)! The last days **mockers** ([empaiktes](#) from [empaizo](#) in 2 Peter 3:3+) "trifle" with the things of God, dealing with them as if they are of no temporal or eternal import. They show their contempt for Christ's return by ridiculing and deriding that certainty, their derision motivated by their insolence, disrespect, incredulity and desire to justify their ungodly behavior. If you are not looking for Him, you will hardly be motivated to be living for Him! In fact you may even be tempted to live a "Herod-like" life! Woe!

Dressed Him in a gorgeous robe - Clearly they were mocking His claim to be a King, for it was kings who wore **gorgeous** robes. The word for gorgeous is [lampros](#) which means bright, shining then of clothes that are elegant and resplendent (Acts 10:30, "fine clothes" of James 2:2-3). While their adorning of Jesus with a gorgeous robe was a cruel jest, had their spiritual eyes been opened they might have realized that this was indeed the majestic One Who David repeatedly acclaimed the "**King of Glory!**" (Ps 24:7, 8, 9, 10-[Spurgeon's note](#))

And sent Him back to Pilate - Luke does not record Herod's "verdict" (as if this could really be called a "trial"), but Pilate alludes to it in Lk 23:15 affirming to the Jews that neither he nor Herod found any guilt in Jesus.

J C Ryle - We are told that neither the ruler of Galilee nor the ruler of Judea could find any fault in our Lord. In Galilee most of his miracles had been performed, and he had spent much of his time there. Yet the ruler of Galilee accused him of nothing. He was to be crucified as 'a lamb without blemish or spot.' (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

THE FOUR EPISODES OF MOCKING THE KING OF KINGS		
TRIAL	REFERENCE	MOCKING/ABUSIVE ACTIONS
Second Religious Trial Before Caiaphas	Mt 26:57,67-68+ Lk 22:54, 63-65+	Spat in face, beat, slapped, told to prophesy who hit Him Beating, blindfolded and told to prophesy, blaspheming
Second Civil Trial Before Herod	Lk 23:8-12+	Treated with contempt Mocking Him Dressed in gorgeous robe
Third Civil Trial Before Pilate	Mt 27:27-31+ Mk 15:16-20+ Jn 19:1-3+	Stripped, put scarlet/purple robe Wove crown of thorns & put on His head Reed in right hand Beating head with reed Spitting on Him Kneeling and bowing down Acclaiming "Hail, King of the Jews" Blows to face

<p>On the Cross</p>	<p>Mt 27:39-44+ Mk 15:29-32+ Luke 23:35-37+ Lk 23:39+ Mt 27:49+</p>	<p>Four groups - those passing by, religious leaders, the two criminals, soldiers Hurling abuse, wagging their heads If you are the Son of God come down from the cross Religious leaders mocking and sneering - cannot save Himself King come down from the cross & we will believe He trusts in God, let God deliver Him Soldiers mocked Him "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" Robbers casting same insult - Are you the Christ? Save Yourself and us "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."</p>
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Luke 23:12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

KJV Luke 23:12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

- Ps 83:4-6; Acts 4:27; Mt 16:1; Rev 17:13,14
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

ENEMIES BECOME FRIENDS

Have you heard the word "**frenemy**"? It is a hybrid of friend and enemy, an apropos description of this passage. There is actually an entry in [Wikipedia!](#)

Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day - Now the focus of their enmity is directed against Christ resulting in their newly minted friendship. It is a tragic commentary on these two pagan rulers that their friendship was cemented by a common rejection of Christ. Is this not still true that worldly men are brought together because of their hatred of the other worldly Christ. [The enemy of my enemy is my friend.](#)

For before they had been enemies with each other - The nature of their prior enmity is unknown.

[The enemy of my enemy is my friend](#) - This is an ancient proverb which suggests that two opposing parties can or should work together against a common enemy. The earliest known expression of this concept is found in a Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, the Arthashastra, which dates to around the 4th century BC, while the first recorded use of the current English version came in 1884.

J C Ryle comments that "The incident before us is a striking emblem of a state of things which may always be seen in the world. Men of the most discordant opinions can unite in opposing truth. Teachers of the most opposite doctrines can make common cause in fighting against the Gospel. In the days of our Lord, the Pharisees and the Sadduces might be seen combining their forces to entrap Jesus of Nazareth and put Him to death. In our own times we sometimes see infidels and idolaters—worldly pleasure-lovers and bigoted ascetics,—the friends of so-called liberal views and the most determined opponents of all changes—all ranked together against evangelical religion. One common hatred binds them together. They hate the cross of Christ. To use the words of the apostles in the Acts: "Against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, are gathered together." (Acts 4:27.) All hate each other very much, but all hate Christ much more. The true Christian must not count the enmity of the world a strange thing.(cf Jn 15:18, 19, 20) (Luke 23 - Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)

John MacArthur writes that "Herod's life ended in disgrace: Herodias would ultimately prove to be Herod's downfall. After Emperor Caligula granted Herodias's brother Agrippa I (Acts 12:1) the title of king, she demanded that Herod go to Rome and obtain the same title. (The gospel references to him as king [Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14, 22] reflect informal popular usage of the term.) But before Herod and Herodias reached Rome, a messenger from Agrippa accused Herod of wrongdoing. As a result, Caligula deposed Herod who, accompanied by Herodias, was banished permanently to a city in what is now France. Antipas and Herodias are reminiscent of another ill-fated couple, Ahab and Jezebel. "Like Ahab," writes D. A. Carson, "Antipas was wicked but weak; and Herodias, like Jezebel, wicked and ruthless" (Matthew, in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. The Expositor's Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 8:338). Antipas's weakness coupled with Herodias's ruthlessness ensured that eventually their sins could only bring disastrous consequences. (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

The story of the Lord's hearing before Herod serves three important purposes First, it confirms Pilate's verdict that Jesus was not guilty of any crime. **Second**, Herod and Pilate are two witnesses that confirm Jesus' innocence (cf. Deut. 19:15). Neither of them was biased

in His favor; Pilate was indifferent to Him, and Herod had sought to kill Him (Luke 13:31). **Finally**, it confirms prophecy (Ps. 2:2; cf. Acts 4:25–27). (See [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Luke 23:13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

KJV Luke 23:13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

- Mt 27:21-23; Mark 15:14; John 18:38; 19:4
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

THE SECOND CIVIL TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

Luke begins to describe the sixth and final phase of the illegal trial of Jesus in Lk 23:13-16. Herod has just sent Jesus back to Pilate and Pilate summons the religious leaders (had they dispersed after Jesus was sent to Herod?) and gives his second not guilty verdict, this time adding that Herod also found Him not guilty. Pilate attempts to release Jesus but the Jews would not hear of it with the result that "Pilate slowly and reluctantly and in fear surrenders to the demand of the Sanhedrin for the crucifixion of Christ." ([A T Robertson](#)) The time is still early Friday morning, between 6-9 AM.

Luke 23:13-15 has parallel accounts in Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15 and John 18:39–19:16 (See the preceding table).

John MacArthur notes that "**The entire series of trials was filled with irony.** The one whom men judged is the judge of all men; the one whom men condemned will eternally condemn them. The perfectly righteous, sinless, and innocent one was condemned as a blasphemer and criminal. The one who always pleased holy God did not please sinful men. Men sought to kill the very one who gave them life. The Lord Jesus Christ was declared a blasphemer for claiming to be who He truly is, making His accusers blasphemers. All of the wicked participants in Christ's trials who judged and condemned Him did nothing but what God had predetermined must happen. Their decisions did not determine His fate, but rather their own. They wasted the most monumental, unparalleled opportunity that anyone could ever have—a personal encounter with the Son of the living God, the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of sinners." (See context in [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Note on sequence of events - Luke has described Jesus' first civil trial before Pilate who rendered a not guilty verdict (Lk 23:4) and sent Jesus to Herod for His second civil trial and a not guilty verdict (essentially) (Lk 23:15). Herod returned Jesus to Pilate and that is where we pick up the story. Similar to the section on Herod (Lk 23:6-12), Luke 23:13-16 has no direct parallel in the other three Gospels. After giving his second not guilty verdict (found only in Lk 23:14), Pilate proposes to punish Jesus and release Him (Lk 23:16). This passage is a [segue](#) into the next major section dealing with the custom of releasing one prisoner on Passover, a story which is described in all four Gospels.

Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers - The Jewish religious leaders were called together in preparation for Pilate's official decision. It was as if the judge entered back into the courtroom and the bailiff said "All rise," as he prepared to read the verdict to all in the courtroom.

Edersheim on summoned the religious leaders - On the return of Jesus from Herod, the Sanhedrists do not seem to have been present. Pilate had to call them together, presumably from the temple.

And the people - This phrase suggests that enmity to Jesus has spread like an evil leaven into the general laity, Jews who were not religious leaders and some of whom had undoubtedly shown their [fickle](#) hearts by acclaiming Him with shouts of "[Hosanna](#)" (Mt 21:9, Mk 11:9,10, Jn 12:13) as He entered Jerusalem at the beginning of [Passion Week](#), in His so-called "[Triumphal Entry](#)." Those shouts would soon change to angry, hateful shouts of "**Crucify, crucify.**" (Lk 23:21) The word for **people** is [laos](#) which is the same Greek word Matthew used to describe "**all the people (laos)**" who cried "**His blood shall be on us and our children**" (Mt 27:25). In fairness, it should be noted that a few commentators (Wiersbe) do not feel that those **people** who would soon shout "Crucify Him" were also the same **people** that were in the crowds shouting "Hosanna" at His Triumphal entry.

Luke 23:14 and said to them, "You brought this Man to me as One who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this Man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

KJV Luke 23:14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

- **as one who incites the people to rebellion** Lk 23:1,2,5
- **I have found no guilt in this man** Lk 23:4; Da 6:4; Mt 27:4,19,24,54; Acts 13:28; Heb 7:26
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

PILATE ANNOUNCES HIS VERDICT ON JESUS

Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes this section - When Herod Antipas returned Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the latter began to make several attempts to have Him released. The first attempt is recorded in Luke 23:13–15: And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said unto them, Ye brought unto me this man, as one that perverted the people: and behold, I having examined him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for he sent him back unto us; and behold, nothing worthy of death has been done by him. In this first attempt to release Jesus, Pilate told the leaders that Herod Antipas found him innocent. This was the second declaration of the innocence of Jesus. Furthermore, Pilate himself reiterated that he, too, found Jesus innocent, and this became the third declaration of innocence. However, this failed to convince the masses. (The Messianic Bible Study Collection)

And said to them - Them refers to Pilate's address to the **the chief priests and the rulers and the people** - See the preceding verse for note on **the people**.

You brought this Man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion - Pilate summarizes the charge of [sedition](#) against Jesus. The Jewish leader had brought Jesus to Pilate accusing Him of leading a revolt against Rome, knowing that their real charge of blasphemy (Mt 26:65, Mk 14:64, cp Jn 10:33) would not elicit a death penalty.

There is an interesting play on words (IMO) with Luke's phrase **you brought this Man to me**. The verb **brought** is the Greek verb [prosphero](#) which is used some 46x (in 44v) in the NT, and 26x is translated "offer" (offering, offered), these contexts clearly speaking of the bringing of a sacrificial offering. Can you see the irony as Pilate describes the Man the Jews had brought to him? The religious Jews who were scrupulously legalistic about their sacrificial offerings bring to Pilate the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29) and Pilate after examining Him finds no spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19+) which qualifies Him to be offered as the perfect sacrificial Lamb (cf Ex 12:5) so that He might become the sin offering, make atonement and bear away our sin (cf Lev 16:9, 10+), His blood providing redemption for all who believe in Him. Take a moment to listen to and watch [Lamb of God](#), pausing to ponder the price paid by God's perfect Lamb to redeem us from the penalty and power of our sins, past, present and forever. Amen. Praise His Holy Name. Amen and Amen.

Here are passages from Hebrews that use **prosphero** to speak of God's once for all time offering of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world...

Hebrews 9:14+ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered** Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:28+ so Christ also, having been **offered** once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Hebrews 10:11-12+ Every priest stands daily ministering and **offering** time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, **having offered** one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

Behold (2400)([idou](#)) is an exclamation used by Pilate in an attempt to arrest the attention of the incensed Jewish throng, but of course it proved to be of no avail, for they were like the Jews described by Stephen -- "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit." (Acts 7:51+).

Plummer renders the accusation that Jesus was guilty "seducing people from their allegiance" to Rome. Pilate's dilemma was between the desire of the Jews (which he could ill afford to incite to riot) and Roman law.

Incites to rebellion (present tense = continually)(654)([apostrepho](#) from **apo** = away from + **strepho** = turn quite around) means literally to turn back or away and thus saying that Jesus was continually turning the people away from correct behavior or belief. In one sense they were correct for Jesus was trying to turn the Jews from a works based righteousness to a righteousness based on faith in Him! But more to the point the Jewish leaders were trying to dupe Pilate by saying Jesus was defiant of Roman authority.

Having examined Him before you - Pilate is saying he had questioned Jesus thoroughly regarding the Jewish accusation that Jesus was an insurrectionist. Think about this for a moment. Pilate was subject to Caesar and the Roman government and to protect his own skin (so to speak), he dare not conduct a cursory or superficial interrogation of Jesus, lest he be proved wrong if Jesus were in fact an insurrectionist. Pilate's job and reputation would be on the line. So clearly, he does a diligent cross examination and still finds no guilt.

Examined (asked questions) (350)([anakrino](#) from **ana** = again + **krino** = to separate, sift, distinguish) means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes, interrogating or cross-examining.

Thus **anakrino** is a fitting verb in this case, for it was often used in secular Greek to describe the interrogation of a prisoner in a judicial examination before his final verdict was rendered.

I have found no guilt [aitios](#) in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him- This is Pilate's second "not guilty" verdict regarding Jesus (Lk 23:4).

The writer of Hebrews speaks to the "no guilt" writing of Jesus "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest (JESUS), **holyinnocent, undefiled, separated from sinners** and exalted above the heavens." (Heb 7:26)

Life Application Bible Commentary – DO WHAT'S RIGHT - When the stakes are high, it is difficult to stand up for what is right, and it is easy to see opponents as problems to be solved rather than as people to be respected. Had Pilate been a man of real courage, he would have released Jesus regardless of the consequences. But the crowd roared, and Pilate buckled. People are like Pilate when they know what is right but decide not to do it. When you have a difficult decision to make, don't discount the effects of peer pressure. Realize beforehand that the right decision could have unpleasant consequences: social rejection, career derailment, public ridicule. Then think of Pilate and resolve to stand up for what is right no matter what other people pressure you to do.

Luke 23:15 "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and **behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.**

KJV Luke 23:15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

NET Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, he has done nothing deserving death.

- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

CONCLUSION OF FIRST TWO TRIALS: JESUS HAS DONE NOTHING DESERVING DEATH

No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us- This is a continuation of Pilate's statement **I have found no guilt in this man**. His point is neither did Herod! While Herod did not issue an official verdict about Jesus it was clear that he did not find Him guilty of any crime worthy of death. And so the word from the two civil authorities, **Herod** and **Pilate**, was "NOT GUILTY!"

Constable has an interesting thought on Herod's "verdict" - Pilate also announced that Herod's verdict agreed with his own. Herod was a recognized authority on Jewish affairs that Pilate's hearers probably respected more than they did Pilate since Herod was Semitic. Both men agreed that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death.

Behold - Pilate uses **behold** in an attempt to garner the attention of the Jews. He is saying "Look! Jesus does not deserve death!"

Spurgeon reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration (ED: IN THIS CASE "ATTENTION!"). Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation."

Nothing deserving death has been done by Him - Pilate makes a clear declaration of Jesus' innocence, having committed no crime worthy of death. This statement is in addition to his three clear "not guilty" statements in Luke 23:4, 14, 22. The word for **nothing** ([oudeis](#)) is literally "and not one," which signifies an *absolute negation* by Pilate, which the Jews *absolutely* refuse to accept because of their spiritually blind eyes and hardened hearts.

Deserving (Worthy) (514) ([axios](#)) from **ágō** = to weigh) strictly speaking means bringing up the other beam of the scales. Having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much. Pilate places the evidence on one scale and Jesus on the other (so to speak) and concludes that Jesus is NOT deserving of death. This same word is used later by the thief on the Cross who concludes he and his companion on Jesus' left side are both receiving the penalty which they deserve (Lk 23:41). If you deserve something, it's right that you get it - the thieves deserved death but not Jesus! This is a further reflection of God's great love, mercy and grace toward us, who like the two thieves justly deserved the "death penalty" (Ro 6:23+) and God's eternal wrath! Because the One not worthy of death was put to death and God's wrath fell on Him, we who were worthy of death now receive eternal life in Him! Hallelujah!

James Stalker sums up Jesus' transfer from Pilate to Herod and back again to Pilate - BACK TO PILATE - THE sending of Jesus to Herod had not, as Pilate had hoped, finished the case, and so the Prisoner was brought back to the imperial palace. Herod had affected to treat Jesus with disdain; but in reality, as we are now aware, he had himself been tried and exposed. And Jesus returned to do the same thing for Pilate—to make manifest what manner of spirit he was of; though Pilate had no conception that this was going to happen: he was only annoyed that a case of which he thought he had got rid was thrown on his hands again. He had reluctantly to resume it, and he carried it through to the end; but, before this point was reached, his character was revealed, down to its very foundations, in the light of Christ. Herod's spirit was that of frivolous worldliness—the worldliness which tries to turn the whole of life into a pastime or a joke; Pilate's was that

of strenuous worldliness—the worldliness which makes self its aim and subordinates everything to success. Of the two this is perhaps the more common; and, therefore, it will be both interesting and instructive to watch its self-revelation under the search-light of Christ's proximity.

Luke 23:16 "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

KJV Luke 23:16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

- Isaiah 53:5; Mt 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1-4; Acts 5:40,41
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

PILATE SEEKS A COMPROMISE: PUNISH THEN RELEASE JESUS

Note that Luke does not describe the scourging found in the other 3 Gospel accounts (see Mt 27:26b+, Mk 15:15b+, Jn 19:1+)

[Compromise](#) is defined as a middle way between two extremes, an agreement or a settlement of a dispute that is reached by each side making concessions. The word also means the acceptance of standards that are lower than is desirable. This latter definition would be an apropos description of Pilate's dealing with Jesus. An anonymous source once said "The 'morality of compromise' sounds contradictory. Compromise is usually a sign of weakness, or an admission of defeat. Strong men don't compromise, it is said, and principles should never be compromised."

Vance Havner said it this way "God despises mixtures. Our Lord says He will spew the lukewarm out of His mouth—and lukewarm is another word for the same state of compromise."

J Vernon McGee comments on Pilate's compromising offer - "Wait a minute! That is wrong. If Jesus is guilty of something, He should be punished. If He is innocent, He should be set free. To chastise Him and let Him go is [compromise](#). I agree with Marlowe, the Englishman, that **compromise** is the most immoral word in the English language. (Thru The Bible)

Indeed **compromise** is always wrong when it means sacrificing principle. Pilate sacrificed the principles of truth and justice because of the pressure of the crowd. See more on [compromise](#).

Therefore - Term of conclusion. Since Jesus is "Not Guilty," **therefore**...If righteousness and justice ruled the day, what would we have expected the conclusion to be? **Therefore** "I release Him!" But such was not to be, for lady [Justice](#) was not blindfolded (signifying "she" was objective - [pix, note](#)) on this fateful day! Justice was not to be objective on this day! And so the failed attempt to have Herod try the case begins Pilate's is deadly dance (the "Pilate two-step") in his attempts to appease the Jews on one hand and set Jesus free on the other. Mark 15:15 ("Wishing to satisfy the crowd") gives us insight into Pilate's motivation stating that he was not interested in satisfying justice but of satisfying the crowd and his conscience. Pilate was a morally weak man who caved to worldly pressure. We've never done that before have we? ([Rhetorical question!](#))

POSB - Pilate was more willing to satisfy and please the people than to do what was right. Fear, of course, lay behind Pilate's action—the fear...of losing the people's favor, of causing problems for himself, of losing his position and security. Pilate had the authority and the duty to do what was right. But he failed. He was too weak...to stand for the truth, to declare the truth as the thing to do, to free himself from the evil influence of the world. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark)

I will punish Him ([paideuo](#)) and release Him - In Luke 23:22 Pilate repeats the same proposal in another vain attempt to solve his ethical dilemma. As discussed below the verb for **punish** ([paideuo](#)) suggests a lighter degree of scourging than normally be administered to prisoners who were subsequently crucified. The idea would be to "teach a lesson" to Jesus. Of course any punishment by Pilate at this point is clearly illegal and unjust because he himself had exonerated Jesus.

Kent Hughes writes that "Under Roman law a **light beating was sometimes given along with a warning** so the accused would watch his behavior more carefully in the future. Pilate was trying to appease Jesus' accusers, hoping that a lesser judicial act would quell their blood lust. At this point it had become dramatically apparent that Pilate (the thoroughly political man) was, surprisingly, truly trying to save Jesus. Evidently influences beyond the merely political were inwardly tugging at this Roman leader. " (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#)) (Bold added)

R C H Lenski - This chastisement is a morsel that is offered these insistent accusers. Pilate is asking whether they cannot be satisfied if he orders this. They will then not lose face by being turned down completely. They will have accomplished much, if not all. Pilate was again hopeful, but every play he made only made his defeat surer. To yield an inch from his first verdict (Lk 23:4) overthrew the entire verdict. That is why the Sanhedrists hung on. All they had to do was to hang on, and they did. He who yielded so much would yield also the rest. It was just as unjust to chastise Jesus for no crime that merited chastisement as to put him to death without proving a crime that was worthy of death. Pilate's proposal is a self-indictment of criminal injustice. He shrank from the bloodguilt of executing Jesus; he did not shrink from

chastising him. The fearful inconsistencies of worldly logic in moral matters are astounding. To hope to escape the devil by paying him a half-price is the folly of making him certain that you will pay also the other half. (BORROW [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel PAGE 1116](#))

Will punish (3811)([paideuo](#) from **pais** = child) refers primarily to the training children. At one end of the spectrum the training is by teaching, instructing, educating or nurturing and at the other end it is by punishment. In the present context the idea of punishment is clearly indicated and it is undoubtedly more severe than just a "spanking of a child." **BDAG** suggests that **paideuo** in Lk 23:16, 22 means to "discipline by whipping or scourging" which is the sense in several OT (Septuagint) uses (1 Ki 2:11, 14, 2 Chr 10:11, 14). **W E Vine** adds **paideuo** "also has the meaning to chastise with blows, to scourge, said of the command of a judge, Luke 23:16, 22." And so the **NET** version has "I will therefore have Him flogged and release Him."

Luke's use of the verb [paideuo](#) instead of the verb [phragelloo](#) used by Matthew and Mark for scourging suggests that Pilate is referring to punishing Jesus not with a severe scourging like that which He suffered prior to His crucifixion. Pilate clearly viewed Jesus as not guilty, and so his goal was to placate the Jews by having Jesus punished with a reprimand that was short of brutal scourging. He apparently continued to misinterpret the intent of the Jews -- they did not just want their "pound of flesh," they wanted Messiah's life blood! Nothing short of that would satisfy the blood lust in their evil hearts.

For comparison notice that Mt 27:26 and Mk 15:15 use the verb [phragelloo](#) to describe Pilate's **scourging** of Jesus before handing Him over for crucifixion. **BDAG** says that **phragelloo** means to "flog, scourge, a punishment inflicted on slaves and provincials after a sentence of death had been pronounced on them." In short, the verb **phragelloo** described a more intense degree of scourging. And as stated, it was the common practice to inflict this harsh punishment after the pronouncement of a death sentence prior to execution. Clearly, the beaten, wounded, bloody victim would then die faster while hanging on a cross. John 19:1 uses a different verb for **scourge** ([mastigoo](#)) which means to beat with a whip or lash.

Carl Schneider in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT Volume 4, page 519) has the following note on Jesus' scourging:

The scourging of Jesus in Jn 19:1 and in the prophecies of the passion in Mt. 20:19 == Mk. 10:34 == Lk. 18:33 is not the synagogue punishment but the Roman [verberatio](#).

Mt. 27:26 = Mk. 15:15 have the Lat. loan word [φραγελλῶν](#) ([phragelloo](#)) instead of [μαστιγῶν](#) ([mastigoo](#)). Lk. 23:16 has the weaker [παιδεύσας](#) ([paideuo](#)) and says nothing about its execution (ED: THAT IS LUKE DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE CARRYING OUT OF THE SCOURGING). **Here is one of the many instances of Luke's softening of the passion story.** John seems to think in terms of a compromise between true *verberatio* and a separate whipping. The aim of Pilate is to awaken pity by the scourging. It seems as though he wants to impose only a scourging without crucifixion. (This would be a kind of examination, cf. 3. and Schl. J. on 19:1.)

According to Roman law the [verberatio](#) always accompanied a capital sentence, *condemnatio ad metalla*, and other degrading punishments with the loss of freedom or civil rights.¹⁷ In many cases it was itself fatal. It usually preceded crucifixion.¹⁸ It was so terrible that even Domitian was horrified by it.¹⁹ Women were exempted.²⁰ We know little about the details. The number of strokes was not prescribed. It continued until the flesh hung down in bloody shreds. Slaves administered it, and the condemned person was tied to a pillar.²¹

RELEASE: A KEY WORD IN JESUS' TRIAL

In another of the many ironies on this day, it is ironic that "release" is a **key word** in the trial of our Lord, because He in fact was not released. Of course, this is according to the predestined plan of God (Acts 4:27, 28, 2:23) to provide a Lamb, so that when believers pass away, the death angel will pass over us, and we will pass into the presence of the Lamb Who was slain for our sin.

Leon Morris summarizes Pilate's last words and actions regarding his sentencing of Jesus to die - Now we see how Pilate was compelled to sentence Jesus to death. But Luke makes it clear that this was very much against the governor's wishes, for Pilate recognized that Jesus was innocent. Indeed four times he said this (Lk 23:4, 14-15, 22; cf. John 18:38; 19:4, 6). The pressure of the high priests for sentence against an innocent man posed a terrible dilemma for Pilate, and the Gospels make it plain that he tried hard to avoid making a decision. He started by trying to get the Jews to deal with the whole matter themselves (John 18:31). Later he sent Jesus to Herod (Lk 23:7). He attempted to get the Jews to accept Jesus as the prisoner to be released at Passover (Mark 15:6), and he offered to beat Jesus and release him (Lk 23:16). But in the end he could not avoid making the fateful decision. (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke PAGE 322](#))

What the Bible teaches – Because we know the plan of redemption as it is revealed in Scripture, we are rather untouched by Pilate's efforts, but they were genuine. He was not motivated by compassion for the innocent Christ nearly so much as by the fear of reprisal from Rome if he failed to act in complete accord with Roman law. Experts in imperial law tell us that Luke gives us "technically correct" procedure in all these aspects of the trial.

Will release (630)([apoluo](#)) is used here as a legal term meaning to set a prisoner free, so in essence Pilate was in effect saying he will grant Jesus acquittal, pardoning Him and setting Him free. Clearly the verb [apoluo](#) is a key verb in every Gospel account of Jesus' trial before

Pilate, the 19 uses in 17 verses referring either to **release** of Jesus (as here in Lk 23:16) or **release** of a prisoner which eventually would be Barabbas.

Luke 23:16 "Therefore I will punish Him and **release** Him."

Luke 23:17 Now he was obliged to **release** to them at the feast one prisoner.]

Luke 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and **release** for us Barabbas!"

Luke 23:20 Pilate, wanting to **release** Jesus, addressed them again,

Luke 23:22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and **release** Him."

Luke 23:25 And he **released** the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

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

Matthew 27:17 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?"

Matthew 27:21 But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to **release** for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

Matthew 27:26 Then he **released** Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Mark 15:6 Now at the feast he used to **release** for them any one prisoner whom they requested.

Mark 15:9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to **release** for you the King of the Jews?"

Mark 15:11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to **release** Barabbas for them instead.

Mark 15:15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate **released** Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

John 18:39 "But you have a custom that I **release** someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I **release** for you the King of the Jews?"

John 19:10 So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to **release** You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

John 19:12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to **release** Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you **release** this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

Life Application Bible Commentary – RIDING THE FENCE - Pilate knew that Jesus had done nothing deserving punishment, and certainly not the death penalty. Even so, he didn't have the courage or the decency to release Jesus; he tried to find a middle position that would allow Jesus to live and still appease the chief priests and the Jewish rulers. He failed, and Pilate is known forever as the man who ordered the crucifixion of the Son of God. Where do you stand? Have you made up your own mind about Jesus, whether to follow him as Lord and Messiah, or to dismiss him as a misguided martyr? There is no middle ground, no way to ride the fence when it comes to Jesus. You must either embrace him as Lord or reject him as a fraud.

Luke 23:17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner]

KJV Luke 23:17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

- Mt 27:15; Mark 15:6; John 18:39
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

The **NET Note** says that "Many of the best manuscripts, as well as some others, lack Lk 23:17. This verse appears to be a parenthetical note explaining the custom of releasing someone on amnesty at the feast. It appears in two different locations with variations in wording, which makes it look like a scribal addition....The verse appears to be an explanatory gloss based on Matt 27:15 and Mark 15:6, not original in Luke. The present translation follows NA(27) in omitting the verse number, a procedure also followed by a number of other modern translations.

Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner- Most of the modern translations do not include this verse as an authentic original passage, but this same teaching is found in Mark's gospel...

Mark 15:6-8 Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. 7 Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. 8 The crowd went up and began asking him to do

as he had been accustomed to do for them.

What Mark shows us is that the crowds knew about this custom of releasing a prisoner on the feast and so they began to cry out. At first this must have been "music" to Pilate's ears for he could see this as a way to release Jesus. In fact, John records that Pilate himself declared "you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" (Jn 18:39) Matthew 27:19 adds that "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?" While he waited on the decision of the crowd (he must have been convinced that they would surely choose Jesus over a murderer) a most unusual message interrupted his deliberation, a message recorded only by Matthew...

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.'** ([Picture](#)) (Mt 27:19)

Now Pilate's problem was compounded and apparently his delay gave the religious leaders time to circulate through the crowd and persuade the Jews to ask for Barabbas. Matthew 27:20 says

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. (cf Mark 15:11).

POSB - Pilate felt sure that by pitting Barabbas against Jesus, the people would choose Jesus, the One who had ministered and helped so many of them. How wrong the man of compromise was. (The world will always cry out against Jesus to get rid of Him.) The point to note is the moral weakness of Pilate. He knew Jesus was innocent. He knew the Jews sought to kill Jesus because they envied Him. Jesus should have been released immediately, but Pilate attempted a compromise instead of standing up for the truth.

Thought 1. Note a crucial point: when the truth is known, it should be proclaimed, not compromised. Compromise results in three tragedies.

- 1) Compromise weakens character and testimony.
- 2) Compromise means that the truth is not being done or lived. A person is agreeing to do something less than what he should be doing.
- 3) Compromise weakens principle, position, and life.

Thought 2. God accepts no compromise concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. A man either stands for Christ or against Christ. There is no neutral ground. Christ is innocent and sinless; He is the Ideal Man, the Son of God in whom all men are to place their trust. (Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Luke)

We need to declare Christ innocent, declare loudly and clearly that He is the Son of God. This is not a day for indecision and compromise of the truth. Christ is King, perfectly innocent of sin and evil. We need to be decisive, to take a stand for Christ.

Luke 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"

KJV Luke 23:18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

NLT Luke 23:18 Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!"

- **But they cried out all together** Mt 27:16-23; Mark 15:7-14; John 18:40; Acts 3:14
- **Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas** John 19:15; Acts 21:36; 22:22
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Note: The following table is an attempt to line up parallel passages from the 4 Gospel accounts on the same row and to identify the passages found only in one Gospel with **yellow highlighting**. In some cases it is difficult to state with certainty which passage in a particular Gospel comes next in time sequence. If you see a passage you do not think fits in the sequence please send an email with your explanation.

From the chart below note that Luke provides a much briefer account of Barabbas compared with Mark 15:6-11 (and Mt 27:15-18, 20-25). Only Matthew records the message of Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19). While Luke does mention Barabbas' crimes (Lk 23:19), he does not explain the custom of releasing a prisoner which is described by Mark (Mk 15:6) and Matthew (Mt 27:15).

- Color Legend - **Pilate's words.** **Jew's words.** **Barabbas.**
- See also a related but more complete chart all on one page - Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN

**WHOM DO YOU WANT
ME TO RELEASE?**

NOTE: Words in bold & yellow highlight unique to that Gospel

<p>Mt 27:15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted.</p> <p>16 At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.</p> <p>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?"</p> <p>18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.</p>	<p>Mk 15:6+ Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested.</p> <p>7 The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.</p> <p>8 The crowd went up and began asking (present tense) him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them.</p> <p>9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"</p> <p>10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.</p>	<p>Lk 23:17 [<i>Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.</i>]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LUKE DOES NOT RECORD THIS INTERCHANGE BETWEEN PILATE & THE JEWS</p>	<p>Jn 18:39 But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; Do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?</p>
<p>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."</p> <p>(Picture)</p>			

<p>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" 2 3 And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him" 2 4 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." 2 5 And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"</p>	<p>1 1 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" 1 3 They shouted back, "Crucify Him" 14 But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him"</p>	<p>Lk 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" 1 9 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder. 20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again. 2 1 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, Crucify Him" 2 2 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him."</p>	<p>Jn 18:40 So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber." Jn 19</p>
<p>2 6 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.</p>	<p>1 5 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.</p>	<p>2 3 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail. 24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.</p>	<p>John 19:1 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.</p>

SEE NEXT TABLE
BARABBAS RELEASED

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The warning dream of Pilate's wife (? [Procla or Procula](#)) is not found in any other Gospel. She had the message of her dream sent to Pilate who seated on the judgment seat (bema - SAME WORD USED OF THE PLACE BEFORE WHICH EVERY BELIEVER MUST STAND SOME DAY - 2 Cor 5:10+) at "**The Pavement**" ([Gabbatha](#)) ([See picture](#)). Both Romans and Greeks viewed dreams as an important way their false gods spoke (e.g., viewing them as "[omens](#)"), albeit in this case the dream may have originated from the true and living God (but we cannot be dogmatic, cf warning in a dream in Mt 2:12). Whatever the content of the dream was, it was sufficient to convince Pilate's wife that Jesus was righteous and presumably innocent. One can only imagine Pilate's thoughts (and fears) at that moment. Notice that Pilate's wife does not say release Jesus, but **have nothing to do with Him**, something he was already actively trying to do! This pagan woman dreaming of Jesus does raise the question [Is God giving people in closed countries dreams and visions to bring them to faith in Christ?](#) ([see discussion](#)) (See also [Christian dream interpretation? Are our dreams from God?](#))

Can you imagine the pressure intensifying on Pilate to release or to condemn Jesus? Apparently while Pilate was being warned, the chief priests were persuading the crowd to ask for Barabbas' life and Jesus death! (Mt 27:20)

John MacArthur comments on Pilate ritually washing his hands in **Mt 27:24** - It was ironic, and doubtlessly intentional, that the governor chose a Jewish ritual to depict his renunciation of responsibility for Jesus' fate. If the ruling elders of a city were not able to determine the identity of a murderer, the Mosaic law provided that they could publicly wash their hands, pray to God, and thereby absolve themselves of any guilt regarding their inability to render justice (Dt 21:6,7). Using a modified form of that Jewish ceremony which he had heard of, Pilate proclaimed he was innocent of this innocent Man's blood. Doubtlessly with a tone of both dismay and disgust, the governor then said, "See to that yourselves." And when he gave them what they wanted, the people gave him what he wanted. If he would permit Jesus' death, they would assume all blame. "His blood be on us and on our children!" they shouted. That declaration did not, of course, absolve Pilate of guilt, but it did proclaim for all time the people's acknowledgment of their own guilt. They soon forgot that assumption of guilt, however, and not many months later the Sanhedrin self-righteously rebuked the apostles for holding them accountable for Christ's blood (Acts 5:28). The multitude of perhaps several thousand Jews who stood outside the Praetorium made their verdict in behalf of all Israel. It was that verdict, acknowledged by all the other unbelieving Jews through their silence, that caused the branch of Israel to be broken off the tree of God's redemptive blessing (Ro 11:17). It is no wonder that since that fearful day, as a nation and as individuals, unredeemed Jews have been under the chastening hand of God. (See context in [Matthew 24-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) and [next page](#))

GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark 15:8+ records that the Jews were asking Pilate to release a prisoner as was the custom at **the Passover** (cf Jn 18:39, Mt 27:15). **John MacArthur** comments that "Each year, the governor would grant amnesty to one sentenced criminal of the people's choice as a way to cultivate goodwill and to demonstrate Rome's mercy. Pilate thought the crowd would select Jesus, thereby solving his dilemma." (See context in [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

(As an aside, this "tradition" is not recorded in any extra-Biblical source.)

This "tradition" gave Pilate another opportunity to avoid executing an innocent Man and so he asked the Jews if they would like him to release **the King of the Jews** (Mk 15:9), **Jesus Who is called Christ** (Messiah) (Mt 27:17).

GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 18:39+ - **King of the Jews** - Pilate is mocking the Jewish leaders for he knew they had vehemently rejected Jesus as their **King**. Another consideration (but only speculative) is that Pilate hoped to play off the sympathies of those in the crowd who had proclaimed Him as King in His triumphal entry.

John 18:40+ calls **Barabbas** a **robber** which is the Greek word *lestes* a word that describes one who steals openly and with violence in contrast to a thief or *kleptes* who steals primarily by stealth. Judas **was a thief** (*kleptes* - John 12:6) but was not violent, while **Barabbas** was a robber (*lestes*) who "had committed murder" (Mk 15:7). It is also notable that the word *lestes* is used to describe the **two thieves** who were crucified with Jesus (Mt 27:38, 44, Mk 15:27). The irony is that Luke had just used the word *lestes* when Jesus was arrested in the Garden and had addressed "the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him," asking "**Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber** (*lestes*)?." (Lk 22:52+) In fact it was the Jewish leaders who had made the Temple Court of the Gentiles into a **robber's** (*lestes*) **den** (Lk 19:46+), and who now compounded their sin by asking Pilate to release the real **robber** Barabbas and crucify the innocent Jesus!

Fruchtenbaum summarizes **Pilate's attempts to release Jesus** -

Once again Pilate attempted to release Yeshua. He offered the people a choice between Yeshua and Barabbas. This is recorded in Mark 15:6–10. Pilate attempted to have the Messiah released by offering the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. The irony of the situation must not be missed! Barabbas was guilty of the very crime of which Jesus was accused: sedition or rebelling against Rome. Furthermore, we know from other contemporary sources that the entire name of the guilty one was Jesus Barabbas. The name Barabbas means “son of the father.” So the prisoner who was going to be released was “Jesus, son of the father.” But the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, was being accused of sedition and would die on the other’s behalf.

At this point in the proceedings, Pilate received a message from his wife. We find this recorded in Matthew 27:17–19:

When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him up. And while he was sitting on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have you nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

According to tradition, Pilate’s wife’s name was Claudia. She apparently was more sensitive to spiritual things and had received a troubling dream concerning the person of Jesus. In this dream, He was clearly revealed as a righteous man. She also had a sense of impending doom that if Pilate gave in and condemned Jesus to death, dire consequences would result upon the family. Apparently, she had already gone through a night of suffering, realizing that the decision Pilate would make would determine their destiny also.

After Pilate received the warning from his wife, he gave the people the choice between Yeshua and Barabbas. This is recorded in Matthew 27:20–22: Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. But the governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will ye that I release unto you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What then shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ? They all say, Let him be crucified.

The Jewish leaders in the meantime had moved through the crowd, inciting the people to ask for Barabbas’ release and to demand the Crucifixion of Yeshua (Mt 27:20). Pilate’s second attempt to have Yeshua released was foiled.

Pilate attempted a third time to release Jesus. We see this in John 19:1–6. Pilate’s third attempt in verse 1 was another compromise, for he had Jesus **scourged**. Pilate’s apparent hope was that when the people saw Jesus after His scourging, they would be sympathetic toward Him and would call for His release. (Ibid)

The King of the Jews

I

JEWS CRY FOR BARABBAS OVER JESUS

In the chart above, note that the outcry from the Jewish crowd follows Pilate’s question **"Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"** (Mk 15:9, Mt 27:17, Jn 18:39, this question is not recorded by Luke).

But they cried out ([anakrazo](#)) all together - They are of one mind and one heart in their evil intentions! Today we call this **common intent** (A previous agreement or conspiracy to engage in an act of violence combined with a concert of action). It is interesting that the verb **cried out**, [anakrazo](#) (349), is also used to describe the loud cry or scream of demon possessed individuals (Mk 1:23+, Lk 4:33+, Lk 8:28+). Indeed, the "spiritual leader" of this [cacophonous](#) crowd was undoubtedly the chief demon himself, shooting fiery missiles (Eph 6:16+) into the hearts and minds of the Jewish religious leaders and the crowd seeing to spur them on to continue to **cry out** for Jesus’ crucifixion. The word for **together** is [pamphlethei](#) (only here in Scripture) describing a multitude in [unison](#) or a large group acting in complete agreement, **"one and all."** What a striking contrast is this group of Jews with the post-crucifixion group of Jews in the upper room who were also **"all with one mind** ([homothumadon](#)) (albeit their "mind" was a God-centered mind) continually devoting themselves to prayer!" (Acts 1:14+).

Saying, "Away with this man, and release ([apoluo](#) - aorist active imperative) for us Barabbas! - The crowd is not merely making a suggestion but issuing an [ultimatum](#) in the form of a double command (**away** is in the present imperative) to "take away" Jesus and **release** Barabbas. Note they don’t even use His glorious Name but simply refer to Him as **this Man,**" which clearly, in this context, is used in

a [derogatory](#) sense. They knew He had called Himself the "Son of Man," but they refused to acknowledge His Messiahship (cf Messianic prophecy in Da 7:13-14+ - cf Messianic Prophecy) even as they clamored for His death! And so true to form, they remained resolutely stiff-necked and hard-hearted to the very end! While I cannot be certain, it is possible the Spirit inspired Luke to make a fascinating play on words in this sentence, because the verb for their cries of **away** ("take away") is [airo](#), is also used in John 1:29 when John the Baptist "saw Jesus coming to him and said, "**Behold**, the Lamb of God Who **takes away** ([airo](#)) the sin of the world!" In short, the Jews unintentionally were actually fulfilling prophecy (Lk 9:22, 44+, Mk 10:33, 34) that the Son of Man might be lifted up on the Cross and accomplish the work for which the Father had sent Him! (cf Jn 4:34, 17:4). After His crucifixion the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and they might be **taken away** [[airo](#)] (i.e., taken down off of the cross)" (Jn 19:31) The verb [airo](#) is also used by Paul in Colossians explaining that God "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and **He has taken it** ([airo](#)) out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (Col 2:14+). God in His infinite wisdom and omnipotent providence would use the angry cries of the crowd for Christ's crucifixion to accomplish His redemptive purpose for mankind (cf Ge 50:20, Ro 8:28+)! Amazing grace indeed!

Notice the phrase **release for us Barabbas** - Their murderous hearts fittingly desire a rebellious murderer rather than a Righteous Messiah! Beloved, when our hearts are deceived (Jer 17:9, Gal 6:7,8+), truth is turned upside down, turned on its head, so to speak! Black becomes just an acceptable "shade of grey" and we lose our proper perspective of God's righteous standard! So do not be deceived because it can happen in a moment! (cf Mt 26:41+, cf 1 Cor 10:12). It was true then and is still true today (even for believers who yield to the desires of the flesh rather the desires of the Spirit ! (Gal 5:17+, Gal 5:16+,)

J Vernon McGee - Pilate is trying to escape making a decision about Jesus, but he cannot. Careful analysis of Pilate's part in the trial will reveal that he is on trial and Jesus is the Judge. Jesus is not trying to escape, but Pilate is. Pilate sought for an easy escape from these astute religious politicians. He hit upon giving them a choice between Barabbas and Jesus. To him the decision was obvious. He detected that they wanted Jesus dead because of envy. Pilate did not reckon with the depth to which religion can sink when it goes wrong. Matthew tells us that the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas. Pilate was startled when the crowd demanded Barabbas to be released. Imagine a judge asking a crowd for their decision as to what should be done with a man on trial! He decided that Jesus was innocent; yet he handed Jesus over to be crucified. What Roman justice! Pilate finally had to make a decision, just as every man today has to make a decision relative to Jesus Christ. What have you decided about Him? (Thru The Bible)

Question: [Who was Barabbas in the Bible?](#)

BARABBAS (SEE ALSO [DICTIONARY NOTE](#)) - 10V - Matt. 27:16; Matt. 27:17; Matt. 27:20; Matt. 27:21; Matt. 27:26; Mk. 15:7; Mk. 15:11; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:18; Jn. 18:4

Answer: Barabbas is mentioned in all four gospels of the New Testament: Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:18–24; and John 18:40. His life intersects that of Christ at the trial of Jesus.

Jesus was standing before [Pontius Pilate](#), the Roman governor who had already declared Jesus innocent of anything worthy of death (Luke 23:15). Pilate knew that Jesus was being railroaded and it was "out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him" (Mark 15:10), so he looked for a way to release Jesus and still keep the peace. Pilate offered the mob a choice: the release of Jesus or the release of Barabbas, a well-known criminal who had been imprisoned "for an insurrection in the city, and for murder" (Luke 23:19).

The release of a Jewish prisoner was customary before the feast of Passover (Mark 15:6). The Roman governor granted clemency to one criminal as an act of goodwill toward the Jews whom he governed. The choice Pilate set before them could not have been more clear-cut: a high-profile killer and rabble-rouser who was unquestionably guilty, or a teacher and miracle-worker who was demonstrably innocent. The crowd chose Barabbas to be released.

Pilate seems to have been surprised at the crowd's insistence that Barabbas be set free instead of Jesus. The governor stated that the charges against Jesus were baseless (Luke 23:14) and appealed to the crowd three times to choose sensibly (verses 18–22). "But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed" (verse 23). Pilate released Barabbas and handed over Jesus to be scourged and crucified (verse 25).

In some manuscripts of Matthew 27:16–17, Barabbas is referred to as "Jesus Barabbas" (meaning "Jesus, son of Abba [Father]"). If Barabbas was also called "Jesus," that would make Pilate's offer to the crowd even more spiritually loaded. The choice was between Jesus, the Son of the Father; and Jesus, the Son of God. However, since many manuscripts do not contain the name "Jesus Barabbas," we cannot be certain that was his name.

The story of Barabbas and his release from condemnation is a remarkable parallel to the story of every believer. We stood guilty before God and deserving of death (Romans 3:23; 6:23a). But then, due to no influence of our own, Jesus was chosen to die in our stead. He, the Innocent One, bore the punishment we rightly deserved. We, like Barabbas, were allowed to go free with no condemnation (Romans 8:1). And Jesus "suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18ESV).

What happened to Barabbas after his release? The Bible gives no clue, and secular history does not help. Did he go back to his life of crime? Was he grateful? Did he eventually become a Christian? Was he affected at all by the prisoner exchange? No one knows. But the choices available to Barabbas are available to us all: surrender to God in grateful acknowledgment of what Christ has done for us, or spurn the gift and continue living apart from the Lord. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

KJV Luke 23:19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

- Lk 23:2,5; Acts 3:14
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

A PARENTHETICAL DESCRIPTION OF BARABBAS

He was one who had been thrown into prison (phulake) for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder - Mark 15:7 says Barabbas "had committed murder in the insurrection." Some Jews (especially the [Zealots](#)) might have regarded him as a hero for seeking to overthrow the Romans oppressors. Notice that the insurrection had actually been in **the city** of Jerusalem. Imagine Pilate's thoughts as they now asked for Barabbas to be released into the streets of the very city he had committed an **insurrection!** It was another reason Pilate would much rather release Jesus than Barabbas!

He - This refers to **Barabbas** who is only described in the Bible. However the Holman Bible Dictionary has an interesting note "According to Origen, supported by a relatively small number of late manuscripts at Matthew 27:16, Barabbas was named "Jesus Barabbas." Though not well attested, the reading is possible. If it is correct, Pilate's question to the crowd in Matthew 27:17 would have added poignancy. - "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?""

MacArthur points out another irony regarding the name **Barabbas** - His name means "son of a father"; in a strange irony, Pilate was offering them the choice between Barabbas, the son of a human father, and Jesus, the Son of the heavenly Father! (See context in [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Indeed, there is a sense in which every human being ever born makes a choice between "Barabbas" and Jesus. We either choose to remain in Adam, the first "insurrectionist" (excluding of course Satan), or by grace through faith to cast our lot with Christ! Dear reader have you stubbornly chosen to remain in Adam and face eternal punishment or to be swept by the wind of His Spirit and His Word into Christ and enjoy eternal life in Him?

Here we encounter another of the many ironies in the trial of our Lord - If Jesus had raised an **insurrection** against Caesar, the Jewish accusers would have rallied to His position, rather than rail at Pilate to crucify Him!

Insurrection (4714) (**stasis** from **histemi** = to stand) means first a stance or posture (Heb 9:8), then figuratively sedition, an insurrection or an uprising, the very accusation made against Paul (Acts 24:5). Luke uses **stasis** to describe "a **dissension** between the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Acts 23:7). Clearly local Roman leaders feared insurrections, as for example the "town clerk" of Ephesus (Acts 19:35) who declared "we are in danger of being accused of a **riot** (stasis) in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." Note that **stásis** applies to civil insurrection while **pólemos** (war) refers to foreign strife.

Stasis - 9x in 9v - dissension(4), insurrection(3), riot(1), standing(1).

Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19; Lk. 23:25; Acts 15:2; Acts 19:40; Acts 23:7; Acts 23:10; Acts 24:5 ("stirs up **dissension**"); Heb. 9:8 ("while the outer tabernacle is still **standing**,")

Stasis - 23x in 23v in the Septuagint -

Dt. 28:65 (= "no resting place"); Jos. 10:13; Jdg. 9:6; 1 Ki. 10:5; 1 Chr. 28:2; 2 Chr. 9:4; 2 Chr. 23:13; 2 Chr. 24:13; 2 Chr. 30:16; 2 Chr. 35:10; 2 Chr. 35:15; Neh. 8:7; Neh. 9:3; Neh. 9:6; Neh. 13:11; Prov. 17:14; Isa. 22:19; Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 6:7; Dan. 6:15; Dan. 8:17; Dan. 10:11; Nah. 3:11

TDNT on stasis - Outside the Bible. 1. a. This word first means "standing," "standing firm or still," "firmness," also "standing" as distinct from sitting. b. It then means "position," "situation," or "state." 2. Another sense is "taking a stand," especially "rebellious." Along these lines it denotes civil strife, dissension, political unrest, inner strife in the soul, disagreement between groups, or domestic strife. In the LXX **stásis** denotes "what is set up," i.e., a boundary stone, statute, or treaty. It also occurs for the "standing still" of the sun in Josh 10:13, for "place of rest" in Dt. 28:65, and for "location" in 1 Chr 28:2. The only instance of **stásis** as (personal) "discord" is in Pr 17:14. (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume)

LIFE APPLICATION - THE DEBT - If you were heavily in debt—to the point where you could never pay it off on your own—and someone offered to pay your debt for you, what would you say? Or if you were sentenced to life in prison, and someone offered to serve your sentence for you, how would you respond? That is what Jesus has done for believers in his death on the cross. He has paid a debt that they could never repay; he has served a sentence that they deserved. Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion, a horrible form of death normally

reserved for slaves and non-Roman citizens. In addition, the Old Testament taught (Deuteronomy 21:23) that anyone who died by hanging on a tree was cursed. His death atoned for our sins and fulfilled the requirements for breaking the covenant with God. How do you respond toward the one who has done all that for you? The only appropriate response is to live a life of gratitude and obedience before him. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Luke)

Luke 23:20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,

KJV Luke 23:20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

- Mt 14:8,9; 27:19; Mark 15:15; John 19:12
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again - This is Pilate's second proposal of punishment of Jesus followed by release (Lk 23:16).

The Greek word **wanting** ([thelo](#)) speaks primarily of exercising one's **will**, the capability of conscious choice, decision, and intention. **Wanting** is in the present tense, indicating this was Pilate's continual desire. So what we have portrayed in these passages is a classic battle of the wills, Pilate's will versus the will of the Jews. Pilate is surely one of the most tragic figures in all history, for in a manner of speaking his spirit was willing but his flesh was weak, a fact that will surely haunt him for all eternity!

Addressed (4377) ([prophoneo](#) from **pros** = to + **phoneo** = to call) means to utter sounds toward someone and then to speak out, call out or address (Mt 11:16</>; Lk 7:32; 23:20; Ac 22:2). The other NT sense is to call to oneself with implication of shared interests (Lk 6:13; 13:12; Ac 11:2). This verb can convey the sense of to [accost](#) which can mean to approach and speak to boldly or aggressively, as with a demand or request.

Marvin Vincent on [prophoneo](#) - Compare Acts 21:40; 22:2. Always in the New Testament in the sense of to [accost](#), whether an individual or a crowd.

Prophoneo - 7x in 7v - addressed(1), addressing(1), call(2), called(1), called...over(1), spoke(1). No uses in the non-apocryphal Septuagint.

Matt. 11:16; Lk. 6:13; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 13:12; Lk. 23:20; Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2

While Luke does not say, both **Matthew** and **Mark** tell us what Pilate said when he addressed them again...

Matthew 27:22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all *said, "Crucify Him!"

Mark 15:12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"

Hendriksen asks some interesting questions regarding Lk 23:20 - Why was Pilate so determined on releasing Jesus? Was it because even in the heart of this Gentile there was a remnant of a sense of justice, perhaps even justice and sympathy? Was it because he realized that Jesus was at least a far more noble person than were his accusers? Was it because he hated the Jews so thoroughly that it was almost impossible to yield to their wishes? Was it because he had become filled with superstitious fear because of Christ's claim to divinity? See John 19:7, 8. Or was his reluctance due to a combination of some or all of these factors? (Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke)

Overstreet writes - Pilate did attempt to save Jesus from the cross, by declaring Him innocent, by offering to chastise or scourge Him, and by offering to release Him as was the custom (but Barabbas was released instead). Indeed, it has been accurately said that Pilate "sent Jesus to the cross, but not before he had exhausted every expedient for saving Him, except the simple and straightforward one of dismissing the case." Pilate persisted in trying to convince the Jews to let him release Jesus "till they threatened to implicate in the charge of rebellion against Caesar the governor himself, if he persisted in unwonted mercy."³⁴ This must have had a special effect on Pilate since only a year before Christ's crucifixion, which took place in A.D. 33, Pilate had been rebuked by the Emperor Tiberius concerning the shields he had set up in Herod's palace which had offended the Jews. Pilate obviously was in no frame of mind at this early time to risk another confrontation with the emperor, if he thought it could be avoided. It can also be accurately said that when Pilate delivered Christ to be crucified he demonstrated "all the cowardice of the judge who thus declines to act as the protector of innocence," and the natural principles of equity which should have been allowed to an alien (although not required by Roman law) were denied. This certainly constitutes in Pilate an act which is unethical and immoral, even if not technically illegal. What could Pilate have done instead of sending Christ to the cross? He could have displayed the fortitude to do what was morally and ethically right, and then relied on the emperor's sense of justice if the matter had been brought before him. The proconsul of Achaia, Gallio by name, did this very thing when the Apostle Paul was brought before him (Acts 18:12–17); he refused to hear the case and literally drove the complainers from his presence. Pilate could have done this, but instead he chose to follow what he thought was the politically expedient route and sent Christ to the cross. ([Roman Law and the Trial of Christ - R Larry Overstreet](#))

KJV Luke 23:21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

- Lk 23:23; Mt 27:22-25; Mark 15:13; John 19:15
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

THE CROWD'S CHORUS OF "CRUCIFY!"

Matthew 27:22 (cf Mark 15:12) records Pilate's question to the Jews "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" All three synoptic accounts record their repeated cries of "Crucify Him." (Mt 27:23, Mk 15:13).

But they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify (stauroo) Him - Calling out (They kept on yelling)(2019) is the verb **epiphoneo** in the imperfect tense (over and over, again and again) which is used only by Luke in the context of a crowd or mob shouting (Lk 23:21; Acts 12:22; 21:34; 22:24). **Moffatt** is probably not far off in his paraphrase "but they roared." The point is that these bloodthirsty Jews were crying out loudly (cf Acts 12:22), shouting (cf Acts 21:34, 24) to Pilate even before he announced "not guilty" for the third time. One can just imagine the Jews' voices or protest rising several decibels after they heard this third official announcement of Jesus' innocence. **Crucify (stauroo)** is in the form of a command, the present imperative.

It is interesting that the death penalty of the Jews that would normally have been carried out for blasphemy was stoning. Of course, God had providentially arranged that they would not have the power to kill Jesus which led to the classic Roman penalty of crucifixion, in keeping with the OT prophecies. The other alternative was beheading but that quick death was reserved as a "privilege" only given to Roman citizens.

Steven Cole writes "For us who believe in Christ, it is hard to fathom how a person can know anything about Christ and yet willfully reject Him. But it shows us how strong the power of sin is in the fallen human heart! Often, like the Jews, people mistakenly think that following Christ will not get them the happiness and freedom that they desire, and so they go their own way, only to discover too late that their way is the way of destruction. (**ILLUSTRATION**) **Aaron Burr** was the third Vice President of the United States. He actually tied Thomas Jefferson in the number of electoral votes for President, but he lost in the vote in Congress, largely due to the efforts of his opponent, **Alexander Hamilton**. **Burr later challenged Hamilton to a duel and killed him (pix)**. This discredited him politically. He was later tried for treason, but acquitted. He lived a long life, but he was an unhappy man. **Sadly, Burr was the grandson of the godly pastor, Jonathan Edwards**. Although Burr never knew his grandfather, who had died while he was a young boy, he had a godly heritage, but he walked away from it. Late in life he said, "Sixty years ago I told God that if He would let me alone, I would let Him alone, and God has not bothered about me since." Aaron Burr got what he wanted, but it was a tragic mistake! (Wikipedia adds this quote - "By Fairfield's account, Burr had lost his religious faith before that time; upon seeing a painting of Christ's suffering, Burr candidly told her, "*It is a fable, my child; there never was such a being.*" The Jews got what they wanted: Jesus was crucified. They later revolted against Rome, but it did not get them what they wanted. They were slaughtered by the hundreds of thousands, and those who survived were scattered. The temple and the city of Jerusalem were totally destroyed. **Willful, knowing rejection of Christ always results in awful judgment, if not in this life, certainly in eternity.** ([Condemned or Set Free? Luke 23:13-25](#))

Crucify (4717)(**stauroo** from **stauros** = cross, in turn from **histemi** = to stand) means literally to nail or fasten to a cross and so to crucify -- literal death by nailing to and hanging from a cross (a stake). To *impale* on the cross; figurative to *extinguish (subdue)* passion or selfishness. In Galatians Paul uses **stauroo** in a metaphorical sense to refer to crucifixion of the flesh (as a result of the literal crucifixion) "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:24+)

STAUROO - 46X/42V - crucified(29), crucifixion(1), crucify(16). Matt. 20:19; Matt. 23:34; Matt. 26:2; Matt. 27:22; Matt. 27:23; Matt. 27:26; Matt. 27:31; Matt. 27:35; Matt. 27:38; Matt. 28:5; Mk. 15:13; Mk. 15:14; Mk. 15:15; Mk. 15:20; Mk. 15:24; Mk. 15:25; Mk. 15:27; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 23:21; Lk. 23:23; Lk. 23:33; Lk. 24:7; Lk. 24:20; Jn. 19:6; Jn. 19:10; Jn. 19:15; Jn. 19:16; Jn. 19:18; Jn. 19:20; Jn. 19:23; Jn. 19:41; Acts 2:36; Acts 4:10; 1 Co. 1:13; 1 Co. 1:23; 1 Co. 2:2; 1 Co. 2:8; 2 Co. 13:4; Gal. 3:1; Gal. 5:24; Gal. 6:14; Rev. 11:8

Classical Greek and Septuagint Usage - *Stauroō* is a common verb in Greek literature. The noun form *stauros* (4567) was used to denote a "cross" as an instrument of torture or crucifixion, and the verb form *stauroō* was used to mean "to crucify," (ca. Second Century B.C.). In the Septuagint the noun is found once (Esther 7:9) where it refers to a pale (stake) on which an individual was impaled. That was a common means of torture and execution in the Persian Empire. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

New Testament Usage - In the New Testament the verb is used in both literally and figuratively. Matthew 20:19 employs the term literally to mean "to crucify on a cross" or "to put to death on a cross." The verb's occurrence in the other Gospels is translated in the same way. In Galatians 5:24 and 6:14 Paul employed *stauroō* as a picture of his high standard of personal holiness: "My desire for the things of the world has been crucified," or "The power of such has

been destroyed, put to death" (author's translations). In 6:14 Paul made an appeal to those who would futilely try to "glory" in the Law, to embrace "the cross of . . . Christ," as he had done (verse 14), and to glory in the victory of the Cross by means of which the power of the world has been destroyed. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

See the 14 page [NIDNTT article on the Cross and Crucify beginning on page 390](#). - **Excerpt** - σταυρός G5089 (stauros), stake, cross; σταυρώ G5090 (stauroō), hang upon a cross, crucify; νασταυρώ G416 (anastauroō), crucify; συσταυρώ G5365 (systauroō), crucify with; κρεμάννυμι G3203 (kremannymi), hang.

Friberg says this metaphorical sense of **stauroo** in Gal 5:24 speaks of "of a believer's renouncing his old sinful way of living to be united to his Lord - crucify, put to death, i.e. be done with. (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

BDAG says that in Gal 5:24 **stauroo** means "to destroy through connection with the crucifixion of Christ, crucify, a transcendent sense (and in Gal 6:14 refers to) the believer who is inseparably united to the Lord has died on the cross to the kind of life that belongs to this world (BORROW [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament, and other early Christian literature](#))

Related Resource:

- [What is the history of crucifixion?](#)

Life Application Bible Commentary - TAKING A STAND - What are the non-negotiables in your life? What are those core principles and bedrock beliefs that you will not compromise or sell out no matter what? Consider this question before you are in a crisis whereby your principles and beliefs are put to the test. Pilate seems to have had no such convictions. He knew Jesus was innocent and undeserving of punishment, yet he yielded to pressure from his political enemies to sacrifice him. Like Pilate, most people are put in positions where they have to decide where they will stand. Unlike Pilate, Christians must decide to stand firm on the truth revealed to them by God. Where do you stand?

Luke 23:22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

KJV Luke 23:22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

NLT Luke 23:22 For the third time he demanded, "Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.

- **Why, what evil has this man done?** Lk 23:4,14,20; 1 Peter 1:19; 3:18
- **I will punish Him and release Him** Lk 23:16
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Related Passages:

Luke 23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, **I find no guilt** in this man."

Luke 23:14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I **have found no guilt in this man** regarding the charges which you make against Him.

THE THIRD TIME IS NOT THE CHARM!

And he said to them the third time - The quantitative description **the third time** serves to emphasize the innocence of Jesus. Thus Pilate continues to maintain Jesus' innocence reiterating what he had said previously - "I find no guilt in this man" (Lk 23:4), and "I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him." (Lk 23:14) and in Lk 23:15 added "nor has Herod" (found any guilt in Jesus). So here we have a total of four times by two Roman officials that Jesus is innocent. Lk 23:22 "I have found in Him no guilt demanding death."

As an aside **John MacArthur** feels that Pilate said Jesus was innocent some 6 times quoting Jn 18:38; 19:4, 6; Lk 23:4, 14, 22. I am not convinced Luke's references are clearly distinct from the 3 "not guilty" verdicts in John 18:38, 19:4, 6, especially since here Luke clearly states for "**the third time**...I have found in Him no guilt." You be the judge.

Gilbrant points out that "The number three is very significant in the accounts of the entire Passion events. There were three denials of Jesus by Peter, three questions concerning the nature of His ministry, three declarations of Jesus' innocence by Pilate, and a 3-day period of death. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Life Application Bible Commentary - There are two reasons why Luke stressed these three attempts Pilate had made to release Jesus. First, Luke wanted to show through his Gospel the innocence of Jesus before Roman law. Luke was giving evidence to prove the acceptability of Christianity to his Gentile readers. Second, he was establishing the Jewish guilt for Jesus' death. In Acts, this is the basis of the evangelistic sermons to the Jews—you killed him; he died for you and rose again; now repent and be converted (Acts 2:36-38; 3:13-16; 13:26-41).(see [Luke](#))

Why, what evil ([kakos](#)) has this Man done ([poieo](#))? The answer of course is "None!" Pilate was convinced Jesus was innocent (John MacArthur states that Pilate said Jesus was innocent some 6 times! - Jn 18:38; 19:4, 6; Lk 23:4, 14, 22) so he makes an appeal to the crowd's sense of justice. They were only incensed by their injustice! It was a mob mentality by now and there was no reasoning with them! They smelled blood, the blood of the Lamb, on the very day 100's of lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple!

I have found ([heurisko](#)) in Him ([oudeis](#) = absolutely) no guilt ([aitios](#)) demanding death ([thanatos](#)) - (NET = "Crime deserving death") - **Found ([heurisko](#))** means to come upon and in this context means Pilate in this case failed to discover proof of guilt after carrying out a purposeful search. The noun **guilt ([aitios](#))** is used in Lk 23:4, 14, 22 and speaks of being the cause of something, the basis for **guilt** (or a guilty verdict). It was used in legal expressions like "ground for complaint" or "basis for a charge." In this passage the phrase "**guilt...death**" means the reason for capital punishment or the grounds for the death penalty. *Demanding* is not in the original text but added by the translators. The **NET** has "no crime deserving death," so that whatever Jesus did, it was not a capital offense. "The refrain of innocence comes once again. Pilate tried to bring some sense of justice, believing Jesus had committed no crime deserving death." ([NET Note](#))

Therefore - Term of conclusion - this conclusion is based on the three (four with Herod) innocent decrees for Jesus.

I will punish ([paideuo](#)) Him and release ([apoluo](#)) Him - He has already unsuccessfully attempted this ploy earlier (Lk 23:16). As discussed above the verb Pilate uses for **punish** is [paideuo](#) which in this context is speaks of whipping or scourging of the less severe variety (see [notes](#) on Lk 23:16; see also Carson's description of the [3 classifications of flogging](#)). Pilate is clearly attempting to [placate](#) (appease, mollify) the ire of the Jewish crowd, but it would be to no avail.

R C H Lenski suggests that Pilate's "very tone must have betrayed the fact that he had no hope of its acceptance. This verse is highly illuminating for an understanding of the character of Pilate. The Jews had taken his measure." (BORROW [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel PAGE 1122](#))

Guilt ([159](#)) [aitios](#) from [aitéo](#) = ask) describes the relation existing between two or more objects or events, specifically referring to the cause or source, the point at which something begins its course or existence. **Aitios** means that in which the cause of anything resides. Note that because of this meaning some translations render **aitios** author. "that in which the cause of anything resides." Messiah in His death on the Cross is the Source, Author and Cause of our salvation. His death is the Source from which our salvation proceeds. **Aitios** was a technical, legal term describing the grounds for an accusation in court or the content of the legal charges brought against someone (thus an accusation, charge, complaint) **Aitios** is used three times in Luke (Lk 23:4, 23:14, 23:22).

Luke 23:23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.

KJV Luke 23:23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

- Lk 23:5; Ps 22:12,13; 57:4; Zechariah 11:8
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

THE TIDE OF OPPOSITION RISES LIKE A MIGHTY STORM

Pilate makes a second attempt to release Jesus (his first failed attempt was in Lk 23:16), which just serves to stir even more the [rancor](#) of the Jews to the point that they were now on the verge of an all out **riot** (Mt 27:24)! A **riot** is something that Pilate could ill afford on his watch, which was already tenuous in eyes of Rome ([See Four Mistakes Pilate had already made in handling the Jews](#)) and thus he felt compelled to do whatever it took to quell a Jewish uprising. Of course this plays perfectly into the plans of the Jewish leaders to make certain Pilate agrees to execute Jesus.

McGee on Pilate - He detected that they wanted Jesus dead because of envy (Mt 27:18, Mk 15:10). Pilate did not reckon with the depth to which religion can sink when it goes wrong. Matthew tells us that the chief priests and elders persuaded (peitho) the multitude to ask for

Barabbas (Mt 27:20, "stirred up" [[anaseio](#)] Mk 15:11). Pilate was startled when the crowd demanded Barabbas to be released (Mt 27:21). Imagine a judge asking a crowd for their decision as to what should be done with a man on trial! He decided that Jesus was innocent; yet he handed Jesus over to be crucified. What Roman justice! (Thru The Bible)

But they were insistent ([epikeimai](#)) - This verb is different than the verb for **insisting** in Luke 23:5, but the Jewish reaction is the same as it was when Pilate issued his first not guilty verdict (Lk 23:4). Now Pilate says not only is Jesus innocent but he tries to assuage the Jewish hatred of Jesus by promising to "punish Him and release Him." (Lk 23:22). Metaphorically as used here **epikeimai** means to be insistent (pictures one putting pressure on Pilate and the **imperfect tense** = over and over).

The verb **insistent** is in the vivid **imperfect tense** picturing the crowd shouting out louder and louder, again and again. Nothing but Jesus' blood would satisfy the evil intentions of their hearts! These Jews were responding to Pilate with force and pressure, in a sense *pling* evidence and accusations (false) on top of Pilate (so to speak), nearly burying him with reasons which would force him to sentence Jesus to crucifixion (cf Pilate's efforts in Jn 19:12)

[A T Robertson](#) adds that **epikeimai** was "an old verb for the rush and swirl of a tempest... Pilate was overwhelmed by this tornado."

Lenski quips that the Jews "merely continue their insistence and shout the louder at the sight of his complete weakening. And they are right—one more shove, and over he goes." (BORROW [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel PAGE 1122](#))

Rod Mattoon - As a choir raises their voices together to sound forth their song, this mob was singing for slaughter and bellowing for blood. The monotonous chant of this fickle, emotion-charged, screaming rabble of rebels was, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Envy was at work here (cf Pr 27:4) as the united voice of the Sanhedrin was insistent in demanding the Lord be crucified. You can tell a great deal about a person by what they detest and what they like. The character of this crowd is revealed as they thirst for the destruction of someone who was godly, kind, and loving. Pilate attempted to restrain this mob, but they would not listen to what he had to say. They were in a feeding frenzy like pirana consuming a cow crossing a river. (Treasures from Luke) As Matthew affirms Pilate "knew that because of [envy](#) ([phthonos](#)) they had delivered Him up."

With loud voices asking that He be crucified ([stauroo](#)) - "**Loud voices**" is picturesque in the Greek being derived from **megas** and **phone** (cf English "[megaphone](#)").

Leon Morris on **loud voices** - The mob was insistent. Their loud cries give the impression that a riot was beginning to build up. It must have been obvious to Pilate that the situation was becoming increasingly ugly. The mob's shouts won the day. (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke PAGE 324](#))

The verb **asking** ([aiteo](#)) is in the present tense (continually asking) middle voice which was used to express business demands, such as "to ask what is due," or what one has a right to ask. They sensed Pilate's weakening will and like a lion stalking its prey, they leaped on his vacillation and indecision.

And their voices began to prevail ([katischuo](#)) - The idea of the phrase **began to prevail** is that the battle against Pilate was gaining momentum but even now was not entirely won. Nevertheless, the shouts to "**Crucify**" Jesus were beginning (imperfect tense - again and again) to gain ascendancy and to succeed in persuading Pilate's weak will, winning out over his refrain of "not guilty!" In this context of rising resentment and roaring in the crowd, surely Pilate grew concerned that a riot was about to ensue, which would be an unacceptable outcome for Pilate in the eyes of Imperial Rome. That must be avoided at all costs, in this case the "cost" of an innocent Man's life!

The **KJV** adds another phrase not found in the more modern Greek manuscripts declaring "**the voices of them (Jews) and of the chief priests.**" While this phrase is not in the modern manuscripts, it does present an accurate picture of whose voices were beginning to prevail.

Matthew gives us Pilate's reaction to the cry of the Jews to crucify Jesus, essentially claiming he did not concur with the decision of the Jews and thus (in his mind) was innocent. In essence Pilate is implying that the Jews were the one's guilty of forcing him to commit this gross miscarriage of justice in killing an innocent man...

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." 25 And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" (Mt 27:24-25+)

Insistent (1945) ([epikeimai](#) from **epi** = upon + **keimai** = to lie on) means to lie upon, to be placed on, to lie on (literally of the stone against Jesus' tomb - Jn 21:9, of fish on the fire of coals - Jn 21:9). **Epikeimai** is used in Luke 5:1+ to describe the crowd **pressing around** Jesus, which while a literal use, does help give us a sense of the "pressure" the Jews were bringing to bear on Pilate.

Prevail (2729) ([katischuo](#) from **kata** = against + **ischuo** = to prevail) means to be strong against someone or and thus to prevail over. **Katischuo** pictures the shouting from the crowd becoming so loud and persistent that they prevailed with Pilate. O, the difference a few days can make in one's heart response -- many had hailed Him and wanted to crown Him King on His Triumphal Entry (Lk 19:38+). Now probably some of these same voice cry for His crucifixion like a criminal. But Jesus always gets the last word for He uses **katischuo** in His prophecy

declaring "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not **overpower** (katischuo) it." (Mt 16:18) In addition, the first use in the Septuagint in Genesis 49:24 is one of three descriptions of the coming Messiah as "the **Mighty One** (katischuo) of Jacob, (from there is the **Shepherd**, the **Stone** of Israel)."

Gilbrant adds that "The Greek for prevail is **katischuo** meaning to gain the ascendancy or to gain a victory. This was not a yelling contest between the Jews and Pilate. Rather, the thrust of the language is that by their constant and loud demanding, the people got what they wanted." (Ibid)

Question: [Why did the crowds shout, "Crucify Him!" when Pilate wanted to release Jesus?](#)

Answer: When the Sanhedrin brought Jesus before the Roman governor, [Pontius Pilate](#), Pilate could not find any fault in Jesus, and he said so three times (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22). Late in the trial, Pilate sought a way to free Jesus (John 19:12). It was a Passover festival custom that the governor release a prisoner to the people, so, in a ploy to appease the crowd of Jewish leaders who had gathered and to secure Jesus' release, Pilate allowed them to choose between a convicted criminal named Barabbas and Jesus. Instead of choosing Jesus, as Pilate had hoped, the crowd chose Barabbas for release. Shocked that they would free a hardened criminal, Pilate asked, "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" (Mark 15:12). The crowd cried out, "Crucify him!" (verse 13).

It is well that Pilate was confused by the crowd's reaction, for barely a week earlier the people of Jerusalem had welcomed Jesus into the city with the waving of palm branches and shouts of "Hosanna!" (Matthew 21:1–11). What Pilate may not have known was the extent to which the religious and political leaders hated and opposed Jesus. Over the course of Jesus' ministry, His teachings had alienated and angered the Pharisees, the scribes, the Herodians, and the Sadducees. Not only did Jesus point out their extreme hypocrisy on many occasions (see Matthew 23; Mark 7:1–14; Luke 20:45–47), but He also claimed to be God, which was blasphemy to the unbelieving teachers of the law (see Mark 14:60–64). The religious leaders wanted to utterly destroy Jesus (Matthew 12:14; Mark 3:6). Only His death would satisfy them.

In Jesus' time, crucifixion was reserved for the worst of criminals. The torture a person endured on a cross would last for hours, and killing Jesus in this manner likely appealed to the religious leaders who hated Him so deeply. In an effort to hide their move against Jesus from His many supporters, the Jewish leaders arrested and tried Jesus in the middle of the night. When Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate—the only one with authority to order a crucifixion—it was still early in the morning (Matthew 27:1–2). When Pilate presented Jesus and Barabbas to the people, the chief priests whipped the crowd into a frenzy, encouraging them to call for Barabbas's release (Mark 15:11). When Pilate asked what they wanted done to Jesus, the crowd, again influenced by the chief priests, shouted, "Crucify Him!" Pilate, the people-pleaser, gave them what they demanded. He had Jesus flogged and then turned Him over for crucifixion.

At the beginning of the week, there was a crowd in Jerusalem celebrating Jesus as the Messiah; by Friday, there was a crowd crying, "Crucify Him!" The striking change of the city's heart naturally causes some perplexity. It's good to remember that not everyone at the Triumphal Entry was celebrating the Lord. Most of the city was puzzled: "When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?'" (Matthew 21:10), and the Jewish leaders were indignant (verse 15). Some of the same crowd who shouted, "Hosanna!" may also have been part of the crowd shouting "Crucify Him!" but we can't be sure. If some people did join both crowds, it may be because they had grown disillusioned with Jesus when they discovered He was not going to set up the kingdom immediately—or perhaps they disliked Jesus' insistence that they repent. Also, it's quite possible that the crowd gathered before Pilate at that early hour had been assembled and suborned by the Jewish leaders.

In the end, it wasn't the crowd's cries of "Crucify Him!" that put Jesus on the cross. Our sin did that. From the very beginning, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the Lord had promised to send a Savior who would crush the reign of sin and death (Genesis 3:15). Throughout the ages God wove His plan to send a Savior, and that plan culminated in the person of Jesus Christ: God's own Son who became the perfect God-man so He could take upon Himself the punishment for sin. Although wicked men were involved in Jesus' death on the cross, His sacrifice was ultimately the will of God (Isaiah 53:10; John 10:18). The shedding of Jesus' blood fulfilled God's promise to mankind to provide a Savior and sealed the New Covenant (Luke 22:20). Jesus would then defeat the power of death and the grave by rising again three days later and ascending to His Father's right hand in heaven. ([GotQuestions.org](#))

Billy Graham - Caving In to the Crowd LUKE 23:4, 23 NIV

The name of Pontius Pilate will be forever linked to the death of Jesus Christ, for it was he, as Roman governor, who gave the final order condemning Jesus to death by crucifixion.

But the name of Pontius Pilate will also stand forever as a prime example of someone who knew what was right—but failed to do it. Repeatedly, he told the mob clamoring for Jesus' death that he found no basis for condemning Him—but in the end, he caved in to the pressures of the crowd and ordered His death. Publicly he washed his hands and told the crowd that they alone were responsible for Jesus' death (Matthew 27:24), but in reality Pilate's cowardice sent Jesus to the cross.

How often do you cave in to the pressures of the crowd, seeking the approval of others instead of the approval of God? We all like to be liked—but that can be a very dangerous thing. Make it your goal to live for Christ and be faithful to Him, regardless of what the crowd demands. (Hope for Each Day)

Luke 23:24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

KJV Luke 23:24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

YLT Luke 23:24 and Pilate gave judgment for their request being done,

- **And Pilate pronounced** Mt 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1
- **sentence that their demand be granted** Exodus 23:2; Proverbs 17:15
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

PILATE CAVES TO DEMAND OF JEWS

Only Luke's version specifically declares that Pilate passed sentence on Jesus. However, it is notable that Pilate did not give the verdict "Death to Jesus," but that "**their demand be granted.**" The [NET Note](#) agrees explaining that "Although some translations render *epekrinen* here as "passed sentence" or "gave his verdict," the point in context is not that Pilate sentenced Jesus to death here, but that finally, although convinced of Jesus' innocence, he gave in to the crowd's incessant demand to crucify an innocent man," as rendered in the ESV "So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted."

[NET Note](#) - Finally Pilate gave in. He decided crucifying one Galilean teacher was better than facing a riot. Justice lost out in the process, because he did not follow his own verdict. Although some translations render *epekrinen* here as "**passed sentence**" or "**gave his verdict**," the point in context is not that Pilate sentenced Jesus to death here, but that finally, although convinced of Jesus' innocence, he gave in to the crowd's incessant demand to crucify an innocent man.

[Lenski](#) writes that the use of these two similar forms ([aitema](#) and [aiteo](#) in the previous passage) "speak of what the Jews **demand as their right**. This is, indeed, a strange form of sentencing." (BORROW [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel PAGE 1122](#)) (Bolding added)

[Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible](#) - Note a crucial point. It is when we are indecisive or willing to compromise that the pressure to do evil gets to us. Hesitating and being indecisive will cause us to give in to the pressure of sin.

[Matthew](#) affirms that Pilate began to fear a riot "When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves. And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:24-25)

[Pilate](#) was vainly attempting to "clear his name" and say that he was not responsible for the death of Christ and yet, in reality he was, because (1) he had the authority to set Jesus free and (2) he thought He was innocent. Peter and John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit leave no doubt that Jesus' innocent blood was on Pilate's "washed" hands (among others) declaring "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, Whom You anointed, both (1) Herod and (2) Pontius Pilate, (3) along with the Gentiles and (4) the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined ([proorizo](#)) to occur." (Acts 4:27-28, cf Acts 2:23, Isa 53:10) Yes, God had predestined these events but that did not [absolve](#) men like Pilate from their guilt before God's bar of perfect justice (Rev 20:11-15+)! Notice that there four people or groups that [colluded](#) to kill the Messiah.

As [Mattoon](#) says "Pilate is an example of a powerful man with great authority who was dominated by the power of "peer pressure."" (Ibid) Do you (I) ever cave into "peer pressure," and momentarily jettison your loyalty to the Lamb of God?

[Gilbrant](#) adds "He gave in to their demands. Whatever the lack of evidence, whatever the injustice, whatever the mystery of the man Jesus, Pilate felt it was more important for him to keep the populace under control. We call it [appeasement](#). We may find an image of ourselves in Pilate. Too often we abandon truth or justice because of peer pressure or because we are in the minority."

[Life Application Bible Commentary](#) adds "No doubt Pilate did not want to risk losing his position, which may already have been shaky, by allowing a riot to occur in his province. As a career politician, he knew the importance of compromise, and he saw Jesus more as a political threat than as a human being with rights and dignity."

[Spurgeon](#) He had not courage to stem the stream, he feared that they might accuse him to Cæsar if he suffered Jesus to go free, and, therefore, he sold himself to do evil. We need to be firm in our principles or we shall soon be driven into great sin (Interpreter's Bible)

And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted- While the previous passage indicated the Jews had begun to prevailed, this verse signifies that had finally won out over Pilate. There are many ironies in the arrest, trial and murder of Jesus. Here we encounter one of the more sobering ironies that the Jews (especially those who were "religious") and Pilate both of whom condemned Jesus, were themselves condemned to judgment. Both the Jews and Pilate were guilty, but as Jesus told Pilate, the Jews had the greater guilt as seen by Jesus' answer to Pilate's question (Jn 19:10)...

"You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason **he who delivered Me**

to you has the greater sin.” (Jn 19:11).

Pronounced sentence is (1948)(epikrino used only here) is the usual verb for the final decision, the official decision. Epikrino This verb, along with the corresponding subst. evpi,krisij, is very common of the “examination” of persons liable to military service, as e.g. with reference to a man who had been released owing to defective eyesight. Epikrino is also used in connection with the “selection” of boys aged 11–14 for admission to the list of privileged persons who were exempt from the poll-tax.

Demand (155)(aitema from aiteo = ask for with urgency to the point of demanding, even as demanding one's share) are petitions that in general are from one who is in a lesser position than the one to whom the petition is made. The word **demand** speaks of that which is requested **peremptorily**, in an urgent or commanding manner expecting to be obeyed immediately. The Jews requested urgently, insistently and forcefully for Jesus' crucifixion.

NET Note - Finally Pilate gave in. He decided crucifying one Galilean teacher was better than facing a riot. Justice lost out in the process, because he did not follow his own verdict.

Hendriksen - The chief lesson to be learned with respect to the trial before Pilate is that one can never be neutral with respect to Jesus. One always sides either for him or against him. Pilate's “neutrality” failed completely. He succumbed at last to intimidation, and handed Jesus over to be crucified. (Baker NT Commentary - John).

As a point of application note carefully that **“religion”** never saved anyone. In fact one of the most deadly, dangerous deceptions for a human being is to be “religious!” One can sit in a church pew (of both liberal and conservative churches) for 50 years and die and end up experiencing eternal punishment! **Religion** did not save these Jewish hypocrites, but it sadly shrouded the eyes of their heart to their true need for a personal **relationship** with the Messiah. How many super religious people there will be who will suffer this tragic fate for Jesus made it clear declaring...

“Enter through the narrow gate; **for** (term of explanation) the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are **many** (NOT A FEW BUT MANY!) who enter through it. 14 **“For** (term of explanation) the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are **few** who find it.....21-22 **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven**, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 **“Many** (NOT A FEW) will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (AKA “RELIGION”) 23 **“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never (ABSOLUTELY NOT EVER = STRONG NEGATIVE) knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE** (present tense = THIS IS THE KEY = THEY NEVER HAD A POINT IN THEIR LIFE WHERE THEY BECAME NEW CREATIONS IN CHRIST AND THIS WAS EVIDENT BY THE GENERAL DIRECTION [BEHAVIOR] OF THEIR LIFE WHICH WAS TOWARD “HELL” NOT HEAVEN) LAWLESSNESS.’ (Mt 7:13-14+, Mt 7:21-23+)

Luke 23:25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

KJV Luke 23:25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

- **And he released the man** Lk 23:2,5; Mark 15:7; John 18:40
- **they were asking for** 1 Samuel 12:13; Mark 15:6; Acts 3:14
- **but he delivered Jesus to their will.** Mt 27:26; Mark 15:15
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - to arrange the events chronologically and bring out details unique to each Gospel

Note: The following table is an attempt to line up parallel passages from the 4 Gospel accounts on the same row and to identify the passages found only in one Gospel with **yellow highlighting**. In some cases it is difficult to state with certainty which passage in a particular Gospel comes next in time sequence. If you see a passage you do not think fits in the sequence please send an email with your explanation.

- **Color Legend - Jesus' words. Pilate's words. Jew's words. Barabbas. Crucifixion. Scourge**

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
BARABBAS RELEASED			

<p>Mt 27:26 Then he released Barabbas for them;</p>	<p>Mk 15:15+Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them,</p>	<p>Lk 23:24-25+ And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. 25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.</p>	
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JESUS SCOURGED

<p>Mt 27:26b but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.</p>	<p>Mk 15:15b+and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified</p>	<p>LUKE DOES NOT DESCRIBE SCOURGING OF JESUS</p>	<p>Jn 19:1 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him</p>
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JESUS MOCKED BY SOLDIERS

<p>Mt 27:27-31 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.</p>	<p>Mk 15:16-19+ The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.</p>	<p>LUKE DOES NOT DESCRIBE SOLDIER'S MOCKING JESUS</p>	<p>Jn 19:2-3 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; 3 and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.</p>
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John 19:4-15 Pilate came out again and said to them, **"Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."** 5 Jesus then came out, wearing the **crowns of thorns** and the **purple robe**. Pilate said to them, **"Behold, the Man!"** 6 So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, **"Crucify, crucify!"** Pilate said to them, **"Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."** 7 The Jews answered him, **"We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."** 8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, **"Where are You from?"** But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said to Him, **"You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"** 11 Jesus answered, **"You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."** 12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, **"If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."** 13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, **"Behold, your King!"** 15 So they cried out, **"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"** Pilate said to them, **"Shall I crucify your King?"** The chief priests answered, **"We have no king but Caesar."**

**JESUS DELIVERED OVER
TO BE CRUCIFIED**

Matthew 27:31 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.

Mark 15:20 And they led Him out to **crucify** Him.

Lk 23:25b+ but he delivered Jesus to their will.

John 19:16 So he then handed Him over to them **to be crucified**.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Note the "reed" (**kalamos**) in Mt 27:29, 30 (cf Mk 15:19) used to first to mock Jesus as a "scepter" then used like a "rod" to repeatedly "beat (imperfect tense - over and over) Him on the head". Note that **kalamos** is not just a flimsy "reed" (like in Mt 11:7) for this Greek word was also used of a fishing rod and a rod or shaft for an arrow. These uses give us some idea of the force of the blows from the strong Roman soldiers -- while they were not a blow from a club, they were also not blows from a flimsy reed. If they were like a fishing pole in size and tensile strength, they would have been of sufficient thickness to cause significant pain, bruising and [welt](#) formation on our Lord's holy head! (cf Isaiah 53:4-5) You can begin to imagine His holy face with the sweat intermingled with blood, bruises and red welts! And He did it for YOU and for ME! (cf Isaiah 53:6, 12). **Let that thought sink in the next time you are tempted to sin!** It might cause you to pause and pass on that sin! [Hallelujah, what a Savior!](#) Hallelujah, what a Friend. Amen. [Oh, how He loves you and me \(pause, play, pray, praise Him\)](#)! (cf 1 Jn 4:19) Also remember that while they were beating Jesus on the head, there was a **crown of thorns**, the points of which were undoubtedly being driven deep into the relatively thin skin covering His [calvarium](#) forcing the points of the thorns to pierce down to the nerve (*think pain!*) and vessel rich [periosteum](#) ([pix](#), [pix2](#)) covering the bones of His skull!

Dr William Edwards describes the **Medical Aspects of Scourging** - As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues.⁷ Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.^{2,7,25} Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock.¹² The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross. ([Read the entire article](#))

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Note that many of the details in **Jn 19:1-15** are NOT found in the other Gospels. As noted Luke has no description of the scourging or mocking of Jesus by the soldiers. As alluded to elsewhere in the notes, the scourging of Jesus was considered to be the preparation of a criminal who was to be crucified. There are some writers (D A Carson) who think that Jesus may have experienced two times of scourging, the first a milder form in an attempt to appease the Jews and a severe form in preparation for the Cross.

TIMING OF EVENTS - THIRD HOUR, SIXTH HOUR, NINTH HOUR - John 19:14 indicates that the events surrounding Jesus' trials before Pilate occurred [about](#) (i.e., it is not an exact, specific time but an approximation) the "sixth hour" which has created some confusion because Mk 15:25+ says "It was the third hour when they crucified Him." How could Jesus have appeared before Pilate at the "sixth hour" and be crucified at the "third hour?" Given the fact that the Bible never contradicts itself (critics use this passage to say that Scripture contradicts itself), the most logical explanation is that these times reflect Jewish and Roman methods of calculating time. Mark (Mk 15:33+) and Luke (Lk 23:44+) both record that darkness was on the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, Jesus yielding up His Spirit at the ninth hour, which would have been 3 PM, the time when lambs were being sacrificed for the Passover (cf Jn 1:29+, 1 Cor 5:7) The apparent time discrepancy between John's sixth hour and Mark's third hour is explained below (not every scholar agrees with this explanation):

Gotquestions - Answering the question of how long Jesus was on the cross is complicated by the fact that two systems of marking time are used in the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke use the Jewish system of marking time. John uses the Roman system. Using the Jewish system, Mark says, "They crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him" (Mk 15:24-25ESV). According to this, Christ's crucifixion began at 9:00 A.M. Also using the Jewish system of marking time, Matthew says that "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour" (Mt 27:45ESV). That is, the darkness lasted from 12:00 noon to 3:00 P.M. This was Jesus' final three hours on the cross. At the end of that time, "when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit" (Mt 27:50). After that a Roman soldier made sure of His death (John 19:34), and Jesus' body was taken down. Jesus had been on the cross from approximately 9:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M., a total of six hours. John adds the detail that Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate was taking place, according to Roman time, "about the sixth hour" (Jn 19:14ESV). Since the Romans started counting their hours at midnight, the "sixth hour" would start at 6:00 A.M.

So, using the Roman system (Ed: John):

- **about the sixth hour** = about 6:00 A.M. Jesus is sentenced by Pilate.

Then, using the Jewish system:

- **the third hour** = 9:00 A.M. The crucifixion began. (Mk 15:25)
- **the sixth hour** = 12:00 P.M. (noon). Darkness began. (Mk 15:33, Lk 23:44)
- **the ninth hour** = 3:00 P.M. Jesus died. (Ed: Darkness ends. Mk 15:33. Jesus yields up His Spirit, Mt 27:45, 46-49, 50, Lk 23:44, 45, 46, cf Mk 15:34, 35-39).

Putting it all together, Jesus' trial ended about 6:00 A.M. His crucifixion began about three hours later, and He died about six hours after that. ([Gotquestions](#))

Comment: I would add that Mark 15:33+ "When the **sixth hour** came, darkness fell over the whole land until the **ninth hour**." Using the Jewish method of reckoning of time which began at sunrise which occurs at about 6:00 AM, the **sixth hour** is noon

John Grassmick - Using the Jewish method of counting hours from sunrise (and sunset) Mark alone recorded that Jesus' crucifixion took place at the **third hour**, that is, 9 a.m. This seems to conflict with the time reference "**the sixth hour**" in John 19:14. But John probably used the Roman (modern) method of counting hours from midnight (and noon); thus he put Jesus' trial before Pilate at "**about the sixth hour**," that is, approximately 6 a.m. The interval between 6 and 9 a.m. was filled with the soldiers' mockery (cf. Mk 15:16-20), Pilate's verdict on the two robbers (cf. Mk 15:27), and preparations for the crucifixions. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

John MacArthur - Mark notes that it was the **third hour** (or 9:00 a.m.; the Jewish method of reckoning the hours of the day began about 6:00 a.m.) when they crucified Him. The statement in John 19:14, that it was "**about the sixth hour**" when Pilate sentenced Jesus earlier that morning, does not contradict what Mark says here. John was using the Roman method of reckoning time, which began counting hours at midnight. Consequently, the **sixth hour** in John's gospel referred to 6:00 a.m., three hours before Jesus was nailed to the cross. (See context in [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Pilate came out of his Praetorium three times to address the Jewish crowd - John 18:29, John 18:38, John 19:4 [See also previous note](#). The third time Pilate brought Jesus with him, which was AFTER He had been scourged and beaten and crowned with a crown of thorns. One can only imagine His appearance. Perhaps Pilate hoped to elicit some pity from the crowd but if so it was to no avail. In Jn 19:4 Pilate pronounces his SECOND "not guilty" verdict.

Henry Morris on John 19:12 (compare Mt 27:19) - Pilate desperately wanted to release Jesus because of his superstitious fear of what the gods might do if he executed one of their own. His immediate fear of what Caesar would do to him in the present world, however, soon outweighed his fear of any future world.

The Crown of Thorns - MacDonald writes that the "**Thorns** are a symbol of the curse which sin brought to mankind (Ge 3:17-19+). Here we have a picture of the Lord Jesus bearing the curse of our sins (Galatians 3:13+), so that we might wear a crown of glory. The purple robe was also used in mockery. **Purple** was the color of royalty. But again it reminds us of how our sins were placed on Jesus in order that we might be clothed with the robe of God's righteousness (2 Cor 5:21+). How solemn it is to think of the eternal Son of God being slapped by the hands of His creatures! Mouths which He formed are now being used to mock Him!"

Related Resource:

- [What is the meaning and significance of the crown of thorns?](#)

Wiersbe - The scourge was a leather whip, knotted and weighted with pieces of metal or bone; and many a prisoner never survived the whipping. It pains us to think that the sinless Son of God was subjected to such cruelty. He was innocent, yet He was treated as though He were guilty; and He did it for us....Sin had brought thorns and thistles into the world (Ge 3:17-19+), so it was only fitting that the Creator wear a crown of thorns as He bore the sins of the world on the cross. The very metal He had created and placed in the ground was used to make nails to pound through His hands and feet. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

Matthew 27:26 records that "**Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.**" So the order of the events is

- (1) Release of Barabbas
- (2) Scourging of Jesus
- (3) Delivering Him to be crucified

In Luke 23:25, Dr Luke moves from the release of the guilty murderer to the deliverance of the innocent Messiah to the murderers. Luke does not mention the shameful, horrible treatment by the Romans soldiers which included scourging, spitting and mocking. They mocked Jesus as King for a snippet of time, but one day will stand before Him as Judge and receive their just eternal punishment. **Woe!**

Hughes - Scourging was terrible. Many died from it, and others went mad. Ancient authorities as diverse as Eusebius, Josephus, and Cicero relate that scourging normally meant a flaying to the bone. Eusebius tells of martyrs who "*were torn by scourges down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs were exposed to sight.*" No wonder Jesus did not linger on the cross! (Preaching the Word – John: That You May Believe)

MacArthur Ironically the same Jewish leaders who had demanded that Pilate condemn Jesus as an insurrectionist now demanded the release of the notorious insurrectionist Barabbas.

And he released ([apoluo](#)) the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder - Asking is [aiteo](#) in the imperfect tense picturing them asking over and over. Luke comments on this in Acts 3:14-15 quoting Peter's sermon "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the One Whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses (cf 1 Cor 15:5)."

Released ([apoluo](#)) is used here as a legal term meaning to set a prisoner free, so in essence Pilate was granting Barabbas a pardon for his crimes of murder and insurrection, both [capital offenses](#). In this sense Jesus served as Barabbas' Substitute, taking the punishment of the death penalty that was due the murderer. This is a most ironic situation. We don't know what happened to Barabbas but if he NEVER accepted Jesus as His Redeemer, Who paid the price in full for his sins (Jn 19:30), then tragically while he was pardoned in this life, he would not be pardoned in the next life, when in fact in eternity future he would have to stand before the very One Who stood in his place in time on earth! A tragic irony.

But he delivered Jesus to their will - Luke softens the blow to Jesus, so to speak (pun intended), for unlike the other Gospel writers he does not describe the scourging of our Lord by the Roman soldiers.

A T Robertson on **to their will** - "This is mob law by the judge who surrenders his own power and justice to the clamour of the crowd"

NET Note on **delivered Jesus to their will** - Here is where Luke places the major blame for Jesus' death. It lies with the Jewish nation, especially the leadership, though in Acts 4:24-27 he will bring in the opposition of Herod, Pilate, and all people.

Expositor's Bible Commentary - Although he does not refer to Pilate as washing his hands of responsibility for Jesus (cf. Matt 27:24), or to the Jews' acceptance of responsibility for Jesus' death (cf. Matt 27:25), or to Pilate's wishing to "satisfy" the people (cf. Mark 15:15), he effectively shifts attention from Pilate to the people by ending the Greek sentence, not with the verb (as in the English rendering), but with a final reference to the crowds, in the words *hai phonai auton* ("their voices"; NIV, "their shouts"). (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke)

Delivered (handed over) ([3860](#))([paradidomi](#)) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another.

NET Note on **delivered Jesus to their will** - Here is where Luke places the major blame for Jesus' death. It lies with the Jewish nation, especially the leadership, though in Acts 4:24-27 he will bring in the opposition of Herod, Pilate, and all people.

Leon Morris - Perhaps we should add that Luke is not being anti-Semitic, much less providing grounds for [anti-Semitism](#) in our own day. He is dealing with a specific group of people and maintaining that they brought about Jesus' death. It was not Pilate nor his Romans who called for Jesus' execution: it was the Jewish chief priests and their followers. But this means no more than that one group of men was guilty. Luke is not indicting a race and neither should his readers. (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke PAGE 324](#))

Yes, it was **their will** but Hebrews expands recording overseeing all this drama was **the perfect will of the Father** being **worked out perfectly by the perfect Son**..

THEN I (JESUS) SAID, '**BEHOLD**, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) **TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.**'" 8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law), 9 then He said, "BEHOLD, **I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.**" He takes away the first (COVENANT) in order to establish the second. 10 **By this will** we have been sanctified ([hagiazō](#) in perfect tense = speaks of our [eternal security](#)!) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (cf 1 Pe 2:24+) once for all. (Hebrews 10:7-10)

As as aside the Gospels leave no doubt that Luke's use of the word "punish" ([paideuo](#)) in Lk 23:16 and Lk 23:22 speaks of the severe punishment inflicted by **scourging**. To scourge means to beat severely with a whip ([Pix of keloidal scars in a slave who was scourged](#)).

John 19:1+ Pilate then took Jesus and **scourged** Him.

Comment: Scourged is the verb [mastigoo](#) (*mástix* = whip, scourge) means literally to flog or scourge. The **scourge** was first a whip used as an instrument of punishment and then figuratively came to mean to punish severely or to drive as if by blows of a whip. **It was the normal and legal preliminary to crucifixion.** In the case of Jesus (Luke 23:22) it was inflicted before the sentence of crucifixion was pronounced. Pilate hoped to avert the extreme punishment and satisfy the Jews at the same time. BDAG adds the idea of scourge is "the punishment known in Latin as *verberatio* Acts 22:25 (it was prohibited to impose the punishment of *verberatio* on a Roman citizen)

D A Carson - Flogging administered by the Romans could take one of three forms: the **fustigatio**, a less severe beating meted out for relatively light offences such as hooliganism, and often accompanied by a severe warning; the **flagellatio**, a brutal flogging administered to criminals whose offences were more serious; and the **verberatio**, the most terrible scourging of all, and one that was always associated with other punishments, including crucifixion. In this last form, the victim was stripped and tied to a post, and then beaten by several torturers (in the Roman

provinces they were soldiers) until they were exhausted, or their commanding officer called them off. For victims who, like Jesus, were neither Roman citizens nor soldiers, the favoured instrument was a whip whose leather thongs were fitted with pieces of bone or lead or other metal. The beatings were so savage that the victims sometimes died. Eyewitness records report that such brutal scourgings could leave victims with their bones and entrails exposed. (Pillar Commentary-John)

Dr William Edwards, pathologist at Mayo Clinic explains that "**Flogging** was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt. The usual instrument was a short whip ([flagellum](#) or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals (Fig 2 Legend for this Picture = **Scourging. Left, Short whip (flagrum) with lead balls and sheep bones tied into leather thongs. Center left, Naked victim tied to flogging post. Deep stripelike lacerations were usually associated with considerable blood loss. Center right, View from above, showing position of lictors. Right, Inferomedial direction of wounds.**). Occasionally, [staves](#) also were used. For [scourging](#), the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post (Fig 2). The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers ([lictors](#)) or by one who alternated positions. The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim. ([On the Physical Death of Jesus](#)) (Note that the references are not included in this quote but can be found in the bibliography of the original article). (

Mark 15:15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd (MAN PLEASER! THAT NEVER HAPPENS TO US DOES IT?!), Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus **scourged**, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Matthew 27:26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus **scourged**, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Comment: Matthew and Mark use a different verb for **scourged** (and used only in these two verses in the NT), the verb [phragello](#), which is a loanword from Lat. flagello.

If you want to have your heart broken with pain for our Lord Jesus Christ watch the [Passion of the Christ version of Jesus' flogging set to Worthy is the Lamb](#). (**WARNING - IT IS NOT EASY TO WATCH!**)

Related Resource:

- [On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ - Journal of the American Medical Association \(March 21, 1986\)](#) - I read this shortly after I was saved and as a physician who specializes in pathology, I found the article written by a fellow pathologist from the Mayo Clinic to be extremely enlightening. It includes several excellent diagrams to help visualize various aspects of our Lord's scourging and crucifixion.

ILLUSTRATION - BAD DECISIONS - Throughout history, people have made some bad decisions. An inventor named Alexander Graham Bell made an appointment with Western Union to sell them on the idea of something called a telephone. Western Union's president gave his answer: "What use could this company make of an electrical toy?" A Michigan banker advised Henry Ford's lawyer not to invest in the new motor car company, assuring him, "The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty." A more recent inventor named Chester Carlson came up with a new machine that was able to make copies of documents. He approached IBM, but they told him they weren't interested. Kodak told him the same. Finally, Carlson approached a small company called the Haloid Corporation, which took the idea and renamed itself Xerox. We look at these bad decisions from the standpoint of history and laugh, but those who made them did not have our vantage point. We all can look back on bad decisions that we have made and say, "If only I had known then what I know now, I would have decided much differently!" The more consequential the decision, the more important it is to make wise decisions. The most consequential decision that any person can make is one that affects his eternal destiny. To blow it on that decision is to fail utterly, even if a person makes financial or career decisions that succeed fabulously. Thus the Jews' and Pilate's decision to condemn Jesus Christ to die was the worst decision in the history of the world. It brought awful judgment on the Jewish nation, which later revolted against Rome and was wiped out. The Jews were scattered among the nations for almost 1900 years. Pilate and every Jew who condemned Jesus and did not repent suffered God's eternal judgment for their sinful decision regarding Christ. Their mistake is portrayed for us in the gospel accounts so that we will learn from it and avoid this worst of all possible decisions. (Steven Cole)

THE INCOMPARABLE SUFFERINGS - The Anguish of Jesus Christ - John Piper

The agonies of God's Son were incomparable. No one ever suffered like this man. Through all eternity, we will contemplate the killing of the Son of God and sing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 5:12).

Count Zinzendorf (1700–1760) and the Moravians developed a theology based on the wounds and blood of Jesus that some believe became lopsided in its focus on the "five wounds" of Christ. But we are not in danger today of any such excess preoccupation with the anguish of Jesus. So come and worship with me at the splendor of Christ's sufferings.

No one ever deserved suffering less, yet received so much. The stamp of God on this perfect life is found in two words:

“without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The only person in history who did not deserve to suffer, suffered most. He “committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). None of Jesus’ pain was a penalty for his sin. He had no sin.

Therefore, no one has ever had a greater right to retaliate, but used it less. He had at his disposal infinite power to take revenge at any moment in his agony. “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). But he did not do it. When every judicial sentiment in the universe cried out “Unjust!” Jesus was silent. “He gave [Pilate] no answer, not even to a single charge” (Matthew 27:14). Nor did he refute false ridicule: “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten” (1 Peter 2:23). Nor did he defend himself in response to Herod’s interrogation: “He made no answer” (Luke 23:9). No one has ever borne so much injustice with so little vengeance.

This was not because the torment was tolerable. If we had been forced to watch, we probably would have passed out. In the garden, “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). In the middle of the night, before the high priest, “they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him” (Matthew 26:67). Before the governor they “scourged” him (Matthew 27:26). Eusebius (about A.D. 300) described Roman scourging of Christians like this: “At one time they were torn by scourges down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed to sight.”

In his agony the soldiers toyed with him. They dressed him in mock robes of royalty. They began to “cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophesy!’ And the guards received him with blows” (Mark 14:65). A crown of thorns was pressed down on his head—made worse by being driven into his skull with blows. “They were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him” (Mark 15:19). In this condition he was unable to carry his own cross (Matthew 27:32).

The torture and shame continued. He was stripped. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross (Acts 2:23; Psalm 22:16). The mockery was unrelenting through the terrible morning. “Hail, King of the Jews!” “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” (Matthew 27:29, 40). Even one of the criminals “railed at him” (Luke 23:39).

It was a hideous death. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia tells us, “The wounds swelled about the rough nails, and the torn and lacerated tendons and nerves caused excruciating agony. The arteries of the head and stomach were surcharged with blood and a terrific throbbing headache ensued.... The victim of crucifixion literally died a thousand deaths.... The suffering was so frightful that ‘even among the raging passions of war pity was sometimes excited.’ ”

All of this came upon the “friend of sinners,” not with brothers at his side, but utterly abandoned. Judas had betrayed him with a kiss (Luke 22:48). Peter had denied him three times (Matthew 26:75). “All the disciples left him and fled” (Matthew 26:56). And in the darkest hour of the history of the world, God the Father struck his own Son with our punishment. “We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4). The only person in the world who truly knew God (Matthew 11:27) cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Never before or since has there been such suffering, because, in all its dreadful severity, it was a suffering by design. It was planned by God the Father and embraced by God the Son. “It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief” (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus was “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Herod, Pilate, the soldiers, and the Jews did to Jesus “whatever [God’s] hand and ... plan had predestined to take place” (Acts 4:28). Down to the details, the sufferings of the Son were written in the Scriptures. “Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst’ ” (John 19:28).

Not only was it suffering by design, but also by obedience. Jesus embraced the pain. He chose it—“obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). And his obedience was sustained by faith in his Father. “When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46).

In that faith “he set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). Why? “For it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33). He had set his face to die. “And what shall I say, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27). He lived in order to die.

Therefore, the suffering and weakness of Jesus were a work of his sovereign power. “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). He freely chose to join the Father’s design for his own suffering and death.

And what was that design? To be a substitute for us, so that we might live. “The Son of Man came ... to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). “The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

And the goal of it all? “Greater love has no man than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Yes, but to what end? What does love pursue? Two great purposes were accomplished in the suffering of Christ, which

are really one purpose. First, "Christ ... suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). The suffering of Jesus brought us to God who is fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore. Second, in the very hour of death the Father and the Son were glorified. "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John 13:31). Our joy in savoring God and his glory in saving us are one. That is the glory of Christ's incomparable sufferings.

A PRAYER Father, what can we say? We feel utterly unworthy in the face of Christ's unspeakable sufferings. We are sorry. It was our sin that brought this to pass. It was we who struck him and spit on him and mocked him. O Father, we are so sorry. We bow ourselves to the dirt and shut the mouths of our small, dark, petty, sinful souls. O Father, touch us with fresh faith that we might believe the incredible. The very pain of Christ that makes us despair is our salvation. Open our fearful hearts to receive the Gospel. Waken dead parts of our hearts that cannot feel what must be felt—that we are loved with the deepest, strongest, purest love in the universe. Oh, grant us to have the power to comprehend with all the saints the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, and may we be filled with all the fullness of God. Fight for us, O God, that we not drift numb and blind and foolish into vain and empty excitements. Life is too short, too precious, too painful to waste on worldly bubbles that burst. Heaven is too great, hell is too horrible, eternity is too long that we should putter around on the porch of eternity. O God, open our eyes to the vastness of the sufferings of Christ and what they mean for sin and holiness and hope and heaven. We fear our bent to trifling. Make us awake to the weight of glory—the glory of Christ's incomparable sufferings. In his great and wonderful Name. Amen. ([Chapter 8 in Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ](#))

Luke 23:26 When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

KJV Luke 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

- **placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus** Mt 27:32-44; Mark 15:21-32; John 19:16 Lk 9:23; 14:27
- **Simon of Cyrene** Acts 2:10; 6:6,9; 13:1
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- James Stalker's classic [Trial and Arrest of Jesus Christ - 10. VIA DOLOROSA](#) Mt 27:31–33; Mk 15:20, 21; Lk 23:26; Jn 19:16, 17
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel
- [Play the beautiful classic song Via Dolorosa sung by Sandy Patti](#) - try to keep a dry eye as you pause to ponder the poignant words!

Jesus Bears the Crossbeam or Patibulum

CARRYING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Hendriksen's parallel passages - Lk 23:33-43 Calvary: The Crucifixion of Jesus Cf. Matt. 27:27-44; Mark 15:21-32; John 19:17-27

Luke's version of Jesus' Crucifixion is divided by Bock as follows:

- Journey to Golgotha (Lk 23:26–32)
- The crucifixion (Lk 23:33–38)
- The discussion with the two thieves (Lk 23:39–43)
- Jesus' death (Lk 23:44–49)

When they led Him away ([apago](#)) - Who is **they**. Lk 23:13 tells us it is "the chief priests and the rulers and the people." The **rulers** were the members of the ruling Sanhedrin, made up predominantly of scribes and Pharisees, along with some Sadducees. Others favor the **they** to be the soldiers because of course it was the Roman soldiers who ultimately led Jesus away to the cross.

Note that they did not drive Him like cattle are driven, but they **led Him away** like one does when leading sheep to slaughter. And He willingly went, in perfect agreement with the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:7+ which declared "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth (cf Mt 26:63, Mt 27:14, Mk 14:61; Mk 15:5; Lk 23:9; Jn 19:9); **Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers**, So He did not open His mouth."

William Lane notes that "The route followed normally led through busy streets in order to intimidate the people."

MacArthur on **Simon** - At some point **Simon** embraced the gospel of the Lord whose cross he had carried. His wife and sons also became believers and were known to the church at Rome. One of them, **Rufus**, was singled out by Paul as a choice servant of the Lord, and Simon's wife ministered to the apostle (Ro 16:13). The church at **Cyrene**, in which Simon undoubtedly played a significant role, developed and grew

strong, eventually sending out missionaries to preach the gospel to the Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11:20). One of its members, Lucius, even served as one of the pastors at the Antioch church when Paul and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries (Acts 13:1). (See [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

In MacArthur's Matthew Commentary he surmises that "It may have been the carrying of Jesus' cross that led Simon to faith in Him. What began as a forced and probably resented act of physical servitude became the opportunity for spiritual life. Not only Simon himself but his entire family came to salvation, and his wife became like a mother to the apostle Paul." (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

THOUGHT - The lesson from Simon's life is to be ready to be used of the Lord when He calls, for when one is in the center of His will, the impact can be unimaginable. Only eternity will reveal what Simon's availability to carry the Cross of Jesus will mean, but clearly from MacArthur's comment above, it had far reaching impact. Don't refuse to carry His cross! (cf Mk 8:34-36+, "daily" in Lk 9:23+).

In the excellent medical article on the crucifixion **Dr William Edwards** gives us some background which helps understand why Simon of Cyrene was called to carry the cross - The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state. Moreover, hematomas had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical. ([Please take time to read the full article](#)).

They seized ([epilambano](#)) a man, [Simon of Cyrene](#), coming in from the country - Simon had little choice in the matter. And while **Simon** was chosen at random, it was clearly not by chance but the outworking of God's **providence**. He was (so to speak) at the wrong place at the wrong time (or as his life would unfold as described above it would be more accurate to say he was at the right place at the right time!)

It is notable that this Simon's name is given, for the soldiers, the criminals crucified and the centurion who apparently believed (Lk 23:47; Mt. 27:54; Mk 15:39) were all anonymous. Not only do we know his name but his place of origin, Cyrene, which was a city in North Africa (Libya today) west of Alexandria which was a prosperous trade center with large population of Jews. Luke describes Jews who were from Cyrene on the feast of Pentecost who heard the men filled with the Spirit speaking in tongues. Some of the men who opposed against Stephen were from a synagogue in Cyrene (Acts 6:9).

Parallel passages:

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.

Mark 15:21+ They **pressed into service** a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross

Comment - **Pressed into service** is the verb *aggareuo* meaning Simon was compelled to carry the cross.

And placed on him the cross ([stauros](#)) to carry behind Jesus - Normally the victim to be crucified had to carry his own cross, so this suggests that Jesus had been weakened by the vicious Roman scourging.

Spurgeon - Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him. There is a cross for every one who is a follower of the Crucified; may we have grace to carry it after him! I wonder if he was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church; and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyhow, and a foreigner; truly honored was he to be compelled to bear the cross after Christ. And methinks that he must have been a glad man to have such an honor thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you also to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you, by way of ridicule, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden, and as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign's hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the cross after him.....Perhaps they were afraid that Christ would die from exhaustion; so they compelled Simon to bear his cross. Any one of Christ's followers might have wished to have been this man of Cyrene; but we need not envy him, for there is a cross for each of us to carry. Oh! that we were as willing to bear Christ's cross as Christ was to bear our sins on his cross! If anything happens to us by way of persecution or ridicule for our Lord's sake, and the gospel's, let us cheerfully endure it. As knights are made by a stroke from the sovereign's sword, so shall we become princes in Christ's realm as he lays his cross on our shoulders.

Spurgeon - Wherein he was highly privileged. Such honour have all true saints.

Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.

Led away ([520](#)) ([apago](#) from **apó** = from + **ágō** = to carry, lead) means to carry or lead away, leading from one place to another. **Apago** was used as a legal term meaning to lead one from one point to another in legal proceedings (to trial, punishment, prison or execution), just as Jesus was "led...away to Caiaphas, the high priest." (Mt 26:57), "to Pilate" (Mt 27:2) and finally to be crucified (Mt 27:31, cf prison guards who were led away [to execution] Acts 12:19).

Apago was used in Mk 15:16 to describe Jesus being led to the scourging and mocking by the Roman soldiers, before He was led away to be crucified. The frequent use of **ago** in several of the events of the unjust trial of Jesus leading to His murder is a bit ironic for all those who led Him to one place or another will themselves be led to eternal death ("the way is broad that **leads** to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." Mt 7:13+) unless they believe in Him for eternal life ("the way is narrow that **leads** to life, and there are few who find it." Mt 7:14)

Apago - 16X/16V - bringing(1), lead(1), lead...away(2), leads(2), led astray(1), led away(1), led...away(6), took(1), took...away(1). Matt. 7:13; Matt. 7:14; Matt. 26:57; Matt. 27:2; Matt. 27:31; Mk. 14:44; Mk. 14:53; Mk. 15:16; Lk. 13:15; Lk. 21:12; Lk. 22:66; Lk. 23:26; Acts 12:19; Acts 23:17; Acts 24:7; 1 Co. 12:2

Seized (1949)(epilambano) means literally they took a firm hold of him, probably grasping him by the hand. This was not a gentle tap but a violent grasp. 1. take hold of, grasp, catch w. gen. or acc. Mt 14:31; Mk 8:23; Lk 9:47; 14:4; Ac 17:19; 18:17.—2. figuratively - catch Lk 20:20, 26; take hold of 1 Ti 6:12; be concerned with, take an interest in, help Heb 2:16.

EPILAMBANO - 19X/18V - catch(2), give help(1), gives help(1), seized(2), take hold(2), taking(1), taking hold(1), took(4), took hold(5). Matt. 14:31; Mk. 8:23; Lk. 9:47; Lk. 14:4; Lk. 20:20; Lk. 20:26; Lk. 23:26; Acts 9:27; Acts 16:19; Acts 17:19; Acts 18:17; Acts 21:30; Acts 21:33; Acts 23:19; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:19; Heb. 2:16; Heb. 8:9

Cross (4716) stauros from **histemi** = to stand) was an an upright stake, especially a pointed one. Thayer adds the **stauros** was a well-known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; to it were affixed among the Romans, down to the time of Constantine the Great, the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors and abettors of insurrections, and occasionally in the provinces, at the arbitrary pleasure of the governors, upright and peaceable men also, and even Roman citizens themselves. **Stauros** is used somewhat in with a figurative (but still very real) supernatural significance as the source of the the doctrine concerning the saving power of the death on the cross endured by Christ (1 Co 1:18 = where "being saved" = **present tense**). Note another Greek word **xulon** is also translated "**cross**". **The cross** literally. Mt 27:32, 40, 42; Mk 15:21, 30, 32; Lk 23:26; J 19:17, 19, 25, 31; Phil 2:8; Heb 12:2. FIGURATIVELY of suffering and death Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; 10:21; Lk 9:23; 14:27. The cross of Christ in Christian teaching 1 Cor 1:17f; Gal 5:11; 6:12, 14; Eph 2:16; Phil 2:8; 3:18; Col 1:20; 2:14.

STAUROS - 27X/27V - Matt. 10:38; Matt. 16:24; Matt. 27:32; Matt. 27:40; Matt. 27:42; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 15:21; Mk. 15:30; Mk. 15:32; Lk. 9:23; Lk. 14:27; Lk. 23:26; Jn. 19:17; Jn. 19:19; Jn. 19:25; Jn. 19:31; 1 Co. 1:17; 1 Co. 1:18; Gal. 5:11; Gal. 6:12; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Phil. 3:18; Col. 1:20; Col. 2:14; Heb. 12:2. It is surprising that **STAUROS** is not found in the Septuagint!

Friberg on **stauros** - (1) literally cross, an instrument of capital punishment, an upright pointed stake, often with a crossbeam above it, or intersected by a crossbeam ([Mt 27.32](#)); (2) by metonymy, as the means of atonement punishment of the cross, crucifixion ([Php 2.8](#)); as a religious technical term representing the significance of the atoning death of Jesus in the Christian religion cross ([1Co 1.18](#)); metaphorically, the dedication of life and the self-denial that a believer must be prepared to take on himself in following Christ ([Lk 14.27](#)) (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

Vine on **stauros** -Noun Masculine — denotes, primarily, "an upright pale or stake." On such malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb stauroo, "to fasten to a stake or pale," are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed "cross." The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the 3rd cent. A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the "cross" of Christ. As for the Chi, or X, which Constantine declared he had seen in a vision leading him to champion the Christian faith, that letter was the initial of the word "Christ" and had nothing to do with "the Cross" (for [xulon](#), "a timber beam, a tree," as used for the stauros, see under TREE). The method of execution was borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians.

The stauros denotes (a) "the cross, or stake itself," e.g., Matthew 27:32; (b) "the crucifixion suffered," e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:17,18, where "the word of the cross," RV, stands for the Gospel; Galatians 5:11, where crucifixion is metaphorically used of the renunciation of the world, that characterizes the true Christian life; Galatians 6:12,14; Ephesians 2:16; Philippians 3:18. The judicial custom by which the condemned person carried his stake to the place of execution, was applied by the Lord to those sufferings by which His faithful followers were to express their fellowship with Him, e.g., Matthew 10:38. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

Dictionary of Biblical Imagery PAGE 654 - CROSS -

In the ancient world the word cross was often synonymous with crucifixion. It sometimes only consisted of an upright stake, but usually a cross beam was attached either on the top or in the middle of the stake. Crucifixion as a form of execution probably originated with the Persians. It was later appropriated by Alexander the Great, adopted by the Romans and finally abolished by Constantine. It should be noted that the reference to the condemned person hanging on a tree in Deuteronomy 21:22–23 is not a reference to execution but is a public display of God's curse subsequent to stoning.

In the first century A.D. crucifixion was one of the strongest forms of deterrence against insurrection or political agitation in Roman provinces. Crucifixion was preceded by scourging. When the victim was affixed to the cross, he was stripped and mocked. The pain was extreme. After the victim died, the body was often left on the cross to decay and become food for scavengers.

The imagery of cross in the Synoptic Gospels expresses radical discipleship that leads to suffering and sometimes to martyrdom. Jesus demands that his followers be willing to deny themselves and “take up the cross” (Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34). Luke’s version (9:23) emphasizes a daily commitment to this task. The expression “take up the cross” recalls the common practice of the condemned person carrying the cross beam to the place of execution. Such a demand entails that all who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer and be crucified. Jesus’ road to suffering and eventual death by means of the cross became an example of obedience and commitment to God for all who would become disciples. In this respect the call to discipleship is a call to both self-denial and suffering. In John the notion of being “lifted up,” which is understood as being part of the glorification process, is associated with Jesus’ crucifixion (Jn 3:14; 12:32–34). Here the cross signifies victory.

The image of cross in Paul is theological in import. Paul’s interest is in the saving significance of the cross as atonement and not in the historical reconstruction of the event. Paul interpreted Jesus’ agonizing and humiliating experience on the cross as an expression of obedience (Phil 2:8), which accomplished the required redemption. Paul’s preaching of the cross, namely the crucifixion of the Messiah, does not correspond to established ideas of salvation in the Greco-Roman and Jewish religions (1 Cor 1:17–18). Rather it is seen as divine wisdom. Not only does cross become associated with the death of Jesus, but more importantly it becomes inseparably bound to all components of Christian salvation. For Paul the cross is the revelation of God’s power and wisdom. It dramatically signifies an all-encompassing reconciliation: it bridges the gap between humanity and God (Col 2:14); it breaks the barrier between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:16); and it restores the entire cosmos (Col 1:20). Similar emphases on the effects of the cross are also described in Hebrews 12:2 and 1 Peter 2:24.

See also [ATONEMENT](#); [SUFFERING SERVANT](#) CRIME AND PUNISHMENT; CURSE; SUFFERING; ; WISDOM.

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Life Application Bible Commentary – CARRYING THE CROSS - In some ways, Simon is unique in all of human history. He was forced to do something that everyone else does (or does not do) by choice: carry the cross for Jesus. Simon had no real choice—he either carried the cross or faced the displeasure of the Roman soldiers. People today, on the other hand, are given the incredible compliment by God of having a choice, to follow Jesus on his way to Calvary or not. As Simon surely discovered, it was difficult and painful work; it still is. G. K. Chesterton said: "It is not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." The work of being Jesus' fellow crossbearer is the most difficult—and most important—work anyone can ever do. What's your choice? (See [Luke](#))

QUESTION - [Who was Simon of Cyrene?](#)

ANSWER - Simon of Cyrene is mentioned in three of the four Gospels as the man impelled by the Roman soldiers to carry Jesus' cross out of Jerusalem. His place of origin has led many to wonder if he was of African descent (and therefore black), or if he was simply born there as were many others of Greek, Roman, and Jewish descent.

Cyrene was situated in modern-day Libya, on the northern coast of the African continent. Settled by the Greeks in 630 B.C. and later infused with a significant Jewish population, Cyrene was the capital of the Roman district of Cyrenaica at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. By then, Cyrene was home to a large number of Greek-speaking, or Hellenistic, Jews.

Many Jews from Cyrene had returned to their native Israel and were part of a community in Jerusalem called the [Synagogue of the Freedmen](#) comprising Jews from many other provinces including Alexandria (Egypt), Cilicia and Asia (Acts 6:9). Luke records men from Cyrene being among those converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). After the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7), believers from Cyrene were among the first to be scattered by the persecution in Jerusalem; arriving in Antioch, they preached to the Gentiles there (Acts 11:20). These believers were instrumental in the formation of the church at Antioch, where, for the first time, “the disciples were called Christians” (Acts 11:26).

Simon of Cyrene is mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Matthew only records his name and place of origin (27:32), but Mark and Luke say that he was “on his way in from the country” (Luke 23:26). Mark, uncharacteristically, provides the most information about Simon, adding that he was “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (Mark 15:21), men obviously well known to Mark’s readers. It is speculated that the [Rufus](#) mentioned here may be the same man Paul greets in his letter to Rome, whom he calls “chosen in the Lord” and whose mother “has been a mother to me, too” (Romans 16:13). Paul’s knowledge of Rufus’s family indicates that at some point they lived further east.

So does any of this indicate whether Simon was black? Ultimately, we don’t know for sure. There is always the possibility that Simon was an African who converted to Judaism, or that he was of mixed descent. However, considering that people of Jewish lineage lived throughout the Roman Empire, it is also possible that Simon of Cyrene was olive-skinned.

Related Resource:

- [Who helped Jesus carry the cross?](#)
- [What are the Stations of the Cross and what can we learn from them?](#)

QUESTION - [What is the Via Dolorosa?](#) (SEE ALSO [ZONDERVAN DICTIONARY ARTICLE](#))

ANSWER - The Via Dolorosa, literally "the sorrowful way," is the traditional route in Jerusalem which our Lord traveled on the day of His crucifixion from the judgment seat of Pilate, also called the Praetorium (Matthew 27:2-26), to the place of His crucifixion on Mount Calvary. After his judgment by Pontius Pilate, the Lord Jesus was beaten, mocked and spit upon by the Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:26-31). Then he was forced to carry His own cross through the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha, where He was crucified (Matthew 27:32-50). The Via Dolorosa is now marked with fourteen "stations of the cross" commemorating fourteen incidents that took place along the way. At least five of these incidents are not recorded in the Bible, springing instead from Roman Catholic tradition. Of the ones that are mentioned in Scripture, the actual place of the events along the way, such as the scourging (John 19:1-3) and the carrying of the cross by Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27:32), are not known.

The Bible does not specifically mention the Via Dolorosa. All we know from Scripture is that Jesus carried His cross from the Praetorium to the site on Mount Calvary where He was crucified. The locations of these two sites are not known for certain, but wherever they were, the route between them was truly a sorrowful way. The scourging and physical pain the Lord Jesus suffered was minor in comparison to the pain caused by the real burden He was bearing—the burden of the sins of all believers. He bore our sins to the cross where He paid the penalty for them all.

As Easter approaches and Christians contemplate this holiest of seasons, we are reminded what a precious gift our salvation is and the price paid for it by the Lord Jesus. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). As we think about the pain and humiliation He suffered for us, paying a price that we could never pay ourselves, we can't help but praise and thank Him and commit ourselves to a life of obedience to Him.

Luke 23:27 And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

KJV Luke 23:27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

- and of Lk 23:55; 8:2; Mt 27:55; Mark 15:40
- THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM - James Stalker - Luke 23:27–31
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

The scene with the mourning women described in this next section (Lk 23:27–31) is unique to Luke

And following Him was a large crowd of the people- We can only guess at the number in this large crowd of people who had lined the road as Jesus had made His triumphal entry only a few days earlier. And imagine their thoughts as they witnessed the road of triumph give be replaced by a road to crucifixion, an event many of them interpreted as Christ's defeat!

MacArthur adds an interesting comment regarding the crowd stating that "They were also disappointed. After Christ's death, "all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts" (Luke 23:48) in a universal sign of grief. They wanted Him to be their Messiah; probably until the very last, some of them were wishing that Christ would be the one who would fulfill their desires. Perhaps, at the last moment, He would come down from the cross, as His enemies mockingly challenged Him to do (Mark 15:32), and lead an assault against the Romans." (See [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

There is a bitter irony in Luke's use of the verb **following** ([akoloutheo](#)) **Him**, for earlier Jesus Himself had used the same verb in His call to discipleship, not to describe those that were simply physically **following** Him, but to identify those who His genuine disciples and were spiritually **following** Him, declaring "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow** ([akoloutheo](#) in present imperative calling for this to be one's lifestyle, a lifestyle only possible of course as one yields daily to and is empowered by His Spirit) **Me.**" (Lk 9:23).

And of women who were mourning and lamenting Him - Some consider that these women were likely professional mourners (cf Mk 5:38-40).

Spurgeon - No woman is mentioned as having spoken against Jesus in his life, or as having had a share in his death. Of woman born, by a woman was he anointed for his burial; a woman—Pilate's wife—pleaded for him, and here women wept over him. Women ministered to him in life, laid him in the grave, and were the first to meet him at his rising. (Interpreter's Bible)

Hughes - These women are not to be confused with his devoted followers who had traveled from Galilee and would stay with him to the bitter end (cf. Luke 24:49). Rather, these were devout women of Jerusalem who had come to bewail the death of a young man, local women who regularly turned out to witness executions and provide opiates and drugs to ease the pain (M. Sanhedrin 43a). Some were acting out the part of professional mourners as they literally "were beating themselves and bewailing him."⁹ These daughters of Jerusalem were well-intentioned, sympathetic, kind souls. (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

Guzik writes "It was customary for a great multitude to follow a condemned criminal on his way to crucifixion. It was intended to be a public event. ([Luke 23](#))

MacArthur comments that the women mourning "Jesus were not His mother, Mary Magdalene, or any of the other women who accompanied Him and the disciples (Luke 8:2-3); they were professional mourners. It was traditional for women to mourn at the death of someone (cf. Luke 8:51-52), particularly someone prominent like Jesus, who many had hoped would be the Messiah. But though they were official mourners who were doing their duty, surely it was not without a measure of sincerity and sympathy. Nowhere in the Gospels is there a record of a woman who was hostile to Jesus, rebuked Him, or spoke evil of Him. These women were likely no exception." (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Mourning (imperfect tense - over and over)([2875](#))(**kopto**) means literally (in the active voice) to cut off (as when Messiah entered Jerusalem to begin His final week on earth = Mt 21:8 = "cutting branches from the trees," Mk 11:8 = "leafy branches which they had cut from the fields"; this same sense in Lxx = Nu 13:24; Jdg 9:48). The more common usage is figurative and in the middle voice (as in Lk 23:27) **kopto** means to beat one's body with the hands (especially one's breast) as an act of mourning or lamentation (Mt 24:30, Mt 11:17, Lk 23:27; Lxx - 1Ki 13:28, 2Ki 1:12, 11:26, Zech 7:5, Ge 23:2, 1Ki 25:1).

The same verb **kopto** is used in the Septuagint translation of Zechariah 12:10 in which Jehovah says "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they **will mourn** (Lxx = **kopto**) for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." Jesus is NOT referring to this time of **mourning** by the Jews, which will occur in the believing Jewish remnant, who are alive at the return of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation. See more detailed discussion of Zechariah 12:10.

Lamenting (imperfect tense - over and over)([2354](#))(**threneo** from **threomai** = to shriek out) means to express one's grief by mourning, lamenting, singing funeral songs (sing a dirge) (Mt 11:17).

Threneo is used only 4 times in the NT - lament(1), lamenting(1), sang a dirge(2). - Matt. 11:17; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 23:27; Jn. 16:20.

Jn. 16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you (DISCIPLES), that you will weep and lament (WHEN HE IS CRUCIFIED), but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.

MacArthur - The very event that made the hateful realm of mankind ("world") rejoice and cause grief to Jesus' disciples, will be the same event that will lead to the world's sorrow and the believer's joy. The disciples would soon realize the marvelous nature of God's gift of salvation and the Spirit through what He accomplished, and the blessing of answered prayer (Jn 16:24). Acts records the coming of the Holy Spirit and the power and joy (Ac 2:4-47; 13:52) of the early church. (See [The MacArthur Bible Commentary](#))

Gilbrant on threneo - This verb was used throughout classical Greek from the time of Homer (ca. Eighth Century B.C.) meaning, "mourn, lament." Usually it is used transitively, "mourn for someone" (cf. Bauer). According to Vincent thrēneō was a formal, audible expression of grief, meaning "to utter a dirge over the dead" (Word Studies in the New Testament, 2:258). Such expressions of grief were commonly known in the days of the Old Testament. The Septuagint uses thrēneō to translate eight different Hebrew terms all of which generally mean "lament, mourn" for a loved one (cf. Judges 11:40; 2 Samuel 1:17; 2 Chronicles 35:25). In a few instances thrēneō was also used intransitively to describe a general condition of mournful "weeping" (cf. Joel 1:5,11; Zephaniah 1:11; Zechariah 11:3). In the New Testament the verb occurs four times. In Matthew 11:17 (and its parallel in Luke 7:32) it is used intransitively, "We sang a dirge, but you did not mourn" (free translation). In other words, the people who did not believe were not responding in the sensible way to the message of the Kingdom. Examples of its transitive use can be found in John 16:20 where Jesus told the disciples they would "mourn" because His death was imminent. A similar usage is found in Luke 23:27 where the women "lamented" for Jesus who was on His way to the cross. For this occurrence it is useful to compare kopetos (2842), "lamentation for the dead" (in a ceremonial sense), with thrēneō, because what the women did by accompanying Jesus from Gabbatha to Golgotha was a form of burial procession. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Threneo - 28x in 26v - Jdg. 11:40; 2 Sam. 1:17; 2 Sam. 3:33; 2 Chr. 35:25; Jer. 9:17; Jer. 22:10; Jer. 51:8; Lam. 1:1; Ezek. 7:12; Ezek. 8:14; Ezek. 32:16; Ezek. 32:18; Joel 1:5; Joel 1:8; Joel 1:11; Joel 1:13; Mic. 1:8; Mic. 2:4; Zeph. 1:11; Zech. 11:3

Luke 23:28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

KJV Luke 23:28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves,

and for your children.

- **daughters** Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5,10; 5:8,16; 8:4
- THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM - James Stalker - Luke 23:27–31
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

JESUS' FINAL PUBLIC MESSAGE PRIOR TO CRUCIFIXION

But Jesus turning to them said - It is interesting that Jesus spoke 3 sentences in this section, and this would have temporarily halted the procession to the place of the Skull, and yet there is not a suggestion that the soldiers told Him to stop speaking and start moving! Jesus was in control to the very last step! Jesus sets us all such an incredible example - here even in his last words, He is not complaining about the gross injustice and unfair torture He has received, but is thinking of others. This is the supreme example of selfless love we are charged to imitate (1 Cor 11:1+, 1 Jn 2:6+), but dare not try to do this in your own natural power for such love is only possible as it is "infused" through us by the Holy Spirit in us (Gal 5:22+).

Daughters of Jerusalem - This is similar to the phrase in the OT "**Daughter of Jerusalem**" (singular) used as a metaphor for Israel as a whole. (Mic. 4:8+; Zeph. 3:14+; Zech. 9:9).

Stop weeping for Me - The [present imperative with a negative](#) is a command to stop weeping for Him.

Weeping (2799) (**klaio**) means to mourn, to weep, to lament or to wail with emphasis upon noise accompanying weeping and thus represents an expression of one's immediate and outward reaction that took place when someone died.

It is fascinating that **klaio** is the very verb Luke used to describe Jesus' weeping as He entered into the city (Lk 19:41+ "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,") and now Luke uses it of others weeping as Jesus walks the [Via Dolorosa](#), the road to Calvary, leaving the city He loved to be crucified outside the city walls (Heb 13:11-12+).

But weep for yourselves and for your children - Why? Jesus is alluding to the horrible time of suffering that will come in 70 AD when Rome destroys Jerusalem and in the siege some severely starved women are forced to eat their own children! Hundreds of thousands of Jews would die.

Weep, O my daughters, but grieve not for Me;
Weep for yourselves and your children;
Shed bitter tears of mourning and pray.
O pray "Miserere, nostri Domine."
(Have mercy on us, O Lord)
—EDWIN COX

Warren Wiersbe writes that "Too often in our preaching and teaching, we so emphasize the physical aspects of our Lord's sufferings that we forget the spiritual agony that He endured on the cross in being separated from His Father. As Jesus looked to the future, He saw glory for Himself (Heb. 12:2) but judgment for the Jewish nation. Too much "religious devotion" is only sentimental emotion that is shallow and transient. Jesus wants us to share "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10) and not try to duplicate the feelings of His sufferings." (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#) - VERY HELPFUL FOR SERMON PREPARATION).

Luke 23:29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.

KJV Luke 23:29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

- **the days** Lk 21:23,24; Mt 24:19; Mark 13:17-19
- **Blessed** Deut 28:53-57; Hosea 9:12-16; 13:16
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JERUSALEM

For - Term of explanation. Jesus is going to explain why they should not weep for Him, but for themselves.

Behold (2400)(idou) is used here to prompt or arouse these women's attention as Jesus prophetically introduces something unusual.

The days are coming when they will say - Days are coming identifies this as a prophecy. **They** is the Jews living in Jerusalem in this coming time of destruction and doom. Compare the similar phrases in predictions of Jerusalem's fall "the days will come" (Lk 19:43, Lk 21:6), "these are days of vengeance" (Lk 21:22-24).

Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed- Jesus' point is that in these **coming days**, it will be better to have never had any offspring, so horrible will be this time! What bitter irony! Normally barrenness was considered to be like a divine curse (Luke 1:25; Ge 30:23; Isa 4:1) and childbirth a joy and blessing (Lk 1:57-58; 11:27; Ge 21:6-7; Isa 54:1) but in this time of destruction it would be a "blessing" (relatively speaking), for women would lose their offspring and even some would be forced to cannibalize their offspring to stay alive! (Cannibalism had been prophetically promised as one of the curses on Israel for breaking covenant - see Lev 26:29, Dt 28:53, Jer 19:9, cf 2 Ki 6:28-29, Lam 4:10. Josephus tells a dreadful story of the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. see this account in [Josephus War 6. Chapter 3. Paragraph 4](#))

Notice the irony once again as Jesus is predicting judgment coming on the Jews and their holy Temple - Jesus is not so much as the judged as He is the Judge (Acts 10:42) in full control of the situation, even His last steps prior to His crucifixion!

Jesus had earlier predicted the fall of Jerusalem

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, **'if you had known in this day**, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side (TITUS LAID SIEGE TO JERUSALEM IN 70 AD BEFORE DESTROYING THE TEMPLE AND THE CITY), 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Lk 19:41-44+).

Comment: Notice Jesus' words "If you had known in this day" clearly implies they could have known the day, certainly the general time, when Messiah would come into Jerusalem. How could they have known? Had they studied and believed Daniel 9:24-27 (notes), they could have know "this day!"

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies (THIS DESCRIBES 70 AD NOT THE GREAT TRIBULATION), then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Lk 21:20-24+)

Luke 23:30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.'"

KJV Luke 23:30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

- Isaiah 2:19; Hosea 10:8; Rev 6:16-17; 9:6
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Related Passage:

Revelation 6:16-17+ and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

THE PLEA FROM THOSE WHO LIVE IN JERUSALEM

Then they - The **they** in context is probably the Jews who live in Jerusalem when the future day of suffering comes.

Will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US - Jesus is predicting a dreadful judgement which would cause those alive in Jerusalem to do any thing to escape, this passage saying in essence that even death would be better than suffering the pangs and anguish of this time. Some commentators think this refers to protection rather than a quick death but that is hard to fathom if one is calling for a mountain to **fall** ([pipto](#) in aorist imperative = Do this now!) on them!

NET Note - The figure of crying out to the mountains 'Fall on us!' (appealing to creation itself to hide them from God's wrath), means that a

time will come when people will feel they are better off dead (Hos 10:8).

Hughes agrees theirs was a plea for merciful death - The coming judgment would be so unbearable that Israel would cry out with language used by ancient unfaithful Israel (Hosea 10:8), pleading for an earthquake to cause the mountains to fall on them and thus put them out of their misery. (Ibid)

Jesus is quoting Hosea 10:8 which warned the Northern (12 Tribes) Kingdom of Israel of the coming invasion by Assyria. The captivity would be so severe that the people would pray for the mountains and hills (SOUNDS A BIT LIKE IDOLATRY DOESN'T IT?) to fall on them, similar to the days that would soon be coming on Jerusalem in 70 A D, which was but a foretaste of the horrible Great Tribulation of the last of the Last Days, when the Jews would experience the Time of Jacob's distress described in Jeremiah 30:7. The earth-dwellers (unbelieving Jews and Gentiles) at that time will be so horrified at God's hand of judgment that they will cry out "to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev 6:16±).

Isaiah has a similar prophecy that speaks of the future dread [Day of the Lord](#) writing "Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble." (Isaiah 2:19±).

MacArthur comments that "Jesus did not offer a final invitation to the people who were accompanying Him on the way to the cross, but rather pronounced a final doom on them. Their perspective was totally skewed. They needed to shed tears not for Him, but for themselves in light of their impending judgment." (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Luke 23:31 "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

KJV Luke 23:31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

- Proverbs 11:31; Jeremiah 25:29; Ezekiel 15:2-7; 20:47,48; 21:3,4; Daniel 9:26; Mt 3:12; John 15:6; Hebrews 6:8; 1 Peter 4:17,18; Jude 1:12
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE PROVERB CONCERNING JERUSALEM

For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?- This proverbial like saying is difficult to interpret with absolute certainty.

Spurgeon - Our Lord foresaw the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem, and bade the women prepare for overwhelming sorrows. If the innocent thus suffered, what would become of the guilty?

A T Robertson - Green wood is hard to burn and so is used for the innocent. In the dry (ν τ ξηρ [en tōi xērōi]). Dry wood kindles easily and is a symbol for the guilty. This common proverb has various applications. Here the point is that if they can put Jesus to death, being who he is, what will happen to Jerusalem when its day of judgment comes?

Robert Stein feels the most likely interpretation is "If God has not spared his innocent Son from such tribulation [by permitting his crucifixion], how much worse will it be for a sinful nation when God unleashes his righteous wrath upon it [by permitting the Romans to destroy Jerusalem]."

Arnold Fruchtenbaum suggest that "This was a Jewish idiom meaning, "if I suffer this much and I am innocent, how much more will the guilty suffer?" Ezekiel 20:46-47 is the background from which this idiom comes."

Darrell Bock gives an excellent analysis of this difficult passage - Jesus makes a comparison: he is the green or damp wood, the nation in future judgment is the dry wood (ξύλον, xylon; Plummer 1896: 530; BAGD 549 §3; BAA 1113 §3). Jesus presents a lesser-to-greater argument: if this is what happens to a living tree, what might happen (a deliberative subjunctive; BDF §366.1) to a dead one? Though the basic image is clear, the referents are disputed (Fitzmyer 1985: 1498; Plummer 1896: 529):

1. If the Romans treat an innocent person like Jesus this way, how much more will they mistreat a nation in revolution? This view introduces the Romans into a context where they are absent.
2. If the Jews treat Jesus this way for coming to deliver them, how will they be treated for destroying him? The only thing against this view is that the subject shifts in the second half of the passage.
3. If humankind behaves this way before wickedness is full, how much more will it do so when wickedness overflows? It is not clear, however, how the reference to green and dry trees can produce this sense. This view sees the green tree as a negative reference, which is unlikely.
4. If God has not spared Jesus, how much more will the impenitent nation not be spared when divine judgment comes? In this view "they" is an oblique third-person plural reference to God (12:20 has a similar reference). It is

easier to burn dry wood than lush, moisture-filled green wood.

5. The proverb is a general remark about coming judgment that lacks more specific referents (Nolland 1993b: 1138).

The widely held fourth view is most likely correct (Creed 1930: 286; Danker 1988: 372; Manson 1949: 343; Marshall 1978: 865; J. Schneider, TDNT 5:38 n. 7 [who notes that the remark looks historical]). Schweizer (1984: 358) says the point is, "The fate of Jesus, like that of the prophets, is sure to befall his enemies." If view 4 is not correct, then view 2 is the next best option. Deciding between the two is not easy. A general reference to judgment (view 5) seems too vague. The concept of wood consumed in judgment is also found in Isa. 10:16–19 and Ezek. 20:47 (but Luke does not have the concept of burning found in these two references).¹⁰ This is Jesus' last lament for the nation. ([Luke 9:51-24:53 Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

MacArthur proposes that "He is the green tree, full of life and fruitfulness. If this is what the Romans did to Him, what will they do to the dry, dead, barren nation of Israel in a.d. 70?" ([Luke Commentary](#))

So here we see Jesus going to His death, pausing to issue a final warning cry to all who have ears to hear. His poignant warning echoes down through the centuries to all who see Him traverse the [Via Dolorosa](#), and yet still fail to truly place their faith and trust in Him as their Protector in the day of God's wrath.

THOUGHT - Dear reader, if you know ABOUT Jesus, but do not truly KNOW Him (cf Mt 7:23+), then the application is simple - Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2+). **Today** believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31+) and you will be rescued by Him from the wrath to come (1 Th 1:10+).

Luke 23:32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

KJV Luke 23:32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

- Lk 22:37; Isaiah 53:12; Mt 27:38; Mark 15:27,28; John 19:18; Hebrews 12:2
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Parallel Passages

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

Mark 15:27 They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

John 19:18 There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

THE TRULY GUILTY

Two others also, who were criminals - Matthew and Mark tells us they were **robbers** ([lestes](#)), which speaks of violent robbers, the same word used to describe Barabbas in Jn 18:40.

MacArthur on two...criminals - These two men illustrate the two options that face every person. Those who, like the one who repented (Lk 23:40–43), "confess with [their] mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in [their] heart that God raised Him from the dead ... will be saved" (Ro 10:9). On the other hand, those who, like the unrepentant man, reject Jesus will face eternal judgment (John 3:18). (See [Luke 1-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Related Resource:

- [Who were Dismas and Gestas?](#)
- [Wikipedia article on proposed name of penitent thief](#)

Others is [heteros](#), meaning they were of a different kind than Jesus! A more striking contrast never existed for their very name (criminals) meant they were literally workers of evil whereas Jesus was the epitome of love, mercy and grace!

Criminals ([2557](#))([kakourgos](#) from [kakos](#) = evil + [ergo](#) = to work) means one who does evil and then a criminal or villain. It is an adjective describing one who commits gross misdeeds and serious crimes. Luke uses it three times to describe the two thieves crucified with Jesus (Lk 23:32, 33, 39) and Paul once in 2 Ti 2:9. There are only 2 uses in the Septuagint - Esther 8:12 and Pr 21:15. The **KJV** translates it [malefactors](#), literally one who does wrong, one who commits a crime or some other wrong.

This passage is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out

Himself to death, **And was numbered with the transgressors;** Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Were being led away to be put to death with Him - "No legal charge had been proven against Him, but He was crucified between thieves as the worst of the three. Wherever Christ moved among men, He presented a contrast to the company around Him for He alone was a sinless Man, absolutely impeccable, but never was the contrast greater than at His death." (**What the Bible teaches**)

Put to death (337) (**anaireo** from **ana** = up + **haireo** = to take) literally means to take up or lift up (from the ground), which is used literally to describe Pharaoh's daughter when she "took him (Moses) away and nurtured him as her own son." (Acts 7:21). In the figurative sense in Heb 10:9 the writer of Hebrews says "He takes away (in sense of to abolish, invalidate) the first (the OT sacrificial system described in Heb 10:8) in order to establish the second (the new, once for all time sacrifice of Christ)." Most of the uses of **anaireo** are used in an active sense to refer to literal killing or putting to death (Mt. 2:16; Acts 5:36; 7:28; 9:23, 24, 29; 16:27; 23:15, 21, 27; 25:3). **Anaireo** speaks of public execution in the present context (Luke 23:32; cf Acts 2:23; 10:39; 12:2; 13:28; 22:20; 26:10).

The Man Crucified with Christ Luke 23:32–43; Matthew 27:44 - John Phillips

At nine o'clock that morning they nailed this man cursing, fighting, screaming to his cross. Not long afterwards they broke his legs and hurled him into eternity. He went straight to paradise. He was not baptised, confirmed, or enrolled in any church. He confessed to no priest although there were plenty standing by. He did no penance. He had no claim to moral character. He did not ask the virgin Mary to pray for him, even though she was present. He called on none of the saints. He was a lost soul on his way to an imminent hell when suddenly, He flung his soul at Jesus' feet. He heard the gospel from Christ's enemies ("He saved others ...") and he turned in wondrous faith to Jesus. And he was saved, instantly, then and there, on the same grounds and in the same way anyone is saved. And he received immediate assurance of his salvation, too.

1. He Was a Dying Man

He owned—

- a. The legality of his sentence
- b. The load of his sin

2. He Was a Discerning Man

He began to—

- a. Look at Jesus
- b. Listen to Jesus

3. He Was a Delivered Man "To day ... paradise!" (100 NT Sermon Outlines)

Luke 23:33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

KJV Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

- **When they came to** Mt 27:33,34; Mark 15:22,23; John 19:17,18; Hebrews 13:12,13
- **the place called The Skull there they crucified Him** Lk 24:7; Dt 21:23; Ps 22:16; Zech 12:10; Mt 20:19; 26:2; Mk 10:33,34; Jn 3:14; 12:33,34; 18:32; Acts 2:23; 5:30; 13:29; Gal 3:13; 1 Pe 2:24
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel
- [On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ - Journal of the American Medical Association \(March 21, 1986\)](#) - I read this shortly after I was saved and as a physician who specializes in pathology, I found the article written by a fellow pathologist from the Mayo Clinic to be extremely enlightening. It includes several excellent diagrams to help visualize various aspects of our Lord's scourging and crucifixion.

Parallel Passages: (note the "+" sign after the chapter/verse links to the respective commentary)

Matthew 27:33-43+ 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. 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." 38 At that time two robbers *were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 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.'"

Mark 15:22-32+ Then they *brought Him to **the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.** 23 They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. 24 And they *crucified Him, and *divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. 25 It was the third hour when they crucified Him. 26 The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." 27 They *crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. 28 [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] 29 Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 32 "Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

John 19:18-24+ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. **It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."** 20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was **written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.** 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, **'Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'**" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." 23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

Golgotha, the Skull (in foreground), in Relation to Temple Mount (click diagram to enlarge)
[Click for excellent explanation of this diagram from ESV Global Study Bible](#)

THE CLIMAX OF REDEMPITIVE HISTORY: "THEY CRUCIFIED HIM"

One trembles when writing any thoughts on this most holy of days in all eternity when the Holy One of Israel becomes the sacrificial Lamb of God for all humanity (Jn 1:29+). It will take all of eternity to even begin to fathom the significance and scope of this event marking the supreme expression of God's redeeming love for sinful men and women. On the other side, the Cross represents the ultimate manifestation of the depravity of our human nature!

They crucified (stauroo) Him - These 3 words are found in all four Gospels (KJV) (Mt 27:35KJV, Mk 15:24KJV, Lk 23:33KJV, Jn 19:18KJV). Otherwise the Scripture is amazingly silent on the details of crucifixion. No description of the hammer pounding the nails into His wrists or feet, no description of His body sagging in torment on the Cross, no description of the agonizing efforts to push up His legs to breath (the wounds on His back rubbing against the rough wood of the Cross), etc. An economy of words that describe vividly what happened to our Lord. Let us ponder this deeply. But even more let us ponder the 3 dark hours (Mt 27:45), for that was the more unspeakable agony for the sinless Lamb to be made sin for us (2Co 5:21+) and to experience being forsaken by the Father (Mt 27:46+).

Pate comments "'It is a telling criticism that Fitzmeyer, a Jesuit theologian, observes in an aside comment on v. 32 that the account of Jesus' road to the cross says nothing about the [fourteen stations of the cross](#), such as the falls of Jesus, the meeting with His mother or with Veronica ('true image'). Such later traditions, though certainly sentimental in appeal, seem to have no historical basis."

We do well to remember that while evil men, both Jews and Gentiles, are orchestrating and implementing Christ's excruciating Crucifixion, Jesus is in full control for earlier He had clearly declared

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. **No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.** I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18+)

To be forced to endure the horrible death of the crucifixion is bad enough, but to freely choose to endure it for us is love simply beyond our comprehension!

Guzik has an interesting note regarding Christ's crucifixion: This was the most important act of this most important life, and this is reflected even in ancient secular histories. The existing mentions of Jesus in ancient extra-biblical literature each highlight His death on the cross. ([Luke 23](#))

- A letter written by Mara bar Serapion to his son (ca. a.d. 73)
- Josephus, the Jewish historian (ca. a.d. 90)
- Tacitus, the Roman historian (ca. a.d. 110-120)
- The Babylonian Talmud (ca. a.d. 200)

When they came to the place called The Skull - Skull translates the Greek word [kranion](#) (our English "cranium", cf Latin "calvaria" which

gives us "Calvary") which equates with the Hebrew/Aramaic word [Golgotha](#) (or [here](#)) as explained in Jn 19:17. Luke does not refer to this as **Golgotha**. Mark 15:22 writes "they brought Him to the place **Golgotha**, which is translated, Place of a Skull." (cf Mt. 27:33) While we do not know the exact location of the "Skull," we do know that as an outcast both of Israel and of Rome, Jesus "suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12), outside the walled section of Jerusalem proper.

The name **Skull** refers (most common interpretation) to the fact that the site resembled a skull and today many consider this to be [Gordon's Calvary](#) which can still be viewed a short distance from Jerusalem's northern wall, not far from the [Damascus Gate](#). This site was well known in Jesus' day and associated with unspeakable suffering and pain for the victims taken there to die.

What the Bible teaches - Calvary is a Latin word, and it means "**the skull**"; **Golgotha** in Hebrew. This event at Calvary is the climax of the ages; the hinge of the vast forever. All the ages preceding it looked forward to it, all eternity will look back to it. As Erich Sauer wrote, in "The Triumph of the Crucified" "Of all times, it is the turning point; of all love it is the highest point, and of all salvation it is the starting point, of all worship it is the central point". The words "Calvary" and "eternity" are found only once in the AV, and this is important to us, for Calvary has changed eternity for every believing soul. It should be noted that most translations do not use the name "Calvary" but "the Skull". (What the Bible teaches – Luke)

Alexander Maclaren - The cross is the centre of the world's history. The incarnation of Christ and the crucifixion of our Lord are the pivot round which all the events of the ages revolve.

H. C. Trumbull - Calvary shows how far men will go in sin, and how far God will go for man's salvation.

Rogers - There were three of them there that day. Three crosses. One of those men on the cross died in his sin and went to hell. Another man died to his sin and went to heaven because of the middle man who died for both...Three crosses, a cross of redemption, a cross of rejection, and a cross of reception. (Sound Theology)



There they crucified Him and the criminals - Without fanfare Luke describes the most monumental event in all eternity! The Roman writer Cicero described crucifixion as "the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible." The origin of this brutal mode of killing men apparently originated in [Persia](#) and was adopted by the [Carthaginians](#), then the Greeks and finally the Romans who had as their goal that those who witnessed this brutal, agonizing death would be deterred from crime. By the time of Christ, it is estimated that the Romans had crucified 30,000 people in Israel alone! Secular records tell us that after the Jewish revolt and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, there were actually so many crucifixions that the Roman government ran short of wood for the crosses!

THOUGHT - One of the most amazing truths of the crucifixion of Christ is that there were not just two criminals crucified with Him on that day, but there were in fact literally millions and millions of criminals (evil doers) crucified with Him that day! If you are a genuine believer in Christ, then as mysterious and miraculous as it sounds, you were crucified with Him on the Cross as Paul explains in Romans 6

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into (NOT WATER BUT SPIRITUAL IDENTIFICATION WITH) Christ Jesus **have been baptized into His death** (IDENTIFIED WITH HIM ON THE CROSS)? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness (BRAND NEW QUALITY YOU DID NOT POSSESS PRIOR TO DYING WITH CHRIST) of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self (OLD MAN) was **crucified**

with (SEE THIS VERB [sustauroo](#)) **Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with (MADE INEFFECTIVE), so that we would no longer be slaves to sin (EVERY USE IN ROMANS 6-7 OF THE WORD **SIN** IS PERSONIFIED AS A "MASTER" OR "KING" NOT AN INANIMATE ENTITY!); 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if (SINCE) **we have died with Christ** (CO-CRUCIFIXION!), we believe that we shall also live with Him (CHRIST IS NOW OUR LIFE, THRU HIS SPIRIT- Col 3:3-4, Ro 8:13), 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so **consider** yourselves (PRESENT IMPERATIVE = RECALL THE TRUTHS OF ROMANS 6:1-10 TO YOUR MIND FREQUENTLY) to be dead to sin (THE POWER OF SIN PERSONIFIED), but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore (NOW APPLY THE TRUTH THAT YOU WERE CO-CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST AND ARE DEAD TO THE POWER OF SIN) **do not let sin reign** (PRESENT IMPERATIVE WITH NEGATIVE) in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts (THIS COMMAND CAN ONLY BE OBEYED AS WE RELY ON AND ARE ENABLED BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST), 13 and **do not go on presenting** (PRESENT IMPERATIVE WITH NEGATIVE) the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present** (AORIST IMPERATIVE) yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:2-14+)

Neither Luke nor John record the offer to Jesus of something to drink before the crucifixion. Mt 27:34 says that "they gave Him wine to drink mixed with [gall](#) (means something bitter = myrrh in Mark); and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink." Mark 15: 23 says "They tried to give Him wine mixed with [myrrh](#) (Gk - [smyrnizo](#) - only here in NT; see [dictionary entry](#)); but He did not take it." It is a bit ironic and interesting that today **myrrh** is used as an antiseptic in mouthwashes, gargles, and toothpastes!

Jesus the perfect Son of God was unwilling to drink from the **cup** offered by the godless Romans, but as He had earlier told Peter "the **cup** which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (Jn 18:11, cf Mt 26:39) Of course the Roman **cup** was literal, while the Father's **cup** was metaphorical, describing the God's full wrath filling up the cup which would then be poured out fully on His only Son, making "Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor 5:21+) Amazing love how can it be!

MacArthur explains that "**Myrrh** was a narcotic that was also used as an anointing oil (Ex. 30:23) and a perfume (Ps. 45:8; Prov. 7:17; Matt. 2:11; John 19:39). Based on Proverbs 31:6, the Jews had a custom of offering crucifixion victims a type of pain-deadening medication (cf. Ps. 69:21). But Jesus, wanting to maintain full awareness as He completed His atoning work, refused to drink it." (See [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

It is intriguing that **myrrh** was offered to Jesus only twice, the first time being at His birth in Mt 2:11 (**Greek smyrna**) when adoring magi offered Him expensive gifts which He received. Now, at the end of His life, the pagan Roman soldiers offer Him myrrh which He refuses.

Why was Jesus offered myrrh? Was it to ease His suffering on the old rugged Cross? Probably not. More likely the numbing effect on one's senses was the attempt by the Roman guards to minimize any struggling as they drove the spikes into Jesus' hands (wrists) and feet. The pain would have been excruciating. While the text is silent, one has to believe that even with the incredible pain caused by the pounding of the spikes into His extremities, Jesus received it willingly and majestic as the perfect Man He had always been (cf His silence to the emotionally painful accusations in Mt 27:12-14). What a striking contrast this would have been to the Roman soldiers, as the criminals fought and screamed (likely curses as they had nothing to lose at this point!) and Jesus lay there surrendering Himself totally to the will of His Father and to the brutality of these godless men!

It is interesting that no Gospel described the details of securing these three men on their respective crosses. We only learn later from (doubting) Thomas about the use of nails when he declared to those disciples who had said they had seen the Lord ""Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the **nails**, and put my finger into the place of the **nails**, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (Jn 20:25).

One on the right and the other on the left- Jn 19:18 has "one on either side, and Jesus in between."

Skull ([2898](#))(**kranion**) our English "cranium", cf Latin "calvaria" which gives us "Calvary." This refers to the skull the bony framework of the head

Gilbrant - The word is related to *kara*, a poetic counterpart to *kephalē* (2747), "head," in classical Greek. It denotes a "skull," the bony structure of the head, particularly the upper portion of the head. It is used of men, horses, trees, etc. In the New Testament it is only used as a reference to the name of the hill where Christ was crucified (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17). All the accounts but Luke use it to explain the meaning of the Aramaic name of the hill, Golgotha. In Luke, the King James Version uses "Calvary" as the translation for *kranion*, but this is simply drawn from the Latin word for skull. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary – Zeta-Kappa](#)) ([ISBE article](#))

KRANION - 4V - Matt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:17

Related Resources: Two Songs that Relate to the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Take a moment and listen to the poignant song ["The Hammer"](#)

THE LYRIC THAT SHOULD PIERCE US ALL IS "Who nailed Him there? Then I looked and saw the hammer in my hand!"

- And if you want your heart to break (some more) take a few moments and [WATCH THE LAMB](#).

The Place Called Calvary Luke 23:33 - John Phillips

Calvary! The name is familiar to us from a hundred hymns. It is sweetest music in our ears. It tells us of sins forgiven, of peace with God, of life for evermore. But, strange to say, the actual word occurs only once in the Bible (King James Version). "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him." Take those last four words. Emphasize each one in turn. You will have the anatomy of a crime—the darkest, foulest, most monstrous crime ever committed on this sin-cursed planet earth.

1. The Place
There!
2. The People
They!
3. The Penalty
Crucified!
4. The Person
Him!

Note: Since it was Passover time, Jerusalem would have been crowded with Jewish visitors from scores of lands. It has been estimated that something like a million people would have been present. Acts 2:8–11 gives us a roll call of the various nations still represented in the city a couple of months later at Pentecost. The crucifixion of Christ, then, took place before the eyes of the world. (100 NT Sermon Outlines)

Below are several articles on crucifixion.

Dr William Edwards on Crucifixion -

CRUCIFIXION PRACTICES

Crucifixion probably first began among the Persians.³⁴ Alexander the Great introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans appear to have learned of it from the Carthaginians.¹¹ Although the Romans did not invent crucifixions they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering. (#10,17) It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution and usually was reserved only for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals. (#3,25,28) Roman law usually protected Roman citizens from crucifixion,⁵ except perhaps in the case of desertion by soldiers. In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied to or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground. ^{8,11,30,34,38} Only later was a true cross used; it was characterized by an upright post (stipes) and a horizontal crossbar (patibulum), and it had several variations (Table). (#11) Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by the Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ ([Fig 3](#)), (#2, 7,11) crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographic region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used. (#28)

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls. ^{8,11,30} He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs.¹¹ Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 lb (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried ([Fig 3](#)).¹¹ The patibulum, weighing 75 to 125 lb. (34 to 57 kg),^{11,30} was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar. ^{7,11} The procession to the site of crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion. ^{3,11} One of the soldiers carried a sign (titulus) on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed ([Fig 3](#)).^{3,11} Later, the titulus would be attached to the top of the cross.¹¹ The Roman guard would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death.^{9,11}

Outside the city walls was permanently located the heavy upright wooden stipes, on which the patibulum would be secured. In the case of the Tau cross, this was accomplished by means of a mortise and tenon joint, with or without reinforcement by ropes.^{10,11,30} To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat (sedile or sedulum), often was attached midway down the stipes. ^{3,11,16} Only very rarely, and probably later than the time of Christ, was an additional block (suppedaneum) employed for transfixion of the feet.^{9,11}

At the site of execution, by law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild analgesic. ^{7,17} The criminal was then thrown to the ground on his back, with his arms outstretched along the patibulum.¹¹ The hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans. ^{8,11} The

archaeological remains of a crucified body, found in an ossuary near Jerusalem and dating from the time of Christ, indicate that the nails were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 in (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft 3/8 in (1 cm) across.^{23,24,30} Furthermore, ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin have documented that the nails commonly were driven through the wrists rather than the palms (Fig 4).^{22-24,30}

After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, together, were lifted onto the stipes.¹¹ On the low cross, four soldiers could accomplish this relatively easily. However, on the tall cross, the soldiers used either wooden forks or ladders.¹¹

Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. Ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin suggest that nailing was the preferred Roman practice.^{23,24,30} Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes (Fig 5).¹¹ To accomplish this, flexion of the knees may have been quite prominent, and the bent legs may have been rotated laterally (Fig 6).^{23-25,30}

When the nailing was completed, the titulus was attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head.¹¹ The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves.^{11,25} The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging.^{8,11} However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees (crurifragium or skelokopia).^{8,11}

Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites.¹⁶ Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.^{8,11,12,28} However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge.¹¹

Since no one was intended to survive crucifixion, the body was not released to the family until the soldiers were sure that the victim was dead. By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance.^{8,11} Traditionally, this had been considered a spear wound to the heart through the right side of the chest—a fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers.¹¹ The Shroud of Turin documents this form of injury.^{5,11,22} Moreover, the standard infantry spear, which was 5 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m) long,³⁰ could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on the customary low cross.¹¹

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION

With knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution. Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce orthostatic hypotension and even hypovolemic shock.^{8,12} When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of the hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt.^{2,16} Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes.⁷ As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

With arms outstretched but not taut, the wrists were nailed to the patibulum.^{7,11} It has been shown that the ligaments and bones of the wrist can support the weight of a body hanging from them, but the palms cannot.¹¹ Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius and the carpals or between the two rows of carpal bones,^{2,10,11,30} either proximal to or through the strong bandlike flexor retinaculum and the various intercarpal ligaments (Fig 4). Although a nail in either location in the wrist might pass between the bony elements and thereby produce no fractures, the likelihood of painful periosteal injury would seem great. Furthermore, the driven nail would crush or sever the rather large sensorimotor median nerve (Fig 4).^{2,7,11} The stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms.^{7,9} Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, ischemic contractures and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike might produce a clawlike grasp.

Most commonly, the feet were fixed to the front of the stipes by means of an iron spike driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint.^{2,5,8,11,30} It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the medial and lateral plantar nerves would have been injured by the nails (Fig 5). Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries, other than perhaps the deep plantar arch, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion.^{2,10,11}

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation (Fig 6). The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and

shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. 2,10,11 Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.¹¹

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders ([Fig. 6](#)).² However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain.⁷ Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves.⁷ Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes. ^{2,7} Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort.⁷ As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia.^{2,3,7,10}

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. ^{2,3,7,10} Other possible contributing factors included dehydration,^{7,16} stress-induced arrhythmias,³ and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions.^{2,7,11} Crucifracture (breaking the legs below the knees), if performed, led to an asphyxic death within minutes. ¹¹ Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, **excruciating** (Latin, *excruciatu*s, or "out of the cross"). (Read the full article "[On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ](#)".)

Adam Clarke adds

"Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!"

F W Farrar on crucifixion - A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly-dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, shame, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of intended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened [when a victim took several days to die]; the arteries—especially at the head and stomach—became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood, and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst, and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself—of death, the unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most—bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release. ([Life of Christ](#))

Dr Truman Davis describes crucifixion from a medical standpoint - The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, **excruciating** (LATIN - "OUT OF THE CROSS") pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. ([A Physician's View of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ](#))

Related Resources:

- [Crucifixion - Wikipedia](#)
-

Darrell Bock has a summary of the differences in Luke's Gospel and the other Synoptic Gospels...

1. Luke does not mention Golgotha by name (Mark 15:22 = Mt. 27:33).
2. Luke does not mention the offer of drugged wine (Mark 15:23 = Mt. 27:34).
3. Luke 23:33 uses a different term for the criminals (κακοι ργος, as opposed to λ στής in Mark 15:27 = Mt. 27:38) and mentions them at a different point in his narrative.
4. Luke 23:34 uniquely records Jesus' prayer to forgive the sin of his executioners.
5. Luke does not mention the time that the crucifixion began (Mark 15:25), although he and Mark mention the time that it became dark (Luke 23:44 = Mark 15:33).
6. Luke 23:35 briefly refers to spectators, but does not supply the contents of their mocking: taunts about Jesus' saying that he would destroy the temple and raise it up in three days (Mark 15:29–30 = Mt. 27:39–40). (Luke exhibits a similar silence at Jesus' trial.)

7. Luke 23:35 speaks only of the rulers and does not name the chief priests, scribes, and elders (Mark 15:31 = Mt. 27:41).
8. Luke 23:35 mentions that the rulers mock Jesus with reference to being the Chosen One, rather than calling him the King of Israel (Mark 15:32 = Mt. 27:42).
9. Luke does not mention the rulers' other taunts (Mark. 15:32 = Mt. 27:42–43).
10. Luke 23:36 mentions the offer of wine vinegar at a different point in the narrative (Mark 15:36 = Mt. 27:48).
11. In Luke 23:36 the soldiers mock Jesus about being King of the Jews.
12. Luke 23:38 records the inscription over Jesus at a different point in the narrative (Mark 15:26 = Mt. 27:37).
13. Luke 23:39–43 uniquely records Jesus' discussion with the two thieves.
14. Luke 23:45 uniquely has a second reference to darkness.
15. Luke 23:45 mentions the tearing of the temple veil at a different point in the narrative (Mark 15:38 = Matt. 27:51).
16. Luke neither mentions nor records the content of Jesus' first cry from the cross (Mark 15:34 = Mt. 27:46, using Ps. 22:1).
17. Luke does not include the crowd's mention of Elijah (Mark 15:35–36 = Mt. 27:47, 49).
18. Luke 23:46 uniquely records the content of Jesus' second cry from the cross, using Ps. 31:5.
19. Luke does not record the earthquake that took place when Jesus died or the subsequent resurrection of many saints (Matt. 27:51–53).
20. Luke 23:47 quotes the centurion as declaring Jesus' innocence instead of his divine sonship (Mark 15:39 = Matt. 27:54).
21. Luke 23:48 uniquely records the crowd watching and mourning.
22. Luke 23:49 uniquely mentions that the disciples watched from a distance.
23. Luke 23:49 mentions that the women were present, but does not identify them other than to note that they are from Galilee (Mark 15:40–41 = Mt. 27:55–56). ([Luke 9:51-24:53 Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

Life Application Bible Commentary – THE WAY OF THE CROSS - When James and John asked Jesus for the places of honor next to him in his kingdom, he told them that they didn't know what they were asking (Mark 10:35-39). Here, as Jesus was preparing to inaugurate his kingdom through his death, the places on his right and on his left were taken by dying men—criminals. As Jesus explained to his two position-conscious disciples, a person who wants to be close to Jesus must be prepared to suffer and die. The way to the kingdom is the way of the cross. Are you prepared to follow him to the fullest extent, with your life? (See [Luke](#))

Three Crosses

Read: Luke 23:32-38

They crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.—Luke 23:33

In many paintings of the crucifixion of Jesus, the center cross on which He hung is taller or higher on a hill than the other two. We can appreciate an artist's desire to give Christ a place of preeminence, but we have no reason to believe that Jesus was given an elevated or exalted position — higher than that of the two thieves. Those who crucified Jesus considered Him to be a common criminal, so the crosses were most likely on the same level.

As I think about this, I realize that Jesus was not out of reach — way above the poor sinners on the other crosses. I also think it is likely that the three crosses were very close together. The two thieves could carry on a conversation with each other above the shouting and tumult of the mob around them. In fact, if the dying thief's hand had not been nailed to the cross, he might very well have been able to reach over and put his hand on Jesus' hand. This I believe is significant. Jesus is within reach of all who will look to Him and touch Him with the hand of faith!

Yes, anyone can come to Him and receive forgiveness and new life. Have you reached out in faith to the One who died on a cross for you? By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

They nailed His hands, they pierced His brow
As they cried with a fiendish glee,
"If Thou be the Son of God, come down!"
But He stayed on the cross for me!
—Crooks

Nothing speaks more clearly of God's love than the cross.

Triumph In Tragedy

Read: Luke 23:26-56

When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him. —Luke 23:33

We call it "Good Friday," but no one standing there that day would have called that Friday "good." The best man that history ever knew was nailed to a Roman cross and murdered. For His enemies it was a victory of sorts; for the soldiers it was simply another day's work; for His followers it was the death of their brightest hopes and greatest dreams. But no one would have called that Friday "good."

That is true of many "bad Fridays" if you consider them apart from Resurrection Sunday. They make life seem futile—without purpose and meaning. But God's most striking victories rise out of the graves of apparent defeats.

In his book *Idols for Destruction*, Herbert Schlossberg wrote, "We are not the lords of history and do not control its outcome, but we have assurance that there is a Lord of history and He controls its outcome. We need a theological interpretation of disaster, one that recognizes that God acts in such events as captivities, defeats, and crucifixions. The Bible can be interpreted as a string of God's triumphs disguised as disasters."

Face each day with trust in Jesus Christ. God's greatest victories often come disguised as defeats. By Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The purposes of God are right,
Although we may not see
Just how He works all things for good
And transforms tragedy. —Sper

God's most striking victories rise out of the graves of apparent defeats.

Luke 23:34 But Jesus was saying, "**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**" And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

KJV Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

- **Father, forgive them** Lk 23:47,48; 6:27,28; Genesis 50:17; Ps 106:16-23; Mt 5:44; Acts 7:60; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Peter 2:20-23; 3:9
- **for they do not know what they are doing** Lk 12:47,48; John 15:22-24; 19:11; Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:13
- **And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.** Ps 22:18; Mt 27:35,36; Mark 15:24; John 19:23,24
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [What were the seven last words of Jesus Christ on the cross and what do they mean?](#)
- [THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS](#) - James Stalker
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

[A T Robertson](#) comments that "Some of the oldest and best documents do not contain this verse, and yet, while it is not certain that it is a part of Luke's Gospel, it is certain that Jesus spoke these words, for they are utterly unlike any one else." (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

But Jesus ([lesous](#)) was saying - The context could not be more striking. Here we see Jesus placed on the Cross representing the height of mankind's sin, the worst that man can do to God, and yet Jesus, ever the merciful One, pleads for forgiveness of the very ones who had committed this "highest" of "high crimes and misdemeanors!"

The English translations (assuming the manuscripts are authentic) miss an important (and amazing) detail. The verb for **saying** is in the imperfect tense which means that Jesus was saying these wonderful words not just once, but over and over! Pause and ponder that picture for a moment so that it sinks down into your very innermost being! Notice that it is clearly a prayer and yet seems to have been prayed out loud. Jesus frequently prayed audibly, a good example for all of us (it's more difficult to fall asleep when you are praying out loud!).

What the Bible teaches suggests that "When they nailed Him to the tree, He said, "Father, forgive them"; when they mocked Him and scoffed at His claims, He said, "Father, forgive them"; when they shouted for Him to come down from the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them".

This is not "cheap grace," but the costliest of grace! As we ponder these amazing words, was there ever a day when sin abounded more than on this day and yet listen to Paul's amazing description in the KJV: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Ro 5:20KJV+). Indeed, are not Jesus' very first words from the Cross AMAZING GRACE ABOUNDING! Sin had reached it's apex, but divine grace superseded sin's worst!

Darrell Bock writes "Jesus thus intercedes for his enemies, portraying the very standard he sets for his disciples in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:29, 35; 1 Pet. 2:19–23; Ernst 1977: 634). He does not curse his opponents (contrast 2 Macc. 7:19, 34–35; 4 Macc. 9:15; Schweizer 1984: 360). The moral tone of Jesus' response is high, although this lack of vindictiveness is also found in a few other ancient works.¹⁵

Thinking of others, Jesus still desires that they change their thinking (as some do in the Book of Acts) and that God not hold their act against them. Jesus' love is evident even from the cross." ([Luke 9:51-24:53 Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe - While they were nailing Him to the cross, He repeatedly prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Not only was He practicing what He taught (Luke 6:27-28), but He was fulfilling prophecy and making "intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Father (pater), forgive (aphiemi) them; for they do not know what they are doing - As noted in the chart, these words were the first words spoken by Jesus and most likely were spoken between 9 AM and 12 Noon. And as alluded to elsewhere, it was very difficult for a crucified individual to speak, and certainly not possible without considerable pain. How fitting is His plea for forgiveness at His death, for at His birth He was given the Name **Jesus** which Matthew says explains refers to Him "Who will save His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21) And here at His death He prays for them to be forgiven! What an amazing Savior is Jesus the Christ!

In one sense His prayer was answered when He breathed His last, thus providing the perfect sacrifice through Whom all might receive forgiveness by grace through faith in Him. Notice also how in a very real sense Jesus practiced what He had taught in Luke 11:4 when He instructed His disciples "we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us."

Note also that in praying this prayer of forgiveness, Jesus fulfilled His own command for us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good for those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44+). Now just try to do that in your natural power. It is only possible by relying on the Spirit's enabling power. And I would submit that even in His death, Jesus still fully Man, was continuing to rely on the Spirit just as He had at the inception of His ministry some 3 years earlier when "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit." (Luke 4:14, cp Acts 10:37-38). Peter says "God was with Him." (Acts 10:38), until the sky turned dark and God forsook Him Who had been made sin!

Stephen understood Jesus' example and as he was literally being pummeled with rocks and stones, Luke recorded that "falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:60+) In that very day Stephen entered Paradise to be with Jesus forever!

Regarding the phrase **they do not know what they are doing**, Luke records several passages in Acts that serve as somewhat of a "commentary" on this their sins of ignorance...

Acts 3:17+ "And now, brethren (Jews), I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also."

John MacArthur explains - Their ignorance was certainly inexcusable, since the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah was clear from the Old Testament, the words and works of Jesus, and His death and resurrection. Yet, none of them were beyond the reach of God's grace, if they would repent and turn to Christ. Even the rulers who incited the people to cry for the death of their Messiah are indicted for the less heinous motive of ignorance. There is a note of mercy in the fact that Peter focuses on the blindness and ignorance of the unregenerate (cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4). (See context in [Acts 1-12 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Acts 13:27+ "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.

Acts 17:30+ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

Paul adds that if the rulers had understood Who Jesus was, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8).

Robert Stein comments that "Jesus was asking his Father to forgive "them" (i.e., the "they" of Luke 23:13-14, 18, 20-21, 23-25; cf. Acts 2:36)—not just those who nailed him to the cross but all those involved in his death. Jesus' prayer clearly makes any attempt to justify anti-Semitism on the basis of his crucifixion impossible." (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture](#))

Warren Wiersbe comments on **they do not know what they are doing** - We must not infer from His prayer that ignorance is a basis for forgiveness, or that those who sinned against Jesus were automatically forgiven because He prayed. Certainly both the Jews and the Romans were ignorant of the enormity of their sin, but that could not absolve them....Our Lord's intercession postponed God's judgment on the nation for almost forty years, giving them additional opportunities to be saved (Acts 3:17-19). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe in his commentary on Joshua 20:1-9+ offers an incredible insight on the **cities of refuge** in - Before leaving this theme, we should note that there is also an application to the nation of Israel. The nation was guilty of killing the Lord Jesus Christ, but it was a sin of ignorance on the part of the people (Acts 3:12-18+). When Jesus prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34+), He was declaring them guilty of manslaughter rather than murder (1 Co 2:7-8+). The way was open for their forgiveness, and God gave the nation nearly forty years to repent before He brought judgment. This same principle applied to the Apostle Paul (1Ti 1:12-14). However, no lost sinner today can plead ignorance, because God has declared the whole world guilty and without excuse (Ro 3:9-19+). ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves - For context note that a Jewish man would normally wear five pieces

of clothing: sandals, an inner cloak, a headpiece, a belt, and an outer cloak, or tunic. Note also that the soldiers typically would take the clothing of those they executed. Indeed, their selfish motives would fulfill the God's sovereign masterpiece written over 1000 years earlier!

One soldier "won" the seamless garment and thus left Calvary wearing the garment of the righteous Christ. How sad to be clothed physically with Christ's garment and fail to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ (Isa 61:10, cf 2 Cor 5:21+) which alone would gain him entry into Paradise! Indeed it is only for those who are "baptized into Christ (identified with Him by grace through faith) (who) have clothed (themselves) with Christ." (Gal 3:27+)

And so in this pagan gambling scene by men ignorant that they were players in the greatest drama in all eternity we see them perfectly fulfill the prophecy in Ps 22:18

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

All the Gospel accounts allude to this Messianic prophecy in Psalm 22:18 (cf Messianic Prophecy)...

Matthew 27:35 And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.

[A T Robertson](#) - These rough Roman soldiers casting lots over the garments of Christ give a picture of comedy at the foot of the Cross, the tragedy of the ages. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

Mark 15:24 And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.

Comment: Note that of the three synoptic accounts, only Mark gives the specific reason for the soldier's casting of lots - to determine what each would receive.

The Gospel of John gives the most complete record writing

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic ([chiton](#)) was seamless, woven in one piece. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." (**REMEMBER:** IN THE NAS WORDS IN "ALL CAPS" SIGNIFY A DIRECT QUOTE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT) (John 19:23-24+)

Comment: Presumably the soldiers divided up His outer garments. However, for the seamless tunic they cast lots thus perfectly fulfilling David's words "and for my clothing they cast lots." Notice there were four Roman soldiers, a [quaternion](#), and they were required to remain with the victim (Mt 27:36 "began to keep watch over Him") until death was certain to make sure that no one attempted to rescue the victim or minimize his suffering in some way (e.g., causing a quick death in some way).

Guzik reminds us that "Yet even in all this sin, pain, agony, and injustice God guided all things to His desired fulfillment. It may seem that Jesus has no control over these events. Yet the invisible hand of God guided all things, so that specific prophecies were specifically fulfilled." (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Matthew)

Leon Morris commenting on the fulfillment of this prophecy writes "Once again we see his [John's] master-thought that God was over all that was done, so directing things that His will was accomplished, and not that of puny man. It was because of this that the soldiers acted as they did" (NICNT - John)

What the Bible teaches – All the Gospels, even Luke, give the distinction between the garments that were divided among the soldiers and the one seamless garment for which they cast lots. In the judgment hall, they removed His garments as they mocked Him, but they put them on Him again before taking Him away to crucify Him. At the cross, they stripped Him, taking away from the Saviour all that He possessed on earth, leaving a little pile of **garments** ([himation](#)) on the ground, to be divided among themselves. When they removed the one inner, seamless garment ([chiton](#), John 19:23) they said, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be" (John 19:24). One man left the cross that day who wore the garment of Christ. Many in their spiritual experience have been to the cross and ever since they have worn something of the beauty of the Saviour as they reproduce His character by the grace of God.

The Scriptures do not tell us what happened to Jesus' after His garments were divided up. Was He crucified with a loin clothe or completely naked. We simply do not know.

Lane writes that "Men were ordinarily crucified naked (Artemidorus II. 61). Jewish sensitivities, however, dictated that men ought not to be publicly executed completely naked, and men condemned to stoning were permitted a loin-cloth (M. Sanhedrin VI. 3). Whether the Romans were considerate of Jewish feelings in this matter is unknown." (NICNT-Mark)

David Guzik writes "Jesus came all the way down the ladder to accomplish our salvation. He let go of absolutely everything – even His clothes – becoming completely poor for us, so we could become completely rich in Him. (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Matthew)

Spurgeon writes "Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Saviour's nakedness, and shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their cruel eyes upon his miseries."

Related Resources:

- [Why did Jesus say "Father, forgive them" on the cross?](#)
- [What were the seven last words of Jesus Christ on the cross and what do they mean?](#)

NET Note has a technical comment on Luke 23:34 - Many important MSS (i(75)a(1)B D* W Q 070 579 1241 pc sy(s sa) lack v. 34a. It is included in a*(,2)(A) C D(2)L Y 0250 ;(1, (13) 33 Ū lat sy(c,p,h). It also fits a major Lukan theme of forgiving the enemies (6:27–36), and it has a parallel in Stephen's response in Acts 7:60. The lack of parallels in the other Gospels argues also for inclusion here. On the other hand, the fact of the parallel in Acts 7:60 may well have prompted early scribes to insert the saying in Luke's Gospel alone. Further, there is the great difficulty of explaining why early and diverse witnesses lack the saying. A decision is difficult, but even those who regard the verse as inauthentic literarily often consider it to be authentic historically. For this reason it has been placed in single brackets in the translation.

Father (3962)(**pater**) is of course the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, the One to Whom Jesus had appealed in the Garden of Gethsemane crying "**Father**, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."(Lk 22:42) It was the One to Whom Jesus addressed His final words crying out with a loud voice "Father into Thy hands I commit My Spirit." And having said this, He breathed His last." (Lk 23:46).

Forgive (863) (**aphiemi** from **apo** = prefix speaks of separation, putting some distance between + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation. Literally aphiemi means to send from one's self, to forsake, to hurl away, to put away, let alone, disregard, put off. It conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and refers to total detachment, total separation, from a previous location or condition. In secular Greek aphiemi initially conveyed the sense of to throw and in one secular writing we read "let the pot drop" (aphiemi). From this early literal use the word came to mean leave or let go. It is worth noting that the most common way aphiemi is translated in the NAS is **left** (to go away from a place, to depart from, to remove oneself from an association with, to leave behind - [ponder how these might relate to "forgiveness!"]) (38x) followed by **forgive** (23x) and **forgiven** (23x).

THE SEVEN SAYINGS OF THE SAVIOR SPOKEN ON THE CROSS				
	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
THE FOLLOWING WORDS WERE SPOKEN FROM 9 AM - 12 NOON				
Father forgive them			Lk 23:34+	
Today you shall be with Me in Paradise			Lk 23:43+	
Woman, behold, your son!Behold, your mother!				Jn 19:26-27+
THE FOLLOWING WORDS WERE SPOKEN ABOUT 3 PM				
ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?	Mt 27:46+	Mk 15:34+		
I am thirsty				Jn 19:28+
It is finished!				Jn 19:30+
Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT			Lk 23:46+	

James Stalker's devotional thoughts on the "Seven Sayings"...click chapter # to go to the article (e.g.,[14](#))

- [14](#). THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS Luke 23:34.
- [15](#). THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS Luke 23:39–43.
- [16](#). THE THIRD WORD FROM THE CROSS John 19:25–27.
- [17](#). THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS Matt. 27:46–9; Mark 15:34–6.
- [18](#). THE FIFTH WORD FROM THE CROSS John 19:28.
- [19](#). THE SIXTH WORD FROM THE CROSS John 19:30.
- [20](#). THE SEVENTH WORD FROM THE CROSS Luke 23:46.

SEE ALSO - [What were the seven last words of Jesus Christ on the cross and what do they mean? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Life Application Bible Commentary – FORGIVE THEM - What is the most amazing thing you have ever seen or heard? For many, it was watching a man land on the moon; for others, perhaps it was witnessing the birth of a child. Life is filled with astounding events, personal and public. But the twelve most amazing words ever spoken are found in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus was suffering the most horrible, painful death ever devised by sinful man, and he looked at the people responsible for his suffering and prayed for their forgiveness. Amazing, astounding, unbelievable—choose your adjective. Then choose to live for this remarkable Savior and to extend his grace, mercy, and compassion to others. (See [Luke - Page 539](#))

J Oswald Sanders - Ignorance and Forgiveness Luke 23:34 (Earthen Vessels)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). It seems as though He was trying to find some extenuating circumstance that might lessen their guilt. His sense of justice was not held back by His agony, and He assigned degrees of guilt. This plea limits His "forgive them," so that Judas and Pilate and some of the religious leaders are excluded from the benefits of His intercession. Unlike the majority, they had not acted in ignorance. Judas and Pilate knew what they were doing. They had both weighed Jesus' claims and had acted deliberately. But to the minds of many of the Jews, blinded by hatred, Jesus was no more than a blasphemous impostor. He therefore cried out that their action was due to ignorance not of the fact of their crime but of its enormity.

In keeping with our Lord's plea, Peter later said to his own kinsmen, "I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders" (Acts 3:17). Paul too conceded that if "they had [understood it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). But their ignorance did not excuse their guilt, or Christ would not have needed to pray, "Forgive them." Even those who did not know what they were doing needed forgiveness. Ignorance may lessen the criminal aspects of sin, but it never exonerates the sin. Their ignorance did not make their sin excusable, but it meant that they themselves were forgivable.

"We must beware of supposing," wrote Bishop J. C. Ryle, "that ignorance is not blameworthy, and that ignorant persons deserve to be forgiven for their sins. At this rate ignorance would be a desirable thing. All spiritual ignorance is more or less culpable. It is part of man's sin that he does not know better than he does. On the other hand we cannot fail to observe in Scripture that sins of ignorance are less sinful before God than sins of knowledge, and that no case is so apparently hopeless as that of the man who sins willfully against the light." (31 Days)

Luke 23:35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

KJV Luke 23:35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

- **And the people stood by, looking on** Ps 22:12,13,17; Zechariah 12:10; Mt 27:38-43; Mark 15:29-32
- **And even the rulers were sneering at Him** Lk 16:14; Genesis 37:19,20; Ps 4:2; 35:15,19-25; 69:7-12,26; 71:11; Isaiah 49:7; Isaiah 53:3; Lamentations 3:14
- **let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One** Lk 22:67-70; Ps 22:6-8; Isaiah 42:1; Mt 3:17; 12:18; 1 Peter 2:4
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Matthew 27:38-43+ At that time two robbers *were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 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.”

Mark 15:29-32+ Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!” 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 32 “Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

JESUS MOCKED BY THE JEWS

In Luke's description of the people and the rulers we are reminded of the prediction in the Messianic psalm (Ps 22:12) which says "Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me." These rulers were the "strong bulls," who fit well the description for **Adam Clarke** writes "The bull is the emblem of brutal strength, that gores and tramples down all before it." These rulers are depicted as **rapacious** beasts! **Spurgeon** adds "The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of **Bashan**, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties."

And the people stood by, looking on (theoreo) - The Greek word for **looking on** is **theoreo** which describes these onlookers as those who observed the drama with sustained attention, like spectators. The Greek word expert **Marvin Vincent** explains that **theoreo** "was more than simple seeing. The verb means looking steadfastly, as one who has an interest in the object, and with a view to search into and understand it: to look inquiringly and intently." Indeed, crucifixions were popular functions for spectators in Jesus' day. However, little did the onlookers comprehend that they were eyewitnesses with front row tickets to the final act in God's great drama of redemption, in which paradoxically the Hero dies that He might live to be the Redeemer of the world!

It is intriguing that this same verb **theoreo** is found in the Septuagint translation of Ps 22:7 which says "All who **see** (Lxx = **theoreo**) me sneer at me." Indeed, Robert Stein suggests that "looking on" "may be an allusion to Ps 22:7." As discussed below the reference to sneering is clearly a Messianic prediction (cf Messianic Prophecy).

It is not certain this first group, **the people**, is the same as that described by Matthew and Mark. They are not described as mocking or hurling abuse as are those who are passing by the scene of the crucifixion. Mark records people who were "passing by (and) were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!” (Mark 15:29-30)

And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying - Matthew 27:41 identifies the rulers as "the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders" the primary instigators of Jesus' crucifixion. One would have thought that now that the rulers had achieved their evil end, they might "back off," and even show an ounce of sympathy. But Luke tells us such was not to be the case as they continued to fan the flames of hatred and abuse! These evil doers would see their evil deed to the very end, to the very last agonizing breath of Jesus. There is a good word for this genre of behavior. It's call **depravity!**

Sneering (1592)(**ekmukterizo** from **ek** = out + **mukterizo** = mock from **mukter** = nose, nostril) means literally they were holding up their nose at Jesus! They were **ridiculing** Him, **sneering** at Him, treating Him with **disdain** and **contempt**. This is **repudiation** in the most severe degree! In the only other NT use of this verb Luke writes "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things (Read Lk 16:1-13+) and **were scoffing (imperfect tense)** at Him." (Lk 16:14+).

Over a millennium earlier David had prophesied regarding the Messiah's unconscionable treatment by His fellow Jews writing...

But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. **7All who see me sneer** (Lxx = **ekmukterizo**) **at me**; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 8 “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.” (Ps. 22:6-8+)

Comment: See study of the deeper meaning of the incredible statement of Jesus - I am a worm.

Just as in Lk 16:14, Luke again uses **ekmukterizo** in the **imperfect tense** signifying that the rulers were sneering a Jesus again and again, over and over. One can envision them watching His in agony on the cross, and casting one scoff after another! But oh my were they deceived, for unbeknownst to them they were perfectly fulfilling the 1000 year old prophecy of one of their heroes, King David! The irony deepens when one realizes that the word **scoff** means to laugh at with contempt and derision. The Greek Septuagint translation of **sneer** in Psalm 22:7 is the verb **ekmukterizo** and this same verb is also used in messianic Psalm 2:4 which says "**He who sits in the heavens laughs**, The Lord **scoffs** (**ekmukterizo**) at them." They may have scoffed at Jesus at Calvary, but woe to them, for God gets the last laugh (or the last "scoff"). God gets the last laugh so to speak! Indeed, Psalm 2 says "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth (INCLUDING YOU SNEERING JEWISH RULERS!). Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 2:10-12) (cf Messianic Prophecy)

"He saved (sozo) others; let Him save (sozo) Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One"- Notice that they are not even willing to speak directly to Jesus, so great is their contempt and disdain for the King of Glory! The exhortation for Jesus to save Himself is the first of three similar taunts (also the soldiers in Lk 23:36-37 and one of the criminals in Lk 23:39), while the accounts in Matthew and Mark have only one similar statement. In Mt 27:42 they taunted Him saying "He saved others; He cannot save Himself."

Saved...save (sozo) means to rescue, liberate, bring out safely and as often used in the NT refers to rescue from God's judgment and eternal death. The wicked cry of these Jewish rulers shows their ignorance of their own Scriptures (cf Isa 53:1-12), which teach that the Messiah did not come to conquer Rome, but to conquer sin and Satan by drinking the full cup of God's holy wrath against sin. The last thing Jesus would do now is save Himself, for it was for this hour that He had come to earth. He had come to die in time, that others might live forever in eternity.

This is one of the few correct things these evil men ever said about Jesus, because He did indeed "save others," performing many miracles in Israel, none of which they could deny. They persisted however in their refusal to believe He was God and therefore could not save Himself. Note that it is very doubtful that these sarcastic comment that **"He saved others"** is a reference to salvation of one's soul from eternal damnation, but referred to physical, temporal salvation. For a few of the examples of Jesus "saving" others in one form or another see Luke 7:50+; Lk 8:36+, 48, 50; Lk 17:19+; Lk 18:42+. There hypocritical taunt is ironic, almost prophetic, for it was by His death that He would **save others** spiritually and eternally! Glory!

While the statement of the rulers about **salvation** is not a direct quote it clearly overlaps with the phrase **"let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him."** (Ps 22:8). Matthew in fact has the quote from Psalm 22:8 in Mt 27:43 ("HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'). In the Septuagint the Hebrew word for **"rescue"** is translated with the same Greek verb **sozo** used in their disdainful remarks. The upshot is that David was alluding to what they would say when they mocked Jesus a thousand years later. The irony of course is that in three days God would indeed "rescue" (save) His Son, raising Him from the dead! God's Chosen One would be supremely vindicated!

Several years later Paul summed up the problem of these Jewish rulers (and of the nation in general) writing "we preach Christ crucified (**stauroo**), to Jews a stumbling block (**skandalon** - think **"scandalized"**!) and to Gentiles foolishness." (1Cor 1:23+)

MacArthur adds that "The rulers viewed anyone hanging on a tree or a cross as cursed by God (Deut. 21:23+), which was true of Jesus (Isa. 53:4, 10; Gal. 3:10-13). But what they did not recognize was that He became a curse for sinners to redeem them from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13+). (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

The parallel description in Matthew adds some detail (the words in **bold font** are not in Luke)

"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.**" (Mt 27:41-42+)

How ludicrous was their hypocritical, **sarcastic** taunt! Think about the countless miracles Jesus had already performed! And they are saying in essence "Just one more and I will believe!" Not so! It reminds me of sharing the Gospel with folks who tell me if I could see a miracle I would believe. That is total deception and a **"strawman"** maneuver to avoid the Truth of the Gospel! They would not believe for they are already talking with a miracle -- i.e., if they refuse to believe your testimony about what the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ did to rescue you from darkness to light they would not believe some lesser miracle! Never forget that you as a Christ follower are literally a walking miracle, indeed one of the greatest of all miracles!

When I knew my children were telling me a tall tale, I would say "Liar, liar, pants on fire!" Well that could be said of these rulers. They did not believe His Gospel words to them, so obviously they would not believe if He came down from the cross, any more than they would have believed in Him when He rose from the dead, which Jesus alluded to in Lk 16:30-31+. In fact the rulers bribed the Roman soldiers to spread lies, claiming the disciples stole Jesus' body (see Mt 28:11-15). As MacArthur says "No miracle would have persuaded them to believe. They loved their sin far too much." Notice that these wicked rulers also mocked His claim as King. Can you imagine their faces when He returns as **King of kings and Lord of lords** (Rev 19:16+) and they see Him in unhindered majesty, power and great glory (Rev 1:7+, cf Mt 24:30+)! Woe! No, Jesus won't get off the cross for these fickle fakers, but He will arise from the dead, ascend to Heaven and then rise up from His throne at the right hand of the Father, to return as the conquering Messiah and victorious King.

If this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One- There is no "if" to it -- Jesus in fact is **"the Christ of God, His Chosen One."** What bitter irony that they use these titles sarcastically, but all heaven declares their veracity (cf Rev 5:11-12+! **The Christ** (literally in Greek **Christos** or "Anointed One") in this context is clearly another way of saying the **"Messiah"** and in fact some translations render it as **"God's Messiah"** (Lk 23:35NLT, Lk 23:35CSB). Recall that Jesus had claimed to be just this, but their eyes were spiritually blinded (Lk 22:67, 70+, cf 2 Cor 3:14-16+) and thus that steadfastly rejected Him and His claims.

The irony is that the title **His Chosen One** used sarcastically here by the Jewish rulers, is used by God the Father in His testimony at the Transfiguration declaring "This is My Son, **My Chosen One**; listen to Him!" (Lk 9:35+, cf 1 Peter 2:4+ = Christ "a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is **choice** and precious in the sight of God.").

Note **"this"** or "this one" is used with a sense of contempt or disdain, much like **"this man"** is used by the Jewish leaders in Lk 23:2 when

they brought their accusations of Jesus to Pilate.

Jesus as God's **Chosen One** is the Greek word [eklektos](#) (which usually refers to God's elect, [those chosen by Him for salvation](#)) and is an allusion to God's declaration in Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; **My Chosen** (Lxx = [eklektos](#)) **One** in Whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him (Mt 3:16 = anointing Jesus with supernatural power for ministry! [which is also our continual need!], cf Isa 11:2+); He (THE CHRIST, THE MESSIAH) will bring forth justice to the nations (AT HIS SECOND COMING AND ESTABLISHES HIS MILLENNIAL KINGDOM IN WHICH ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WILL EXPERIENCE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE OF THE KING)." As an aside Jesus is the ultimate Chosen or "Elect One," and our election is really a matter of being chosen in Jesus for Paul explains that God "**chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.(Eph 1:4+).

Save (heal, make well or whole) ([4982](#)) **sozo**, has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. Sozo is sometimes used of physical deliverance from danger of perishing (see Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30; Lk 23:35; Acts 27:20, 27:31), physical healing from sickness (Mt 9:21, 22; Mk 5:23, Acts 4:9), and deliverance from demonic possession (Lk 8:36). More often **sozo** refers to salvation in a spiritual sense to rescue or preserve from eternal death, from judgment, sin, bring salvation, bring to salvation (active sense = Mt 18:11; Lk 7:50; Jn 12:47; Ro 11:14; 1 Cor 1:21; 7:16; Titus 3:5; Hb 7:25; Jas 4:12; 5:20; 1 Pet 3:21 or passive sense = be rescued or saved, attain salvation = Mt 24:13; Mk 10:26; Lk 13:23; 18:26; Jn 3:17; Jn 5:34; Acts 11:14; 15:1, 11; Ro 8:24; 11:26; 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:5; Eph 2:5, 8; 1 Ti 2:4). Jesus' very Name speaks of His primary purpose to save men from their sin - "She (Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save (**sozo**) His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21+) In Mt 1:21 sozo is equated with deliverance from sins (guilt and power of) with Jesus' Name being a transliteration of Joshua meaning "Jehovah is salvation".

SOZO - 108X/101V - bring...safely(1), cured(1), ensure salvation(1), get(1), get well(2), made...well(6), made well(5), preserved(1), recover(1), restore(1), save(36), saved(50), saves(1), saving(1). Matt. 1:21; Matt. 8:25; Matt. 9:21; Matt. 9:22; Matt. 10:22; Matt. 14:30; Matt. 16:25; Matt. 18:11; Matt. 19:25; Matt. 24:13; Matt. 24:22; Matt. 27:40; Matt. 27:42; Matt. 27:49; Mk. 3:4; Mk. 5:23; Mk. 5:28; Mk. 5:34; Mk. 6:56; Mk. 8:35; Mk. 10:26; Mk. 10:52; Mk. 13:13; Mk. 13:20; Mk. 15:30; Mk. 15:31; Mk. 16:16; Lk. 6:9; Lk. 7:50; Lk. 8:12; Lk. 8:36; Lk. 8:48; Lk. 8:50; Lk. 9:24; Lk. 9:56; Lk. 13:23; Lk. 17:19; Lk. 18:26; Lk. 18:42; Lk. 19:10; Lk. 23:35; Lk. 23:37; Lk. 23:39; Jn. 3:17; Jn. 5:34; Jn. 10:9; Jn. 11:12; Jn. 12:27; Jn. 12:47; Acts 2:21; Acts 2:40; Acts 2:47; Acts 4:9; Acts 4:12; Acts 11:14; Acts 14:9; Acts 15:1; Acts 15:11; Acts 16:30; Acts 16:31; Acts 27:20; Acts 27:31; Rom. 5:9; Rom. 5:10; Rom. 8:24; Rom. 9:27; Rom. 10:9; Rom. 10:13; Rom. 11:14; Rom. 11:26; 1 Co. 1:18; 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 3:15; 1 Co. 5:5; 1 Co. 7:16; 1 Co. 9:22; 1 Co. 10:33; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 2:15; Eph. 2:5; Eph. 2:8; 1 Thess. 2:16; 2 Thess. 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Tim. 4:18; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 5:7; Heb. 7:25; Jas. 1:21; Jas. 2:14; Jas. 4:12; Jas. 5:15; Jas. 5:20; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 Pet. 4:18; Jude 1:5; Jude 1:23

Luke 23:36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine,

KJV Luke 23:36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

- Lk 23:11; Ps 69:21; Mt 27:29,30,34,48; Mark 15:19,20,36; John 19:28-30
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

JESUS' MOCKING BY THE ROMAN SOLDIERS

The Romans soldiers carry out the second mocking of Jesus (first = Lk 23:35, third = Lk 23:39). This is the first mention of the role of the Roman soldiers in the crucifixion.

The soldiers also mocked ([empaizo](#)) Him, coming up to Him - [A T Robertson](#) on [mocked Him](#) says "Even the soldiers yielded to the spell and acted like boys in their jeers (A PLAY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE VERB - [empaizo](#)) DERIVED FROM "PAIZO = TO PLAY WITH LIKE A CHILD, FROM "PAIS" = CHILD). Aorist tense here and different verb also from that used of the rulers (THEY WERE IMPERFECT TENSE = OVER AND OVER). They were not so bitter and persistent." Isn't that interesting that the most bitter opponents came not from the rank, idolatrous pagans but from those who claimed to know God. Mark it down, that if you are in ministry, often the most bitter animosity will come from those who claim to be "religious," usually those who are professors of but not "possessors" of Christ. In short, they are sham "saints" (saints who ain't).

Darrell Bock - R. Brown (1994: 997) calls it a "cheap wine" offered as a "burlesque gift." Its sharp taste was said to remove thirst more effectively than water, and since it was cheaper than regular wine it was used among the poor (MM 452-53; SB 2:264; P. Lond. 1245 line 9). Apparently the offer is made as a joke, since it is accompanied with a challenge that Jesus, if he is king, should save himself (Luke 23:37). ([Luke 9:51-24:53 Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

Offering ([prosphero](#)) **Him sour wine** - This is one of three offers of drink to Jesus. The first was the "drugged wine" before His crucifixion which He refused (Mt 27:34, Mk 15:23), the second this passage in which He was offered sour wine and the third just before He died when He cried out "**I am thirsty**" (Jn 19:28 - see discussion below), John recording "A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth."

This verse is a fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 69:21[±] - "They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

What the Bible teaches – It has been suggested that one way of mocking Him would be to hold the desperately needed moisture just out of reach of His mouth. The terrible thirst connected with His crucifixion cannot be more vividly described than in the words (OF THE MESSIANIC PSALM OF DAVID): "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. " (Ps 22:15).

NET Note explains that "**Sour wine** was cheap wine, called in Latin [posca](#), and referred to a cheap vinegar wine diluted heavily with water. It was the drink of slaves and soldiers, and the soldiers who had performed the crucifixion, who had some on hand, now used it to taunt Jesus further."

MacArthur - Unlike the other two times they offered Jesus something to drink (Mt. 27:34, 48), this was a mock act of [obedience](#) and service to Him; they pretended that the sour wine was actually royal wine and offered it to Him as if He were a king. (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Mocked (1702)([empaizo](#) from **en** = in + **paizo** = to play or to sport with or against someone. Paizo is from pais, the word for child, and thus paizo means to act like a child, to sport or jest). **Empaizo** most often means to deride, mock, scoff, ridicule, make fun of, to treat outrageously, to treat someone contemptuously in an insolent and arrogant way, to treat abusively or to play a game with. One use in Mt 2:16+ has a slightly different sense meaning to deceive, to trick, to taunt, to delude. All 13 uses are in the Gospels and most describe the **mocking** of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make fun of Him by pretending that He is not Who He claimed to be or to imitate Him in a distorted manner. It is therefore little surprise that if evil men mocked Him at His first coming, they would mock the sure promise of His Second Coming (2Pe 3:3 = mockers = [empaiktes](#))! These individuals "trifle" with the things of God dealing with them as if they are of no temporal or eternal import. They show their contempt for Christ at His first coming and at His return, mocking the latter by ridiculing and deriding the certainty of His return, their derision motivated by their insolence, disrespect, incredulity and desire to justify their ungodly behavior (if there is no God they reason they cannot sin without fear). As an aside if you are not looking for Him, you will hardly be motivated to be living for Him!

Mocking implies an underlying unyielding pride and a hardness toward God and His holy word. The scoffer refuses to submit to God's Word and stirs up trouble wherever he goes.

Secular Greek writers understood **empaizō** to mean "to mock, to ridicule, to scorn." Homer uses the group for games and dancing. Lack of seriousness is sometimes meant, e.g., when it is asked whether Socrates is speaking in jest. Ships are seen to be playthings of the winds, and humans of fate or the gods. Mockery may be suggested, or the thought of what is frivolous or futile.

Vine - empaizo - a compound of paizo, "to play like a child" (pais), "to sport, jest," prefixed by en, "in" or "at," is used only in the Synoptists, and, in every instance, of the "mockery" of Christ, except in Matthew 2:16 (there in the sense of deluding, or deceiving, of Herod by the wise men) and in Luke 14:29, of ridicule cast upon the one who after laying a foundation of a tower is unable to finish it. The word is used (a) prophetically by the Lord, of His impending sufferings, Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32; (b) of the actual insults inflicted upon Him by the men who had taken Him from Gethsemane, Luke 22:63; by Herod and his soldiers, Luke 23:11; by the soldiers of the governor, Matthew 27:29,31; Mark 15:20; Luke 23:36; by the chief priests, Matthew 27:41; Mark 15:31.

EMPAIZO - 13X/13V - mock(2), mocked(5), mocking(4), ridicule(1), tricked(1). Matt. 2:16; Matt. 20:19; Matt. 27:29; Matt. 27:31; Matt. 27:41; Mk. 10:34; Mk. 15:20; Mk. 15:31; Lk. 14:29; Lk. 18:32; Lk. 22:63; Lk. 23:11; Lk. 23:36

EMPAIZO - 19v in non-apocryphal Septuagint - Ge 39:14, 17 (= make sport); Ex 10:2 (Use of God mocking the Egyptians); Nu 22:29; Jdg 19:25; 1Sa 6:6; 31:4; 1Chr 10:4; 2Chr 36:16; Ps 104:26; Pr 23:35; 27:7; Isa 33:4; Jer 10:15; Ezek 22:5; Nah 2:3; Hab 1:10; Zech 12:3

1 Samuel 31:4 (1Chr 10:4) Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and **make sport of** (Lxx = empaizo) me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it.

2 Chronicles 36:16 but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

Offering (4374)([prosphero](#) from **prós** = to, toward, denotes motion toward a place + **phéro** = bring) means to carry or bring something into the presence of someone. There is no evidence that the Romans actually allowed the liquid to touch His parched tongue, suggesting this was a final way of taunting Jesus! If this was the case, what amazing callousness!

This use of the verb **prosphero** presents an ironic contrast between His birth and His death - Here the pagan idolatrous soldiers offer Jesus sour wine before His death. In Mt 2:11+ the wise men from the east fell to the ground and worshiped Jesus **presenting** (**prosphero**) or offering "to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." In addition, the verb **prosphero** is used to describe Jesus' offering of Himself on the Cross, the writer of Hebrews asking (rhetorically) "how much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit **offered** (**prosphero**) Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:14+, cf Heb 10:11,12+)

Luke 23:37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, **save Yourself!**"

- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS AS KING

King (**basileus**) of the Jews (**loudaios**) - This phrase is used to describe Jesus in all four Gospels and is found overall 18x in 17v, the first use being at His birth "Where is He who has been born **King of the Jews?** For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." (Mt 2:2)

Matt. 2:2; Matt. 27:11; Matt. 27:29; Matt. 27:37; Mk. 15:2; Mk. 15:9; Mk. 15:12; Mk. 15:18; Mk. 15:26; Lk. 23:3; Lk. 23:37; Lk. 23:38; Jn. 18:33; Jn. 18:39; Jn. 19:3; Jn. 19:19; Jn. 19:21

While the Jews taunted Christ from an aspect of full knowledge of His claims and the implications of those claims, the Roman soldiers taunted Christ out of ignorance.

The taunts and mockery by the Roman soldiers could be seen as a fulfillment of Psalm 22:16 which says "For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet." Gentiles were commonly referred to as **dogs**, so certainly this epithet would apply to these pagan soldiers.

Saying, "If You are the (**basileus**) of the Jews (**loudaios**), **save** (**sozo** - **aorist imperative** - do it now!) **Yourself!**" - The "If" introduces a first class conditional statement which could be rephrased "**Since** You are the King of the Jews." Of course the ironic truth is that it was precisely because He refused to save Himself from the physical torture of the Cross that He would be able to save others spiritually. And they were correct that He was the King of the Jews and the King of kings (Rev 19:16+)!

*As someone has well said it could be rightly said that
love kept Jesus on the cross, not nails.*

John MacArthur - They, of course, knew nothing about Jewish religion or theology; they were merely continuing the game they had begun at His trial (Matt. 27:27-30). (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Luke 23:38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

KJV Luke 23:38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

- Lk 23:3; Mt 27:11,37; Mark 15:18,26,32; John 19:3,19-22
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE SUPERScription: KING OF THE JEWS

All four gospels have the phrase "**THE KING OF THE JEWS.**"

Mt 27:37 And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "**THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**"

Mk 15:26 The inscription of the charge against Him read, "**THE KING OF THE JEWS.**"

John 19:19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "**JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**"

Taking all four accounts, the complete title would have been

This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews

You may have seen the acronym [INRI](#) which stands for the Latin inscription IESVS-NAZARENVS-REX-IVDÆORVM = Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum.

John tells us this title "**was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek**," implying that this may have been the actual order (Hebrew at the top, etc) but one cannot be dogmatic.

John Trapp makes an interesting somewhat "interpretative" observation that "This venerable eulogy and epitaph, set upon our Savior's cross, proclaimed Him King of all religion, having reference to the Hebrews; of all wisdom, to the Greeks; of all power, to the Latins...." In Hebrew, for the Jews who gloried in the law; in Greek, for the Grecians who gloried in wisdom; in Latin, for the Romans who most gloried in dominion and power.

Merrill Tenney - "Aramaic, for the local inhabitants; Latin, for the officials; Greek, the lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean world."

Another way to look at this tripartite title is that it spoke clearly (and accurately from a Biblical perspective, albeit that was certainly not Pilate's intent) to all classes of spectators who either passed by that fateful day or came and stood to see the entire spectacle. In short, the title spoke (1) to the world of religion (Hebrew), the world of politics (Latin - Rome) and the world of philosophy (Greek). In addition, by writing "**the King**" in three languages, Pilate clearly annoyed the Jews by making them read the title three times. Pilate was now back in control of the situation and he responded with an interesting Greek phrase which contained a double Greek perfect tense, *ho gegrapha gegrapha*— which means in essence that the past act of writing the words remained, would continue to remain and would not be altered.

A T Robertson adds that the Greek phrase *ho gegrapha gegrapha* places "emphasis on the permanence of the accusation on the board. Pilate has a sudden spirit of stubbornness in this detail to the surprise of the chief priests. Technically he was correct, for he had condemned Jesus on this charge made by the chief priests."

Warren Wiersbe - The fact that this title was written in Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin is significant. For one thing, it shows that our Lord was crucified in a place where many peoples and nations met, a cosmopolitan place. Hebrew is the language of religion, Greek of philosophy, and Latin of law; and all three combined to crucify the Son of God. But what He did on the cross, He did for the whole world! In this Gospel, John emphasizes the worldwide dimensions of the work of Christ. Without realizing it, Pilate wrote a "Gospel tract" when he prepared this title; for one of the thieves discovered that Jesus was King, and he asked entrance into His kingdom. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

Adam Clarke has an interesting note on Pilate's *ho gegrapha gegrapha* — "That is, I will not alter what I have written. The Roman laws forbade the sentence to be altered when once pronounced; and as this inscription was considered as the sentence pronounced against our Lord, therefore, it could not be changed."

What was the purpose of this superscription? Normally the **inscription** would give the reason for the victim's execution.

MacArthur however feels that "instead of listing the crime for which He was being executed, this inscription" represented Pilate's authorship." (Jn 19:19). While I do not often disagree with Dr MacArthur, in this case it seems clear that both Matthew and Mark identify this inscription as "**the charge against Him**" (Mt 27:37, Mk 15:26).

A T Robertson agrees writing that all four titles "refer to the charge written at the top on the cross giving, as was the custom, the accusation on which the criminal was condemned, with his name and residence. Put all the reports together and we have: This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. This full title appeared in **Latin** for law, in **Aramaic** for the Jews, in **Greek** for everybody (John 19:20)....Latin was the legal and official language; Aramaic (Hebrew) was for the benefit of the people of Jerusalem; Greek was for everybody who passed by who did not know Aramaic."

Now there was also an inscription above Him - **Above** is [epi](#) meaning upon thus the inscription was "above His head" (Mt 27:37). This fact would support the premise that Jesus' was on a traditional shaped cross and not a "T-shaped" cross, for the latter would have had no place to attach the inscription **above Him**.

NET Note on the **type of cross** - John says simply that the notice was fastened to the cross. Luke 23:38 says the inscription was placed "over him" (Jesus), and Matt 27:37 that it was placed over Jesus' head. On the basis of Matthew's statement Jesus' cross is usually depicted as the [crux immissa](#), the cross which has the crossbeam set below the top of the upright beam. The other commonly used type of cross was the [crux commissa](#), which had the crossbeam atop the upright beam. But Matthew's statement is not conclusive, since with the crux commissa the body would have sagged downward enough to allow the placard to be placed above Jesus' head. The placard with Pilate's inscription is mentioned in all the gospels, but for John it was certainly ironic. Jesus really was the King of the Jews, although he was a king rejected by his own people (cf. John 1:11+). Pilate's own motivation for placing the title over Jesus is considerably more obscure. He may have meant this as a final mockery of Jesus himself, but Pilate's earlier mockery of Jesus seemed to be motivated by a desire to gain pity from the Jewish authorities in order to have him released. More likely Pilate saw this as a subtle way of getting back at the Jewish authorities who had pressured him into the execution of one he considered to be an innocent man.

Inscription (1923)(**epigraphe** from **epí** = on, upon + **grápho** = write. **Epigraphy** = study of inscriptions or epigraphs) means writing upon something and in the NT is used only 5 times which result in a striking dichotomy. On one hand most of the inscriptions refer to the leader of the world system at that time (Caesar - Mt 22:20, Mk 12:16, Lk 20:24), but the other two uses refer to the Leader of the Jews (and ultimately the Leader of the world), Jesus. What a contrast in these two "inscriptions," one on a coin, the other on a cross, one reflecting temporal earthly values (money), the other reflecting eternal heavenly values (salvation)! The difference could not have been more striking!

John 19:19, 20 use a different word (only in John, not in Lxx) for **inscription**, the Greek noun **titlos** (5102), which was a brief notice used for identification. It is a Latin loanword (Latin - titulus) and in the NT is the notice giving the reason for Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion.

France adds that "The written charge (or **titulus**) was normally carried before a criminal on the way to execution, or hung around his neck, and would then be fixed to the cross, thus reinforcing the deterrent effect of the punishment." (See [The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

William L Lane is probably correct when he says "The wording was designed to convey a subtle insult to Jewish pretensions and to mock all attempts to assert the sovereignty of a subject territory. The detail concerning the inscription, which conforms to the Roman penal procedure and must reflect eyewitness report, is a solid historical fact (see note 60 at bottom of [Page 568](#)) It provides the unimpeachable information that Jesus went to His death as the Messiah." (See [The Gospel of Mark - Page 568](#))

Whether it was Pilate's intent to mock the Jews or he had some other motive, this title clearly evoked a reaction from the Jews calling for him to change the title, but Pilate remained unmoved by their protests...

Therefore many of the Jews read ([anaginosko](#) - NOTE IT WAS MEANT TO BE READ!) this inscription (**titlos**), for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city (NEAR BUT OUTSIDE - SEE [EXCELLENT DIAGRAM ABOVE](#) - Heb 13:11,12+); and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "**Do not write** ([present imperative with a negative](#)), **'The King of the Jews'**; but that He said, **'I am King of the Jews.'**" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written (perfect tense - stands written!) I have written (perfect tense - stands written!)." (John 19:20-22+)

Warren Wiersbe comments that "It was providential that Jesus was crucified between the two thieves, for this gave both of them equal access to the Saviour. Both could read Pilate's superscription, "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," and both could watch Him as He graciously gave His life for the sins of the world." (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Courageous -Luke).

In another comment **Wiersbe** has an interesting (but [suppositional](#)) thought "It may be that the message of this sign first aroused the hopes of the repentant thief. He may have reasoned: 'If His name is Jesus, then He is a Saviour. If He is from Nazareth, then He would identify with rejected people. If He has a kingdom, then perhaps there is room for me!' That is possible, but I think more impressive on the heart and mind of this thief was (1) hearing Jesus' message of warning to the weeping women on the road to the Cross (Lk 23:28-31), (2) watching Jesus refuse to respond to the hatred hurled at Him (Lk 23:35, etc, cf 1 Pe 2:23+), and (3) instead responding with a prayer for forgiveness (Lk 23:34). Ultimately, whatever this thief was responding to, it was clear that the Holy Spirit was at work behind the scenes convicting him (Jn 16:8, Jn 3:3-8).

MacArthur - Verse 38 notes that as was customary for crucified criminals, there was also an inscription nailed to the cross above Jesus. But instead of listing the crime for which He was being executed, this inscription read, "This is the king of the Jews." Combining all the gospel accounts reveals that the full text of the inscription was "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The inscription was the work of Pilate (John 19:19); it was his revenge on the Jewish leaders, who had forced him to execute a man he had declared innocent. They vociferously objected to the wording and insisted that he reword it to read that Jesus merely claimed to be Israel's king. However Pilate resolutely refused to change it, declaring, "What I have written I have written" (John 19:22). (See context in [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Guzik makes an interesting point - Kings of this world take their throne through others dying. Jesus was proclaimed as King to the whole world through His own death. ([Luke 23](#))

R Alan Cole - To the disciples, it was no irony, but God's own vindication of his Son, even in the hour of his death. Later, hymn writers delighted to use the concept of the King, crowned at last, reigning from the tree. (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Mark)

[Crown Him with many crowns.](#)

The Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns
All music but its own!

Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King

Thro' all eternity.

Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that Jesus is the King of the Jews?](#)
- [Why is Jesus often referred to as Jesus of Nazareth?](#)

QUESTION - [What does INRI stand for?](#)

ANSWER - John 19:19 records, "Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." John 19:20 continues, "Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek." Today, many times when the cross of Jesus is displayed, the letters INRI are placed on the sign above the cross. In Latin, the text "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" would have been written, "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum." Abbreviated, this phrase results in "INRI." It is unlikely that the letters INRI were truly on the sign that Pilate placed over Jesus' head, as John 19:20 specifically states that the sign was written in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.

Although John's gospel refers to the writing as a "title," Mark and Matthew both refer to it as an "accusation." It was customary to set up over the heads of persons crucified the crime for which they suffered, and the name of the sufferer. The accusation on which Jesus had been condemned by Pilate was his claiming to be the King of the Jews. Ironically, the "crime" for which Jesus was crucified is not a crime at all, but an absolutely true statement. Not only is Jesus King of the Jews, He is the King of all – the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14 and 19:16). He is King over all the universe and all its inhabitants. And it was not any crime of His own that was nailed to the cross; it was the crimes (sins) of everyone who would ever put his or her faith in Him for salvation. He has "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

Just as the title King of the Jews was written in three languages, so do those of all nations and languages recognize Him as Savior, as indeed He is of all the elect of God whom He saves from all their sins, by bearing them in His own body on the cross, and of whom He is the able and willing, the perfect and complete, the only and everlasting Savior.

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

KJV Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

- Lk 17:34-36; Mt 27:44; Mark 15:32
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE IMPENITENT THIEF'S PEJORATIVES

A [pejorative](#) is a word or phrase that has negative connotations or that is intended to disparage or belittle;

Luke's account of the two thieves is unique, for Mark and Matthew only refer to the insulting of Jesus, not the conversion of one of the two thieves..

Mt 27:44+ The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

Mk 15:32+ "Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

One of the criminals ([kakourgos](#)) who were hanged there was hurling abuse ([blasphemeo](#)) at Him, saying - Luke has just one of the criminals **hurling abuse**, but from both Matthew and Mark's accounts we can determine that at the outset even the thief who was later converted was joining in the abuse of Jesus. **Criminals** is a somewhat generic description of evil doers, but Mk 15:27+ is more specific, labeling them as "**two robbers**" where the Greek word [lestes](#) for **robbers** means violent robbers, and so not surprisingly was the same term used to describe Barabbas, who had "committed murder in the insurrection." (Mk 15:7+).

The one criminal was **Hurling abuse ([blasphemeo](#))** or blaspheming Jesus and in the imperfect tense pictures him blaspheming over and over, again and again! (Woe! Imagine what the [Great White Throne judgment](#) will be like for this man!) The idea this wicked man blaspheming Jesus includes several ideas - literally to **speak to harm** and in general therefore means to bring Jesus into ill repute and so to slander Him, to defame Him (to harm the reputation of by libel or slander), **speak evil** of Him, to **rail at** Him (revile or scold in harsh, insolent,

or abusive language and rail stresses an unrestrained berating), to **speak calumny** at Him (noun form = a misrepresentation intended to blacken another's reputation = the act of uttering false charges or misrepresentations maliciously calculated to damage another's reputation), to **calumniate** Him (verb form = to utter maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about - calumniate imputes malice to the speaker and falsity to the assertions)

Are You not the Christ? - This phrase is meant to be a more piercing and bitter [taunt](#) than the phrase "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Lk 23:37)

Save ([sozo](#) - [aorist imperative](#) - do it now!) **Yourself and us!** - This taunt is repeated for the third time (Mt 27:40, Mk 15:30 - those passing by; soldiers in Lk 23:37). This is fascinating. This thief is actually crying out to the Lord Jesus for salvation. Was he saved? I think not. First, he was not asking for eternal salvation, but salvation from the agony of his crucifixion. Notice he does not cry out "**save...me**" but "**save...us**," whereas the penitent thief personalizes his requests crying "**Remember me.**" (Lk 23:42) Secondly, this thief had no fear of God (cf Ro 3:18+). Thirdly, he exhibits no evidence of repentance as does the other thief (Lk 23:41,42).

Related Resource:

- See [Four Episodes of Mocking the King of kings](#)

Hurling abuse ([987](#)) **blasphemeo** derived from **bláx** = sluggish, slow, stupid + **phémē** = rumor, fame) OR MORE LIKELY (derived from **bláptō** = to hurt, injure, harm + **phémē** from **phēmí** = to speak) means literally **to speak to harm** and in general therefore means to bring into ill repute and so to slander, to **defame** (to harm the reputation of by libel or slander), speak evil of, to **rail at** (revile or scold in harsh, insolent, or abusive language and rail stresses an unrestrained berating), to speak **calumny** (noun form = a misrepresentation intended to blacken another's reputation = the act of uttering false charges or misrepresentations maliciously calculated to damage another's reputation), to **calumniate** (verb form = to utter maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about - calumniate imputes malice to the speaker and falsity to the assertions)

Life Application Bible Commentary – PERSPECTIVE - Have you ever listened to two people describe an event from completely different perspectives—a car accident, perhaps, or a political debate? Their descriptions sound so divergent that you may wonder if they are talking about the same thing. Luke recorded something like that in 23:39-41: two criminals, dying the same horrifying death, on opposite sides of the cross of Christ. One saw another failed opportunity to get himself off the hook; the other saw and understood that the way of salvation was opening up for himself and the whole world. The first man (apparently) died in his sins; the second received forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. Perspective makes all the difference. Ask God to help you get or maintain proper perspective in your walk with him—that of a forgiven sinner made clean by the grace of God. (See [Luke](#))

Luke 23:40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

KJV Luke 23:40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

- **But the other answered, and rebuking him said** Leviticus 19:17; Ephesians 5:11
- **Do you not even fear God** Lk 12:5; Ps 36:1; Rev 15:4
- **Since you are under the same sentence of condemnation** 2 Chronicles 28:22; Jeremiah 5:3; Rev 16:11
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE PENITENT THIEF'S FEAR OF GOD

The story of the penitent thief found only in the Gospel of Luke. What makes this story so amazing is that his body was enduring the agony, and suffering of crucifixion, but in a moment, his mind became clear, clearly evidence of God's sovereign, miraculous intervention.

John MacArthur gives an excellent summary of the numerous ironies at Calvary - This (the penitent thief) is one of the many ironies at Calvary. Jesus was being mocked because He could not save Himself, yet He saved others, including the thief, by not saving Himself. He was accused by the rulers of Israel of claiming to be a king, and hence a threat to the power and authority of Rome. They warned Pilate that He needed to be executed before He could lead a revolt. And yet the same people who claimed to be protecting Rome from Jesus mocked, scorned, and ridiculed Him as impotent and helpless. He was treated like a king in a sarcastically cruel, comedic jest, yet He is God's true King. He was accused of blasphemy against God by those who blasphemed Him, the true God. Jesus, the innocent, righteous one, was executed by the guilty, turning justice on its head. He was cursed by His enemies, who hated Him, but cursed in an infinitely greater way by His Father, who loves Him. The One who gives life and is life, died that those who are dead might receive life. (See [Luke 1-24 MacArthur](#)

But - This term of contrast introduces an amazing 180 degree change of direction! One moment a reviler. In the next moment a "repenter!" How powerful is the convicting, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit! As an aside, there is no human too wretched, too far from God, too evil, that God's Spirit cannot in a moment circumcise their heart so that darkness becomes light and Jesus is seen as the only Name in Whom there is salvation (Acts 4:12). Amazing grace indeed.

The other answered, and rebuking ([epitimao](#) - imperfect = repeatedly rebuking) **him said** - As alluded to above note that he had initially joined in with the blasphemous abuse of Jesus (Mt 27:44 Mk 15:32) Clearly this thief had experienced a supernatural, miraculous change of heart. To go from **insulting** Jesus in Mt 27:44, Mk 15:32 to proclaiming Him as innocent of any wrongdoing is a wonderful example of genuine repentance!

The Spirit of God had convicted him of His sin and granted him **repentance** (Ro 2:4+) and faith and eternal life! His eyes were opened to the grand drama in which he was a participant. The unbelieving thief, the godless soldiers and Jewish leaders were blinded to the truth of the moment. This reminds me of Jesus' words to Paul regarding the Gospel he was to take to the Gentiles **"to open their eyes** so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18+). Indeed, the spiritual eyes of the penitent thief had been supernaturally enlightened on this fateful day! Oh, the amazing work of grace in a sinner's heart!

The sudden change in the penitent thief also recalls the abrupt change in Saul (later Paul) who was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians, Luke recording

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, **"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"** 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, **"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."** (Acts 9:1-6+)

So the penitent thief, like Saul (Paul) in a supernatural moment was "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14+). The Redeemer had rescued the sinful repentant thief and in so doing gave us a **wonderful example of conversion under the Old Covenant**, showing in essence how all saints in the OT were converted. Yes, Jesus was present, but we do not know how much he truly understood of Christ's redemptive work, and yet God saved him based upon his incomplete and yet sincere, trusting understanding that he had of the Messiah. The Redeemer had not yet borne this man's sin, and yet God credited his understanding of and belief in Messiah as righteousness, just as He had done with Abraham hundreds of years earlier (Ge 15:6+).

Do you not even fear ([phobeo](#)) **God** - Absence of fear of God is characteristic of non-believers as Paul described in Romans 3:9-17+, which he summed up with the words **"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."** (Ro 3:18+). They scoff at words like Jesus spoke in Luke 12 declaring "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: **fear** (aorist imperative) the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" (Lk 12:4-5+) In short, the unregenerate do not fear God! Solomon was correct that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Pr 1:7) Clearly, the penitent thief had been miraculously converted from no fear of God to a right fear of God and the beginning of knowledge about God and in this context His Son, Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT - If you ask me "Do you fear God?" My answer is "Absolutely I fear God. I'm not afraid of God, but I fear God." Let's illustrate the difference. Do you think an electrician goes to work is afraid of electricity? He couldn't live if he were. He would die of fright. He is not afraid of electricity, but he fears electricity. Do you see the difference? He "respects" electricity but does not have a shaking fear of it or he could not do his job. The fear of the Lord is a holy respect, awe, and sense of reverence that we have for Almighty God. Most of us are not afraid of policemen, and yet in another sense we fear policemen. If you are driving down the highway and see a black and white vehicle on the side of the road, the first thing you do is to check the speedometer and/or put your foot on the break! You have a healthy fear of the traffic

Luke frequently alludes to fearing God as a proper attitude - Luke 1:50; 12:4-5; 18:4; Acts 10:2, 22, 35; Acts 13:16, 26.

Since you are under the same sentence of condemnation ([krima](#)) - The NLT picks up the sense of this statement rendering it "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die?"

Darrell L Bock comments "The criminal offering the rebuke clearly sees the event as God's just judgment on them, but he also sees the taunting of Jesus as an expression of intense hypocrisy for which the other criminal would pay. His remarks are really a commentary on all who taunt Jesus, but especially the one who is justly suffering for crimes committed. God will take offense at what is said about his agent, since Jesus suffers death unrighteously. The criminal asks, "How can you taunt this innocent man when you are deservedly suffering the same sentence? What gives you the right and the nerve to put him down?"" ([Luke 9:51-24:53 Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

THOUGHT - You may be reading the story of the repentant, believing thief and thinking "Now wait a minute! I may not be perfect. I have my share of faults. But I'm not in the same league as this robber!" **Adrian Rogers** explains that we are all potentially thieves - Let me tell you something friend, if you're not serving God, you're a thief. You say, Now wait a minute. Don't call me a thief. I'll say it again. If you're not serving God, you're a thief. God is the land owner. God is the landlord. You're breathing God's air. You're walking on God's green earth. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." You're eating God's sustenance. You live, you exist because God made you, God created you. You belong to Him. And if you're here and drawing these things from God and not serving God, you're as much a thief as if you were representing a particular company, drawing a salary and not working for that company."

Rebuking (censuring) (2008)(**epitimaō** from **epi** = upon + **timao** = to honor) means literally to put honor upon and then to mete out due measure and so then to find fault with, to censure severely, to rebuke, to express strong disapproval of, or to denounce (cp the incredible example in Mt 16:22). Note that one may rebuke another without producing conviction of guilt, either because, as in Mt 16:22 (Jesus rebuked by Peter, cp similar uses in Mt 19:13; Mk 8:32; 10:13; Lk 18:15; 19:39) the one rebuked is not guilty of any fault or the rebuke may be insufficient to produce acknowledgement of fault by the offender (cf the repentant thief's rebuke of the non-repentant thief on the cross = Lk 23:40). **Wuest** notes that **epitimaō** "In classical Greek its predominating sense is that of severe, strenuous reproach for unworthy deeds or acts. In this sense, the word carries at bottom, a suggestion of a charge under penalty."

EPITIMAO - 30X/30V - **rebuke(6), rebuked(13), rebuking(3), sternly telling(2), sternly told(1), warned(5)**. Matt. 8:26; Matt. 12:16; Matt. 16:20; Matt. 16:22; Matt. 17:18; Matt. 19:13; Matt. 20:31; Mk. 1:25; Mk. 3:12; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 8:30; Mk. 8:32; Mk. 8:33; Mk. 9:25; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:48; Lk. 4:35; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 8:24; Lk. 9:21; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 9:55; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 18:15; Lk. 18:39; Lk. 19:39; Lk. 23:40; 2 Tim. 4:2; Jude 1:9

Condemnation (Judgment) (2917)(**krima** from **krino** = to judge, the suffix **-ma** indicating the result of the judging, ie, that is, the result of making a decision) describes a judicial sentence from a magistrate (his pronouncement). It describes one deciding a question of legal right or wrong, and thus determining the innocence or guilt of the accused and assigning appropriate punishment. The closely related word **krisis** refers to the **process** or **act** of judging (instead of the **result** of the judging). **Krima** is usually the decision which results from an investigation and is usually used in an unfavorable sense, certainly the case in the present context!

Vine adds that "**Krima** is usually the decision which results from an investigation, just as **krisis** is the process of investigation; sometimes the two are interchanged, as in 1Pe 4:17, **krima**, where the process of judgment rather than the resulting decision seems to be intended. Hence **krima** is used of the estimate one man forms of another, Mt 7:2-note, and of the decision of human tribunals, Lk 23:40, of the decisions of God, in general, Ro 11:33, and in particular concerning the devil, 1 Timothy 3:6, and man, Mark 12:40 and Gal 5:10."

KRIMA - 28X/28V - **condemnation(8), judgment(15), judgments(1), lawsuits(1), sentence(1), sentence of condemnation(1), way(1)**. Matt. 7:2; Matt. 23:14; Mk. 12:40; Lk. 20:47; Lk. 23:40; Lk. 24:20; Jn. 9:39; Acts 24:25; Rom. 2:2; Rom. 2:3; Rom. 3:8; Rom. 5:16; Rom. 11:33; Rom. 13:2; 1 Co. 6:7; 1 Co. 11:29; 1 Co. 11:34; Gal. 5:10; 1 Tim. 3:6; 1 Tim. 5:12; Heb. 6:2; Jas. 3:1; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:3; Jude 1:4; Rev. 17:1; Rev. 18:20; Rev. 20:4

Luke 23:41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

KJV Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

- **And we indeed are suffering justly** Lk 15:18,19; Leviticus 26:40,41; Joshua 7:19,20; 2 Chronicles 33:12; Ezra 9:13; Nehemiah 9:3; Daniel 9:4; James 4:7; 1 John 1:8,9
- **but this man has done nothing wrong** Lk 23:41; 22:69,70; Mt 27:4,19,24,54; 1 Peter 1:19
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE PENITENT THIEF'S SENSE OF SINFULNESS

And we indeed are suffering justly (**dikaïos**) - What is this criminal doing? Is he not confessing his sins and acknowledging he justly deserved the punishment he and the other criminal were experiencing. How could this transformation have occurred except that the Holy Spirit convicted him of "sin, and righteousness, and judgment." (Jn 16:8+).The thief was transformed. As someone has said

"Nature forms us;
sin deforms us;
school informs us;

Christ (His Spirit) transforms us."

What the Bible teaches – The admission of his guilt and the agreement with his condemnation is the powerful evidence of true repentance. A right view of himself and his sin was the precursor to a right view of Christ and His work. ([What the Bible Teaches: Luke](#))

For we are receiving what we deserve (axios) for our deeds - NET "what we did ([prasso](#))" - He acknowledges the righteous justice he and the other had received. His punishment was fair and just. Today we might say he "owned" his sins. This is a crucial dynamic in salvation. When we proclaim the Gospel, if we fail to emphasize that we are all sinners, then how can they even see their need for a Savior. The Good News is not God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Just believe in Jesus. That is a defective "gospel" for it fails to confront the person with the very thing the penitent thief realized -- I am a sinner and I deserve the punishment of death for my sins against a Holy God (cf "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" = Ro 3:23, "the wages of sin is death" = Ro 6:23). The penitent thief came to recognize not only his sins against society warranted his place on the cross, but he also came to recognize that he was sinning against God Himself in blaspheming Him (and again how much of the truth about the Messiah he knew we cannot say, but he undoubtedly knew something -- e.g., he knew Jesus had a "Kingdom" in Lk 23:42).

In essence this thief said, "We are suffering the judgement of God. We are suffering justly. We are receiving what we deserve." Paul said it clearly when he wrote "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Ti 1:15). Jesus saves sinners!

The repentant thief reminds us of the repentant tax collector in Luke 18:13+ who cried 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' Note that he recognized his need for mercy! That is where true salvation must begin! No one can be saved who has not first seen himself or herself as a lost sinner. The self-righteous Pharisee spoke two verses filled with 5 "I's" (Lk 18:11-12+ - "I" is the middle letter of sin!) His focus was on self, not his sin which would have awakened a need for a Savior. Jesus concluded this parable declaring "I tell you, this man (TAX COLLECTOR) went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:13+)

THE PENITENT THIEF'S SENSE OF THE SAVIOR'S SINLESSNESS

But this man has done ([oudeis](#) - absolutely) nothing wrong ([atopos](#)) - His spiritual eyes had been opened to see that the One Who hanging next to Him was "unblemished and spotless" (1 Peter 1:19). How did he know? What had he heard in the city? We cannot say, but we can say he heard or knew enough to recognize Jesus as innocent.

Jesus Saves Sinners - Years ago I heard of a woman who was doing work in a jail service, and she was preaching or ministering or sharing with the prisoners behind the bars. One man came to her, came up close, and put his face right there against the jail bars. And he said, Lady, can you please help me. He said, I am an awful, terrible, horrible sinner. She said, Thank God. He said, No you didn't understand what I said. I'm an awful terrible, horrible sinner. She said, Thank God. He said, Lady please don't make fun of me. Don't ridicule me. She said, I'm not making fun of you, I'm not ridiculing you. I thank God that you've confessed that you're a sinner because now you can be saved. Listen, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (A. Rogers)

Luke 23:42 And he was saying, "Jesus, **remember me when You come in Your kingdom!**"

KJV Luke 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (NOTE KJV ADDS "LORD" WHICH IS NOT PRESENT IN MOST MODERN MANUSCRIPTS).

- **Jesus, remember me** Lk 18:13; Ps 106:4,5; John 20:28; Acts 16:31; 20:21; Romans 10:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:10,11; 1 Peter 2:6,7; 1 John 5:1,11-13
- **when You come in** Lk 12:8; John 1:49; Romans 10:9,10
- **Your kingdom** Lk 24:26; Ps 2:6; Isaiah 9:6,7; 53:10-12; Daniel 7:13,14; 1 Peter 1:11
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

THE PENITENT THIEF'S SENSE OF JESUS' ABILITY TO SAVE

After addressing the other thief on the other side of Jesus (which would mean quite a painful effort to make sure he was heard) then he fixed his gaze on Jesus and directly addressed Him and in so doing reminds one of the Lord's great words in Isaiah 45:22 (the verse God used to save C H Spurgeon)

Look unto Me ("Turn to Me" = NAS), and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

And so the thief turned to Jesus and looked with eyes opened by faith seeking grace and mercy. In essence he offered a prayer to Jesus! As **John Calvin** said "Conversion cannot be separated from prayer."

Vance Havner said "Conversion is an empty-handed turning from sin to the Saviour."

Thomas Hooker rightly said that "The almighty power of God in the conversion of a sinner is the most mysterious of all the works of God."

Jesus, remember me - What a wonderful, faith-filled request. He is hanging on the cross, laboring to breathe, knowing death is soon to come and yet his eyes have been opened to see that this life is not truly the end of one's life. What is the thief doing in this verse? Clearly he moves from the awareness of his sinful condition, to an awareness of the sinless condition of Jesus, to an awareness of his need for forgiveness. He had heard Jesus repeatedly say those words (Father forgive them...) earlier and now he seeks for divine forgiveness of his sins that will bring him into the Kingdom of Christ. And remember this thief had been on the road (ahead of or behind Jesus) carrying his cross and very likely heard Jesus' last words before the Cross as He turned and addressed the women (Lk 23:27-28) and warned them to "stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," etc. (Lk 23:28ff)

John MacArthur says it this way "He (THE PENITENT THIEF) based his request on Christ's prayer that God would forgive those who crucified Him, which gave him hope that he too might receive forgiveness. He expressed belief that Jesus is the Savior, since he would not have asked for entrance to the kingdom unless he believed Jesus was willing and able to provide it. His was the plea of a broken, penitent, unworthy sinner for grace, mercy, and forgiveness." (See context in [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

NET Note - **Jesus, remember me** is a statement of faith from the cross, as Jesus saves another even while he himself is dying. This man's faith had shown itself when he rebuked the other thief. He hoped to be with Jesus sometime in the future in the kingdom.

Remember (a bold aorist imperative)(3403)([mimnesko](#)) is the thief's plea for Jesus to call him to mind, to think about him again. For him to even make such a request presupposes that he believes that Jesus will be at a different place in the future, and when He is there the thief pleads for Him to keep him in mind!

When You come in Your kingdom - This nameless thief eyes are opened to recognize Jesus as a King Who will one day rule over His **kingdom**. How did he know Jesus would come into His **Kingdom**? We cannot be sure, but as a Jew (which he surely was), he had some knowledge of the future Kingdom of God which would be ruled by the Messiah. And so he in essence acknowledges that Jesus is in fact the long expected Messiah. Notice something else he realized -- The thief knew that all 3 on the cross would die and yet his question clearly reflects an understanding that although Jesus would die, He would live again. How much did he know of the resurrection? We cannot state with certainty, but we know that Jesus had just recently raised Lazarus from the dead and that some Jews had "beheld what He had done" and "believed in Him." (Jn 11:45). The resurrection of a man from the dead surely must have spread throughout the city. Had the thief heard this news? We will have to wait until we talk with him in heaven! Also as a Jew he may have been aware of some of the OT prophecies that spoke of resurrection (keeping in mind that his spiritual eyes had now been opened), so that truth that heretofore was hidden to his understanding, now was understandable. Now he might understand a passage like Daniel 12:2 in which Daniel recorded "'Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.'" (note).

Perhaps he had read or been taught about this fact from the prophecy of Daniel which says

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 **"And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom,** That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13,14+)

There was a man in London whose name was Mr. Peas. His name was literally Solomon Peas, P-E-A-S, Mr. Peas. Mr. Peas wrote these words and had them put it on his tomb stone: Beneath these clouds and beneath these trees lies the body of Solomon Peas. This is not Peas, it's only the pod. Peas has shelled out and gone home to God. Now friend, that's exactly what happened to this thief. Jesus said to this thief, "Today you'll be with me in Paradise." Somewhere in a Palestinian grave are the moldering bones of that thief. But I want to tell you right now that thief is face to face with Jesus because he simply prayed and said, "Lord remember me." (Adrian Roger's - The Theology of a Thief)

Spurgeon - Dr. Hanna has beautifully said: "Here, amid the triumph of enemies, and the failure of the faith of friends, is one who discerns, even through the dark envelope which covers it, the hidden glory of the Redeemer, and openly hails him as his Lord and King. Marvellous, indeed, the faith in our Lord's divinity which sprung up so suddenly in such an unlikely region. Are we wrong in saying that, at the particular moment when that testimony to Christ's divinity was borne, there was not another full believer in that divinity but the dying thief?... And what a tenderness of conscience is here; what deep reverence for God; what devout submission to the divine will; what entire relinquishment of all personal grounds of confidence before God; what a vivid realising of the world of spirits; what a humble trust in Jesus; what a zeal for the Saviour's honour; what an indignation at the unworthy treatment he was receiving! May we not take that catalogue of the fruits of genuine repentance which an apostle has drawn up for us, and applying it here, say of this man's repentance: Behold what carefulness it wrought in him; yea, what clearing of himself; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things he approved himself to be a changed man, in all the desires and dispositions and purposes of his heart."

David Jeremiah - AMAZING GRACE - LUKE 23:42 (See [Discovering God: 365 Daily Devotions - Page 355](#))

You may know some people who believe that the course they set out on early in life cannot be altered. These people don't do anything to change their circumstances because it seems to be too late. Their fates are sealed in their minds.

Others are exemplary and inspiring in their ability to see that it is never too late to change. Whether it is a hardened prisoner who finally turns to Christ, or an ailing senior citizen who resolves to get right with God before the end of his life, these people know something that the thief on the cross in today's passage knew—that change is always possible.

The repentant thief on the cross was so certain of Jesus' deity that he pleaded with the Lord to remember him when He entered heaven. After living a life of sin, he saw in an instant that there was another way. While it was very, very late in this man's life, it wasn't too late to turn to Jesus. It isn't too late for you, either.

Isn't it inspiring to know that Jesus loves you so much? What amazing grace that our Savior would offer eternity to all of us—no matter who we are.

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. AUGUSTINE

Remember Me

Read: Luke 23:39-43

Remember me when You come into Your kingdom. —Luke 23:42

Matthew Henshaw got his name into the Guinness Book of World Records in an unusual way. After swallowing a 15.9-inch sword, Henshaw attached a 40-pound sack of potatoes to the handle of the sword and held it for 5 seconds. (This is not recommended.)

Henshaw and others like him have gone to extraordinary lengths to have their names memorialized in the world's most famous record book. The longing for immortality compels people to do many things—some remarkable, and some bizarre.

The immortality Jesus offers has nothing to do with anything we do. In fact, after giving His disciples the authority to do truly remarkable things (Luke 10:17-19), Jesus said, "Do not rejoice . . . that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (v.20).

At Golgotha, an unnamed thief believed that message just in time (Luke 23:40-42). He understood that eternal life had nothing to do with what he had done—good or bad. It had to do with what Jesus was doing—giving His own life so that even the undeserving could be welcomed into heaven by God. The important thing is being remembered not by others, but by God. By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood—
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
[Hallelujah, what a Savior!](#)
—Bliss

Our lives matter because God loves us.

Luke 23:43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

KJV Luke 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

- **Today** Lk 15:4,5,20-24; 19:10; Job 33:27-30; Ps 32:5; 50:15; Isaiah 1:18,19; Isaiah 53:11; 55:6-9; 65:24; Micah 7:18; Mt 20:15,16; Romans 5:20,21; 1 Timothy 1:15,16; Hebrews 7:25
- **You shall be with me** John 14:3; 17:24; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23
- **In paradise** 2 Corinthians 12:4; Rev 2:7
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS](#) - James Stalker
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Related Passage:

Luke 19:10+ "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

THE PENITENT THIEF'S ETERNAL HOME - PARADISE

And He said to him, Truly I say to you (See [Table of Jesus Seven Sayings from the Cross](#)) - Notice Jesus adds "**Truly**" which is the word "**amen**," because He desired the penitent thief might know beyond a shadow of a doubt where he would be go the moment he passed out of this present earthly life. What Jesus told him was surely incredible and "**Truly**" is like a divine "exclamation point." Yes, a convicted felon dying on a cross, a man the Jews would have regarded as unredeemable, was in fact guaranteed by the Redeemer Himself that he would be rescued out of death into life. In John 5:24 Jesus had clearly stated "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." That verse applied to this guilty robber whose sin abounded to the point that it warranted death on a cross. But where his sin had abounded, God's grace super-abounded. He would suffer death, but he would receive eternal life and never come into judgment. Indeed he would soon pass out of death on the cross into life with the Christ! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

THOUGHT: To the very end Jesus lived the truth of Luke 19:10, to save those the lost even on the Cross. Jesus is our example to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21+). It follows (pun intended) that if we seek to follow Him we too will stay focused on mission (so to speak) until the very end of our days. Would God grant us to share the Gospel with and lead someone to Paradise while we are even laying on our deathbed. That "deathbed conversion" would be the antithesis of most so-called "deathbed" conversions (of the one dying)! And may it not end there! Why not put salvation verses on your tombstone, passages like Acts 16:41 or Romans 10:9,10, etc? Why not! Now that would be a most glorious "last will and testament" that might just impact someone's eternal destiny. Folks are thinking about death when they walk around cemeteries, so why not offer them life in the midst of death?

Note that Jesus' answer shows that the man's deeds did not save him, but his faith in Jesus saved him. He did no works to merit salvation. He simply believed in One Whom he acknowledged as the Savior.

Gotquestions note on **truly I say to you** - Jesus prefaced His response with the phrase, "I tell you the truth" ("Verily I say unto thee" in the KJV). Many scholars have noticed that Jesus uses this as a prefix phrase when He is about to say something that should be listened to with care. Seventy-six times in the New Testament, Jesus uses the phrase. Interestingly, no one but Jesus ever says it. When the Lord says "I tell you the truth," He is affirming that what He is about to say is worthy of special attention. It was Jesus' way of saying, "Listen up! What I'm about to say is very important and should be listened to carefully." We're too used to hearing the phrase to appreciate the astonishing authority it expresses and the often solemn nature of the announcement that follows. In every one of the 76 times Christ uses this introductory phrase, He simply says it and then makes a startling statement.

David Guzik - Here is something truly remarkable: a deathbed conversion, and may fairly be said to be the only Biblical example of a last-minute salvation. There is one deathbed conversion in the Bible, so that no one would despair; but only one, so that no one would presume. ii. Significantly, this thief who trusted in Jesus at the last moment goes to the same heaven anyone else does. This may not seem fair, but in the larger picture it gives glory to the grace of God, not to human merit in salvation. In heaven, we will all be filled to the full with joy and reward; but the degree of our faithfulness now determines how big our container for joy and reward will be in heaven, though all will be filled to the fullest they can hold. ([Luke 23](#))

Adrian Rogers on "**deathbed conversion**" - Is death bed repentance possible? It's possible, but it's not probable. The Bible records one death-bed repentance and only one, that no one should despair, but one and only one, that no one should presume. I'm telling you that any time, any place, anywhere that anybody calls on Jesus he'll be saved. But the Bible is not full of stories of people who got saved on the deathbed. Most of the people who are saved get saved when they are young. Jesus said to that thief, Today shalt thou be with me. Today is God's word. Tomorrow is the Devil's word. Oh, my friend, if you ever intend to get saved, now is the day. Now is the hour. How was this thief saved? He didn't have anything good to do. He just prayed. He just said, "Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Spurgeon - The dying Saviour reigns on the cross, and allots a place in paradise to his companion in death. Here is no hint of purgatory, the pardoned thief is with Jesus that very day. So also shall all believers be with Jesus immediately they leave the body.

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about a death bed conversion?](#)
- [Is baptism necessary for salvation? What is baptismal regeneration?](#)
- [What does it mean that today is the day of salvation?](#)
- [Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith plus works?](#)
- [What is the substitutionary atonement?](#)
- [Do we contribute anything to our own salvation?](#)

JESUS ANSWERS THE THIEF FAR BEYOND HIS EXPECTATIONS

Jesus' answer was that he would receive God's forgiveness and be saved from eternal wrath. How was he saved? Like every other sinner

who has been saved "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph 2:8-9).

Today you shall be with Me in Paradise - Note the time phrase "**Today**." It means that he would not have to go through some hypothetical transitional state like purgatory, but that he would **be absent from the body and be at home with the Lord**(2 Cor 5:8+). What wonderful contrast - here he is at this moment "**with**" Jesus on a cross, but in a moment he would be "**with**" Jesus forever in Paradise, which as discussed below is another word for the "third heaven," the abode of God. Note that the thief only asked to be remembered, but Jesus answered with one of those "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20+) type answers so typical of how God our Father responds to His children! Similarly the thief was looking for a **Kingdom** but the King promised him **paradise**!

The cross of Christ is the key that opens the door of paradise.

Dr Edwards adds an interesting thought "This assurance (**Today you shall be with Me...**) was so important to Jesus that it cost Him something. It hurt Jesus to even say these words. "Since speech occurs during exhalation, these short, terse utterances must have been particularly difficult and painful." ([Reference - see especially Figure 5 of "active breathing" in crucifixion](#))

As an aside, if you believe that water baptism is necessary for salvation, then your belief is heretical and dangerous. The dying thief proves without a doubt that baptism is not needed to join Jesus in **Paradise**!

Robert Stein - The supreme irony is that the criminal rightfully being executed for his crime(s) was infinitely better off than Israel's high priest, who by his rejection of God's Son was eternally damned. (NAC-Luke)

A LITTLE MORE LIGHT ON HADES: IS ONE "DIVISION" PARADISE?

In the interest of full disclosure, it must be mentioned that some writers interpret **'paradise'** in this context of the thief on the cross as NOT in heaven per se. There is some logic behind this as we know for example that Jesus did not actually ascend to heaven until Acts 1:9-11. There is also the passage in Luke 16:19-31+ which some writers interpret as two compartments of Hades, a cool side ("paradise") and a hot side. In the Old Testament the teaching on Sheol (synonymous with Hades). Others do not see this passage as referring to two compartments.

Here is a lengthy description of the two views regarding Hades:

Divided Hades View

W. E. Vine expresses what is now perhaps, **the most common view**: "Hades [is] the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the ascension of Christ).... It corresponds to 'Sheol' in the OT.... It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna. For the condition see Luke 16:23-31.

"The word is used four times in the Gospels, and always by the Lord, Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; it is used with reference to the soul of Christ, Acts 2:27, 31; Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Rev. 1:18; in Rev. 6:8 it is personified, with the signification of the temporary destiny of the doomed; it is to give up those who are therein, Rev. 20:13; and is to be cast into the lake of fire, ver. 14" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).

Usual Reformed View

Reformed theologians usually take a very different view. They reject the theory of a divided Sheol or Hades and hold that the Scriptures nowhere warrant our locating paradise in Hades. W. G. T. Shedd summarizes the arguments for the Reformed position as follows ([see his original writing online](#)):

Sheol Means a Punitive Evil. "That Sheol is a fearful punitive evil, mentioned by the sacred writers to deter men from sin, lies upon the surface of the OT, and any interpretation that essentially modifies this must therefore be erroneous."

Sheol Often Means Hell. "[Sheol signifies the place of future retribution](#)."

"1. This is proved by the fact that it is denounced against sin and sinners, and not against the righteous. It is a place to which the wicked are sent in distinction from the good." Then follows a long list of texts: Job 21:13; Ps. 9:17; Prov. 5:5; 9:18; 23:14; Deut. 32:22; Ps. 139:8; Prov. 15:24; Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11; 27:20. In these last three references, destruction is in the Hebrew Abaddon. Shedd argues that since Abaddon is the Hebrew word for Apollyon who is "the angel and king of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:11), the use of Sheol in these texts proves that it denotes hell. "There can be no rational doubt, that in this class of texts the wicked are warned of a future evil and danger. The danger is that they shall be sent to Sheol."

"2. A second proof that Sheol is the proper name for Hell, in the OT, is the fact that there is no other proper name for it in the whole volume—for Tophet is metaphorical, and rarely employed. If Sheol is not the place where the wrath of God

falls upon the transgressor there is no place mentioned in the OT where it does.”

Shedd finds it “utterly improbable” that there should be such silence, when the final judgment is so clearly announced.

“3. A third proof that Sheol in these passages, denoted the dark abode of the wicked and the state of future suffering, is found in those OT texts which speak of the contrary bright abode of the righteous, and of their state of blessedness.”

Shedd then argues that paradise cannot be placed as a part of Sheol: “There is too great a contrast between the two abodes of the good and evil, to allow them to be brought under one and the same gloomy and terrifying term Sheol.”

Again he lists proof texts: Ps. 16:11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24; Isa. 25:8; Prov. 14:32.

4. As a fourth proof that Sheol signifies the place of future retribution, Shedd cites its inseparable connection with spiritual and eternal death. This is true of Hades, as it is used in the NT (Prov. 5:5; Rev. 20:14).

Sheol Often Means the Grave. But, Shedd argues, Sheol has another significance: “Sheol signifies the ‘grave’ to which all men, good and evil alike, go down. That Sheol should have the two significations of hell and the grave, is explained by the connection between physical death and eternal retribution. The death of the body is one of the consequences of sin, and an integral part of the penalty.... As in English, ‘death’ may mean either physical or spiritual death, so in Hebrew, Sheol may mean either the grave or hell. When Sheol signifies the ‘grave,’ it is only the body that goes down to Sheol. But as the body is naturally put for the whole person, the man is said to go down to the grave, when his body alone is laid in it ... When the aged Jacob says, ‘I will go down unto my (dead) son mourning’ (Gen. 37:35), no one should understand him to teach the descent of his disembodied spirit into a subterranean world. ‘The spirit of man goeth upward and the spirit of the beast goeth downward’ (Eccl. 3:21).”

Shedd cites the following texts to prove that **Sheol** signifies the grave: 1 Sam. 2:6; Gen. 44:31; Job 14:13; 17:13; Num. 16:33; Ps. 6:5; Eccl. 9:10; Hos. 13:14; Ps. 88:3; 89:48. He goes on, “Sheol in the sense of the ‘grave’ is represented as something out of which the righteous are to be delivered by a resurrection of the body to glory, but the bodies of the wicked are to be left under its power. Ps. 49:14, 15; 16:10; Hosea 13:14. St. Paul quotes this (1 Cor. 15:55), in proof of the blessed resurrection of the bodies of believers—showing that ‘Sheol’ here is the ‘grave,’ where the body is laid and from which it is raised.”

Objections to Idea that Sheol Means Grave. Shedd seeks to answer some of the objections to his last point. He argues that Psa. 16:10 and Acts 2:31 use soul to mean body and points out that in Lev. 19:28; 21:11; 22:4; Num. 6:6; 19:11, 13; Hag. 2:13, the Hebrew word nephesh, “soul” is translated properly by “dead body.” He also remarks that Acts 2:31 proves that Psa. 16:10 uses Sheol as he has argued because, “Acts 2:31 asserts that ‘David spake of the resurrection of Christ,’ ... but there is no resurrection of the soul. Consequently it is the body that David speaks of.”

Hades Means Hell and Grave. What has been said of Sheol holds good for Hades. Mostly, it signifies the place of torment, and in three places (Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Cor. 15:55) it signifies grave.

In reply to the objection that Sheol and Hades cannot mean grave because there are other words for grave—Hebrew qeber and Greek mnemeion—Shedd replies, “Grave has an abstract and general sense, denoted by Sheol, and a concrete and particular, denoted by qeber. All men go to the grave, but not all men have a grave.... These remarks apply also to the use of Hades and mnemeion.” (All quotations from Shedd’s *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*.) (For more arguments against Shedd’s view see [Middletown Bible Church article on Sheol/Hades](#)).

Summary of Differences

Basically then, there are two views current among Bible believers. We may summarize their differences:

1. The first places **paradise** (at least until Christ’s resurrection) as a compartment of Sheol or Hades. The second denies this and says the location of paradise in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2, 4) is the only location given in Scripture, with no hint of its ever having been located anywhere else.
2. The first emphasizes that **Sheol** refers generally to the region of the departed spirits (as does Hades until the resurrection of Christ). The second repudiates this and holds that “hell” is the proper translation.
3. The first holds that **Sheol and Hades never mean grave** (see [Middletown Bible Church article on Sheol/Hades](#)). The second is equally adamant that in certain texts it does.
4. The first holds that the souls of the wicked and of the righteous both went to Sheol in the OT period (and in the NT until the resurrection of Christ). The second holds that in the OT only the souls of the wicked went to Sheol and that the saints went to heaven—as Elijah, upon his translation, did. In this particular aspect of the dispute, the upholders of the divided Hades view point out that Samuel “came up from the earth” (1 Sam. 28:7–20). Those of Shedd’s persuasion answer that this does not change the plain statement of Pr 15:24 and that Samuel is represented as coming up from the earth “because the body reanimated rises from the grave” (Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 2:602). Furthermore, in the entire narrative, Sheol is not once employed.

Doctrinal Implications

There are many doctrinal issues hanging on the view adopted.

According to the first view, Christ's soul descended into Sheol/Hades. Upholders of this view give differing reasons for His descent and speak of various activities while He was there. Most, however, say it was to proclaim His victory and to lead out the saints from paradise into heaven.

Shedd's position denies such a descent into Sheol/Hades by Christ to preach or proclaim anything. He says that if such a doctrine were true, it would form a fundamental part of the gospel, on a par with the incarnation, and it is inconceivable that it should be so completely passed over in the great dogmatic statements of faith in the NT. Jesus' cry on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," Shedd takes to be conclusive evidence that He did not go to any underworld of departed spirits, for "the hands of God" could not be taken as a description of any place but heaven.

One reason for opposing "grave" as a translation of Sheol or Hades is the use the self-styled Jehovah's Witnesses (see Russellites) make of such a belief. They say Sheol always means "the grave" and nothing more. However, Shedd's view, with its strong emphasis on Sheol as a place of dreadful punishment, poses arguments that the Jehovah's Witness sect can never answer.

After observing so many differences of opinion, it is worth noting that both parties hold Sheol/Hades to be a place of disembodied spirits. As the eternal blessedness of the believers in heaven is to be enjoyed by the entire man, including the body, so the eternal damnation of the sinner in hell is to be endured by the entire man, including the body. Thus Hades will give up the dead which are in it and, reunited with their bodies, they will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13, 14). ([Dictionary of Theological Terms](#))

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Here is another view from Philip Schaff's Dictionary

HA'DES (the unseen world, the spirit-world) occurs eleven times in the Greek Testament (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Acts 2:31; Rev. 1:18, etc.), and ought to have been retained in the English Version (as it probably will be in the Revision) to distinguish it from Gehenna ("hell"). The word is used in Homer as a proper noun for Pluto, the god of the unseen or lower world, next brother to Zeus (Jupiter). In later writers it signifies a place, viz., the unseen spirit-world, the realm of the departed, the abode of the dead.

1. The Greek view of Hades and the Roman view of Orcus is that of a place for all the dead in the depths of the earth—dark, dreary, cheerless and shut up, inaccessible to prayers and sacrifices, ruled over by Pluto.
2. The Hebrew Sheol is the equivalent for the Greek Hades, and is so translated in the Septuagint. It is likewise the subterranean abode of all the dead, but only their temporary abode till the advent of the Messiah or the final judgment, and is divided into two departments, called paradise or Abraham's bosom for the good, and Gehenna or hell for the bad.
3. The N. T. Hades does not differ essentially from the Hebrew Sheol, but Christ has broken the power of death, dispelled the darkness of Hades, and revealed to believers the idea of heaven as the state and abode of bliss in immediate prospect after a holy life.

The English Version translates Hades and Gehenna by the same word ("hell"), except in 1 Cor. 15:55 ("grave"), and thus obliterates the important distinction between the realm of the dead or spirit-world and the place of torment. Hades is a temporary jail or prison-house; heaven and hell are permanent and final. Christ's descent into Hades created there, no doubt, a revolution, so that it either does not exist any longer or else it is very different from what it was previous to that event. At all events, believers need not fear it.

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The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary entry on **Hades**:

HADES A transliteration of the Greek word referring to the place of the dead. In addition to referring to the place of the dead, the term sometimes is used to signify death itself. During the OT period the Hebrew term she'ol was used to indicate the realm of the dead, and when the OT was translated into Greek, the translators employed the term hadēs when rendering she'ol. In the OT both righteous (Gen. 37:35) and unrighteous (Num. 16:30, 33) individuals go to Hades/Sheol at death. It is also usually specified as being located in a downward direction (Ps. 55:15; Isa. 14:15).

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MY COMMENT ON THESE TWO VIEWS - I must confess that I cannot be dogmatic (a play on Shedd's "Dogmatic Theology"). I was taught and have taught the two compartment view of Hades, but I can definitely see some weaknesses with that view, one being that Jesus taking the thief to paradise implies they went to the "cool" side of Hades. Another is the appearance of Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration. If they went to the "cool" side ("paradise") of Sheol (aka "Hades") in the Old Testament, how were they able to participate in Jesus' transfiguration. Can you see the problem? If one believes Jesus descended to Hades after His crucifixion and liberates those OT saints in the "cool side" how could Elijah and Moses be present with Jesus prior to the Cross? Note also that Lazarus is never specifically stated as being in Hades in Luke 16:19-31. In fact in Lk 16:23 it says the rich man lifted up his eyes, the implication being that Lazarus was "above" him, which might lend support to the view that Lazarus is in Paradise in Heaven. The Reformed view has problems also. How can righteous men (Ge 37:35) be in the same place as the unrighteous? This becomes problematic if we accept Lk 16:19-31 as teaching that Hades was a most

uncomfortable place, where the rich man could see, hear, feel, thirst, talk, and remember.

To confuse you a little further, here is an article from the respected resource Gotquestions on [Where Do OT Believers/saints Go When they Die?](#)

The Old Testament believers went to a place of comfort and rest called "paradise" when they died. The Old Testament taught life after death and that everyone who departed from this life went to a place of conscious existence. The general term for this place was **Sheol**, which could be translated "the grave" or "the realm of the dead." The **wicked** were there (Psalm 9:17; 31:17; 49:14; Isaiah 5:14), and so were the **righteous** (Genesis 37:35; Job 14:13; Psalm 6:5; 16:10; 88:3; Isaiah 38:10). (ED: IF THIS IS TRUE THEN IT WOULD TEND TO SUPPORT A DIVIDED VIEW OF HADES).

The New Testament equivalent of Sheol is Hades. Luke 16:19–31 shows that, prior to Christ's resurrection, **Hades was divided into two realms** (ED: GOTQUESTIONS IS RELATIVELY DOGMATIC HERE): a place of comfort where Lazarus was (Abraham's bosom or Abraham's side) and a place of torment where the rich man was (hell). Lazarus's place of comfort is elsewhere called "paradise" (Luke 23:43) (ED: SO CLEARLY THEY DO NOT BELIEVE JESUS MEANT HEAVEN BY USING THIS TERM. AND IN SUPPORT IS THE THOUGHT THAT HE DOES NOT ACTUALLY ASCEND TO HEAVEN UNTIL AFTER HIS RESURRECTION IN Acts 1:9-11). The place of torment is called "Gehenna" in the Greek in Mark 9:45 (ED: THIS IS NOT EXACTLY TRUE. GEHENNA IS USED TO REFER NOT TO TEMPORAL BUT ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, THE LAKE OF FIRE, THE SECOND DEATH - Rev 20:11-15+). Between paradise and hell (the two districts of Hades) there was "a great chasm" (Luke 16:26). The fact that no one could cross this chasm indicates that, after death, one's fate is sealed.

Today, when an unbeliever dies, he follows the Old Testament unbelievers to the torment side of Hades. At the final judgment, Hades will be emptied before the Great White Throne, where its occupants will be judged prior to entering the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15).

On the other hand, when a believer dies today, he is "present with the Lord" in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:6–9). There, he joins the Old Testament saints who have been enjoying their reward for thousands of years (ED: PRESUMABLY THEY ARE ALLUDING TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE OT SAINTS THAT OCCURS AT THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND PRECEDING THE MILLENNIUM - see Daniel 12:13+).

A resurrection awaits everyone—either a resurrection to eternal life or a resurrection to "shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). The Bible clearly states that New Testament saints who have died will be resurrected at the event we call the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). The Bible is less clear about when the Old Testament saints will be resurrected. It is our view that Old Testament believers will be joined to their resurrected bodies at the end of the tribulation period when Jesus returns to earth to set up His millennial kingdom (Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 13:14 ED: SEE MY PRECEDING COMMENT).

Paradise (3857) (**paradeisos**) in a word borrowed from the Persian word for garden, park or enclosure full of vegetable products (cf Eccl 2:5). It is used only 3x in the NT but some 45x in the OT and most of the uses in the Septuagint are translated garden, and specifically of the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:8). It is ironic that man sinned in the first Garden but in the future "Garden" will be forever sinless because of the blood of the Lamb. In Isaiah 51:3 **paradeisos** is used to describe future of redeemed and restored Zion (and the nation) in the Messianic Kingdom as like the bliss of the Garden of Eden before sin entered writing "Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody."

Zodhiates on paradeisos - In Xenophon's economics, Socrates said that the king of Persia took particular care, wherever he was, to have gardens or enclosures full of every beautiful and good thing the earth could produce. These were called paradises. The original Eastern word **pardes** occurs in Neh. 2:8; Eccl. 2:5; Song 4:13. In Sanskrit, **paradésa** and **paradisha** meant a land elevated and cultivated. In Armenian, **pardes** means a garden around the house planted with grass, herbs, and trees for food and ornament. The Sept. uses it to refer to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8). In later Jewish usage and in the NT, **parádeisos** is used for the abode of the blessed after death. Paradise, before Christ's resurrection, has been thought to be the region of the blessed in Hades although it was not specifically called by that name (Luke 16:23). Jesus said He would take the repentant thief with Him to paradise (Luke 23:43)...The expression "the paradise of God" means the celestial paradise where the spirits of the just dwell with God. By comparing 2 Cor. 12:4 to 12:2, we see that it is also called the third heaven. This is an allusion to the three heavens: the lower heaven or hemisphere; the middle heaven or firmament; and the superior heaven, i.e., the highest heaven, the abode of God, the angels, and glorified spirits, the spiritual paradise (cf. Eph. 4:10; Heb. 4:14; 7:26; Sept.: Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; see Rev. 2:7 in relation to Gen. 2:8). (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Only other uses of **paradeisos** -

2 Corinthians 12:4+ was caught up into **Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Comment - In 2 Cor 12:2 Paul says he was caught up into the third heaven. The “blue sky” is the first heaven (the atmosphere around earth), the “starry sky” as the second heaven (the stars we see at night outside of earth's atmosphere), and the place where God lived and reigned as the third heaven, which is Paradise. (**Steven Curtis Chapman has a great song called [That's Paradise](#)**).

Revelation 2:7+ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Comment - Who gets to go to Paradise according to Jesus' promise in this passage? He says it **isto him who overcomes**. Who is an overcomer? Is this a special class of believers? No sir, that is EVERY true believer, INCLUDING this repentant thief on the cross! John helps us understand writing "For whatever is born of God **overcomes** the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our **faith**. 5 Who is the one who **overcomes** the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God**? (1 Jn 5:4-5). So who is an overcomer? He is one who **believes that Jesus is the Son of God** Beloved, be encouraged that whatever you are suffering today, Jesus promises that your place in the future is in Paradise! First the cross, then the crown!

Paradeisos - 45x in 42v in the Septuagint - Ge 2:8; Ge 2:9; Ge 2:10; Ge 2:15; Ge 2:16; Ge 3:1; Ge 3:2; Ge 3:3; Ge 3:8; Ge 3:10; Ge 3:23; Ge 3:24; Ge 13:10; Num. 24:6; 2 Chr. 33:20; Neh. 2:8; Eccl. 2:5; Song. 4:13; Isa. 1:30; Isa. 51:3; Jer. 29:5; Ezek. 28:13; Ezek. 31:8; Ezek. 31:9; Joel 2:3 - Note that most uses are from Genesis 2-3. Here is a representative use (but they are all worth reading to give some insights about paradise - see especially Ge 3:8 "LORD God walking the garden" speaking of fellowship before the FALL and surely a shadow of fellowship in the future PARADISE! HALLELUJAH!)

Ge 2:9+ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the **garden** (Hebrew = gan = enclosure, garden ; Greek = paradeisos), and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gilbrant on paradeisos - The term **paradeisos** is a Greek loanword of Persian origin, from the ancient Persian pairidoza, “a walled garden.” The Greek historian Xenophon used this term in reference to the fields belonging to Persian kings and wealthy people (Liddell-Scott). The Septuagint uses paradeisos in Nehemiah 2:8 in reference to the forests of a king. In Ecclesiastes 2:5 Solomon said that he made himself gardens and orchards (paradeisos). This term is used in Numbers 24:6 of “gardens by the river's side,” and Isaiah 1:30 uses it figuratively in a judgment prophecy of a “garden that hath no water” (cf. Jeremiah 29:5; Ezekiel 31:8,9). The Septuagint also uses paradeisos in reference to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8). Furthermore, as the Jews recognized the truth of a general resurrection from the dead, they surmised that the abode of the righteous after their resurrection would be the Garden of Eden, or paradise. In contrast, the wicked would be sent to Gehenna (see 1060). By the time of Christ, speculation arose concerning the state of the dead prior to the resurrection. Some, then, divided Sheol (the location of the shadowy postdeath existence) into two compartments: in one were the souls of the wicked, in the other—named paradise—were the righteous. MacArthur summarizes the development of the concept and use of the word paradise in Israel's history as follows: (1) it referred to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2–3); (2) it described the abode of the righteous dead prior to resurrection; and (3) it referred to the eternal home of the righteous (“Paradise,” Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 3:655). The location of paradise was sometimes called the third heaven. This forms the background for the word's usage in reference to the idea of perfection in Revelation 2:7 (also compare with the description in Revelation 21– 22 of paradise). The idea of paradeisos as an eternal home for the saints is seen in the conversation between Jesus and the robber who repented (Luke 23:43). For Paul, paradeisos is identical with or at least implied in “the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2,4). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Related Resource:

- Borrow [Last words of saints and sinners](#) fascinating book by Herbert Lockyer

Charles Darwin the perpetrator of the lie of [evolution](#) was reported as having made a deathbed conversion and expressing regret at the damage his work had done to Christianity. Were that true, it would be worthy of rejoicing. However the evidence of Darwin's deathbed conversion is tenuous and therefore probably not truth but legend (see below). For more on this intriguing topic see [Darwin's Deathbed Conversion--A Legend? - Answers in Genesis](#).

From John Witmer's review of “Darwin, Darwinism, and Theology: Recent Studies,” James C. Livingston, Religious Studies Review 8 (April 1982):105–8, 110–12, 114–15.

“It is undisputed that Darwin entered Cambridge for the distinct purpose of becoming a clergyman of the Church of England” (p. 106). At that time, although he may not have been thoroughly orthodox, “Darwin held conventionally Christian beliefs” (p. 106). Through the years he slowly migrated through a generally theistic and a deistic belief to an agnostic position, although where he stood at what stages of his life is subject to fierce debate. In a letter dated May 7, 1879, Darwin declared to John Fordyce that “in my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in

the sense of denying the existence of God" (p. 110). In the same letter Darwin stated that he thought it "absurd to doubt that a man may be an ardent Theist and an evolutionist" (p. 110). Interestingly, no mention is made of the supposed deathbed conversion of the aged Darwin.

Here is another review by Don B. DeYoung Grace College of the book "In the Minds of Men," by Ian T. Taylor. Revised edition. Toronto: TFE Publishing, 1987. Pp. 498. \$29.95 Cloth; \$19.95 Paper.

Taylor's book is a storehouse of useful scientific details. Lamarckism, circular reasoning, vestigial organs, the geologic column—all are explained in clear fashion. An entire chapter discusses the personal life of Charles Darwin. Along with his science accomplishments, the dark side of Darwin's family life is exposed like a soap opera. Darwin's conversion story is thoroughly debunked, despite popular tracts that declare a deathbed repentance. Also debunked is the popular notion that Darwin's original faith in Scripture was replaced by the enlightenment of scientific discovery. Instead, Taylor gives evidence that Darwin never understood the basic doctrines of Scripture, even after three years of theological study at Cambridge (p. 120). The opposition that Darwin felt from contemporaries is also clarified. Not all scientists jumped on the evolution band wagon.

R J Barry in his article " DID DARWIN DETHRONE HUMANKIND? writes...

One assertion that is certainly not true is the story often repeated in some evangelical circles that Darwin underwent a death-bed conversion. The source and embroidering of this tale has been refuted in detail as a 'grotesque gloss on real historical events' by Jim Moore. (J. R. Moore, *The Darwin Legend* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994); idem, 'Telling Tales. Evangelicals and the Darwin Legend', in D. N. Livingstone, D. G. Hart and M. A. Noll (eds.), *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 220–233.)

Hank Hanegraff in Bible Answer Book asks - DID DARWIN HAVE A DEATHBED CONVERSION? In order to demonstrate the falsity of evolution, Bible-believing Christians for more than a century have passed on the story of Charles Darwin's deathbed conversion. Evolutionists have attempted to counter them by loudly protesting that Darwin died believing that Christianity was a fraud and that chance was the creator. In response, it should first be noted that whether Darwin did or did not renounce evolution does not speak to the issue of whether or not evolution is true or false. Maybe Darwin renounced evolution because he was senile or he had taken a mind-altering drug. He may have even just hedged his bets with some "eternal fire insurance." Furthermore, as followers of the One who proclaimed himself to be not only "the way" and "the life" but also "the truth" (John 14:6) we must set the standard for the evolutionist, not vice versa. James Fegan was correct in calling the Darwin legend "an illustration of the recklessness with which the Protestant Controversialists seek to support any cause they are advocating." There is no substantial evidence that Darwin ever repented. Finally, in *The Darwin Legend*, James Moore painstakingly documents the fact that there is no substantial evidence that Darwin ever repented, but there is abundant evidence that he consistently held to his evolutionary paradigm. (For further study, BORROW James Moore book [The Darwin Legend](#), 1994).

Related Resources:

- [What are some flaws in the theory of evolution?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about creation vs. evolution?](#)
- [What is theistic evolution?](#)
- [How does creationism vs. evolution impact how a person views the world?](#)
- [Is the similarity in human/chimp DNA evidence for evolution?](#)
- [What is evolutionism?](#)
- [What was the Scopes Monkey Trial?](#)
- [What is the theory of punctuated equilibrium?](#)
- [What is the definition of Darwinism?](#)
- [How do beliefs about creation impact the rest of theology?](#)

Steven Cole - You may not have noticed, but both criminals asked Jesus to save them. He ignored the request of the first (Lk 23:39), but granted the request of the second. Why the difference? The first thief did not ask in repentance and faith; the second thief did. The first thief was angry, bitter, and railing against Jesus. He did not face up to his own sin. Jesus didn't even try to witness to him. He let him die in his hardness of heart. The second thief was repentant, subdued, and trusting. Jesus graciously granted his request and assured him that he would be with Him in Paradise that day.

The two radically different responses show us that not all that come into contact with Christ respond favorably. Some are hardened by the very same message that softens others. The difference does not originate in the human heart, but in God's grace. Sinful people are not capable of exercising repentance and faith by their own "free will." The fallen human will is "fast bound in sin and nature's night," as Charles Wesley put it ("And Can It Be?"). The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, unable to subject itself to God's law, and unable to please God (Rom. 8:7-8). The natural man cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14), because Satan has blinded his mind to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). Thus God must graciously grant both repentance (Acts 11:18) and faith (Phil. 1:29).

Life Application Bible Commentary – NEVER TOO LATE - As this criminal was about to die, he turned to Christ for forgiveness, and

Christ accepted him. This shows that deeds don't save—faith in Christ does. It is never too late to turn to God. Even in his misery, Jesus had mercy on this criminal who decided to believe in him. People's lives will be much more useful and fulfilling if they turn to God early, but even those who repent at the very last moment will be with God in paradise. Help others see that "today" is the time of opportunity. Bring them to Christ for his forgiveness.

SAVING FAITH - Sometimes churches or individual believers give the impression that becoming a Christian is a complicated process. You must ascribe to a certain set of beliefs, join a particular church, give a prescribed amount of money, and read a specific translation of the Bible. Contrast that with the simple cry of a dying thief: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And with those words, the man received a response that has brought comfort and relief to countless men and women ever since: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Such simplicity in those words, and yet such power! Christians should study, be faithful church members, and read God's Word—and never forget how simple salvation really is.

New Life On Death Row

Read: John 19:16-18

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." —Luke 23:43

We see two opposite responses to Jesus from the two thieves who were crucified next to Him: One blasphemed, the other believed (Luke 23:39-42). We rejoice over the conversion of the one and Christ's words to him: "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (v.43). Now, as then, Jesus saves those who truly repent—even at "the eleventh hour."

One such person was Lester Ezzell, who was on death row in Florida. When his former Sunday school teacher Curtis Oakes traveled 750 miles to visit him in prison, Lester said, "You don't give up, do you?" Though Lester still wouldn't listen to the gospel, Curtis gave him a New Testament and urged him to read it.

Later, Lester wrote several letters to Curtis. The first one brought news of his conversion. His final letter in early 1957 read: "By the time you receive this, my life will have been taken. I will have paid for the wrong I have done. But I want you to know this—with that little Testament, and by the grace of God, I have led 47 people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I just thank you for not giving up on me."

When we witness to others about Jesus Christ, some may not repent until late in life. So, let's never give up on anyone.

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me;
And may I nobly do my part
To win that soul for Thee. —Tucker

When you know Christ, you want others to know Him too.

By Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Behind The Parted Curtain

Read: Luke 23:39-43

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." —Luke 23:43

Pastor and author Erwin Lutzer wrote: "One minute after you slip behind the parted curtain, you will either be enjoying a personal welcome from Christ or catching your first glimpse of gloom as you have never known it. Either way, your future will be irrevocably fixed and eternally unchangeable."

Luke recorded a short yet powerful narrative that pictures two men about to go behind that curtain of death. When Jesus was being crucified, two thieves hung alongside Him. According to Mark, both men hurled insults at Jesus (15:32).

One of the thieves, however, had a change of heart as he realized Jesus' innocence, his own sin, and his destiny. He rebuked the other thief and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. These words were a sign of repentance and simple faith. Jesus responded, "I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Salvation for the man was immediate. He knew that day where he would spend eternity.

Realizing that we are sinners and placing our trust in Jesus' death and resurrection assures us that we can immediately know where we will spend our eternal tomorrows when we slip behind the parted curtain.

Oh, why not turn while yet you may; Too late, it soon will be— A glorious life you may possess Throughout eternity. —Anon.

To prepare for tomorrow, trust Jesus today.

William Guthrie - The Bible, which ranges over a period of 4,000 years, records but **one instance of a deathbed conversion**—one that none may despair, and but one that none may presume.... There be few at all saved. . . . and fewest saved this way."

Victor Kuligin - When I was younger, deathbed conversions always struck me as the easy way out. I reasoned that when someone was facing death and had no other recourse, professing Christ was undemanding. How mistaken I was. Deathbed conversions are among the most difficult. Obviously a person cannot fool God with an empty confession; so assuming a deathbed conversion is genuine, that person must admit that his entire life—every single moment, all his activities and plans and designs—was a complete and utter waste. He must acknowledge that he spent his life working for things that were temporal and finite. He has nothing of eternal significance to show for all his labors, and like the apostle Paul, he must confess that before his conversion, all was dung. What a horrible conclusion to make about your life, especially when you are lying on your deathbed and can do nothing to change it. All opportunities to do anything of eternal significance with your life have slipped away. The regret must be incredibly bitter. (Ten Things I Wish Jesus Never Said)

Ty Cobb's Deathbed Conversion - (ED: **Take this with a grain of salt**) - Then there is Ty Cobb, that all-time great who played 3,033 games and for 12 years led the American League in batting average. For four years, he batted over 400. On his deathbed, July 17, 1961, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He said, "You tell the boys I'm sorry it was the last part of the ninth that I came to know Christ. I wish it had taken place in the first half of the first."

David Jeremiah NEVER TOO LATE LUKE 23:43 (See [Discovering God: 365 Daily Devotions - Page 98](#))

You may be familiar with the story of the pastor who asked a group of children in Sunday school how many of them wanted to go to heaven. All but one little boy raised a hand. When the pastor asked him why he didn't want to go, the little boy said, "Oh, I do want to go to heaven. But if you're getting up a load right now, I can't go. Mama said to come home for lunch right after church."

Rarely do we talk about going to heaven today. And Jesus only used that word to describe going there with one person: the thief on the cross. There were two thieves crucified with Jesus —one mocked Jesus while the other one asked Jesus to remember him in His Kingdom. Then Jesus said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." Jesus affirmed what they both knew —that within hours their physical bodies would die—but He assured the thief that they would enter Paradise together.

It's never too late to place your faith in Jesus —He awaits the cry of a repentant heart. Don't make the eternal mistake of thinking you've waited until it's too late to believe.

Death to a saint is nothing but the taking of a sweet flower out of this wilderness, and planting of it in the garden of paradise. THOMAS BROOKS

Carl Sagan was fascinated that educated adults, with the wonders of science manifest all around them, could cling to beliefs based on the unverifiable testimony of observers dead for two thousand years. "You're so smart, why do you believe in God?" he once asked cleric Joan Brown Campbell. She found this a surprising question from someone who had no trouble accepting the existence of black holes, which no one has ever observed. "You're so smart, why don't you believe in God?" she answered. Sagan never wavered in his agnosticism, even when he was dying. "There was no deathbed conversion," his wife, Ann Druyan, says. "No appeals to God, no hope for an afterlife, no pretending that he and I, who had been inseparable for twenty years, were not saying good-bye forever." "Didn't he want to believe?" someone asked. "Carl never wanted to believe," she said fiercely. "He wanted to know."

IN DYING WE LIVE - A chaplain found a dying soldier on the battlefield. That dying soldier had been mortally wounded. That chaplain knew that in a matter of two or three minutes the boy would be dead. He kneeled over the broken body of that boy, cradled his dying head in his hands, looked into the face of that boy and said, Son, I want to pray for you. The soldier looked into the face of the chaplain and said, Chaplain, am I going to live? The chaplain wasn't a doctor, but it was obvious that the boy was not going to live. The chaplain didn't want to tell him, however, he was going to die, so the chaplain just changed the subject. The chaplain said, Son, are you a Christian? Oh, yes sir, he said, I'm a Christian. He said, The greatest day of my life was as a lad when I walked down the aisle of my church and gave my hand to my pastor and my heart to Jesus Christ. Yes sir, I'm a Christian, Christ is my Lord and my Savior. Chaplain, am I going to live? The Chaplain looked into his face and said, Yes son, you are going to live, as he lay that dying head down upon the ground. He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

Donald Grey Barnhouse - One Saturday morning Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was in his study working when the custodian came in and announced there was a man outside to see him, giving him the man's card. Dr. Barnhouse read the card, which indicated that the visitor was the captain of the Mauritania, the largest passenger vessel afloat.

When Dr. Barnhouse went out to meet the man, the captain said, "You have a very beautiful church here." Dr. Barnhouse replied, "We are grateful for all that was done by our faithful predecessors a hundred years ago." The captain said, "It is very much like the Basilica at

Ravenna in Italy." Dr. Barnhouse responded, "Well, it is an architectural duplication. In fact, years ago they brought workmen from Italy, and the tessellated ceilings and the marble columns and the mosaics were all done by Italian workmen. But that's not what you came to talk about. You didn't come to talk about architecture, did you?"

The man said, "No. Twenty-three times a year I sail the Atlantic. When I come down the bank of Newfoundland, I hear your broadcast out of Boston. And as I came this week I thought to myself, 'I've got twenty-four hours in New York. I'm going to go down and see Dr. Barnhouse.' So I took a train, hoping perhaps I would be able to meet you, and here I am." Dr. Barnhouse was very straightforward as he said, "Sir, have you been born again?" The captain replied, "That is what I came to see you about."

By this time they had reached a chalkboard in the prayer room, and Dr. Barnhouse drew three crosses. Underneath the first one he wrote the word "in." Underneath the third he wrote the word "in." Underneath the middle cross he wrote the words, "not in." He said, "Do you understand what I mean when I say those men who died with Jesus had sin within them?" The captain thought and said, "Yes, I do. But Christ did not have sin within him." Then over the first cross and over the third cross Dr. Barnhouse wrote the word "on." He said, "Do you understand what that means?" The captain wrinkled his brow.

Dr. Barnhouse said, "Let me illustrate. Have you ever run through a red light?" "Yes." "Were you caught?" The man said, "No." "Well, in running that red light you had sin in you. If you would have been caught, you would have had sin on you. So here the thieves bear the penalty of God." Then he wrote another "on" over Jesus Christ and said, "The one thief's sins rested on Christ by virtue of his faith in Christ. The other man's sins remained upon him. Which one are you?"

The man was a very tall, distinguished man, and as he stood Dr. Barnhouse could see that he was fighting back tears. He said to Dr. Barnhouse, "By the grace of God, I am the first man." Dr. Barnhouse said, "You mean your sins are on Jesus?" He said, "Yes. God says my sins are on Jesus!" He shot out his hand and said, "That's what I came to find out!" Dr. Barnhouse invited him to lunch and shared with him further, and the man went back to New York a glowing Christian.[384] (Quoted in Preaching the Word -Luke)

"Jesus Saves"

Priscilla J. Owens

We have heard the joyful sound:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Spread the tidings all around:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Bear the news to every land,

Climb the mountains, cross the waves;

Onward! 'tis our Lord's command;

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Waft it on the rolling tide:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Tell to sinners far and wide:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing, you islands of the sea;

Echo back, you ocean caves;

Earth shall keep her jubilee:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing above the battle strife:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

By His death and endless life

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Shout it brightly through the gloom,

When the heart for mercy craves;

Sing in triumph o'er the tomb:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Give the winds a mighty voice:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Let the nations now rejoice:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Shout salvation full and free;

Highest hills and deepest caves;

This our song of victory:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse - (SEE ALSO GOTQUESTIONS ARTICLE THAT FOLLOWS) Luke 23:43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (RSV) Compare the above with how the same verse is rendered in the Jehovah's Witnesses New World Translation:

"And he said to him: 'Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.' "

(ED: [SEE Lk 23:43 ONLINE NWT CONFIRMING THIS "COMMA" ALTERATION](#))

Do you notice the difference? It is a very small change, but very significant. The Watchtower Society's translators have moved the comma from before the word "today" to after it. This moves the adverb "today" from the second half of the sentence to the first half. So, instead of "today" identifying the time when the repentant evildoer on the cross will be with the Lord "in Paradise," the text is changed so that "**today**" appears to identify simply the time when Jesus was speaking.

This is another case in which JW leaders have changed the Bible to fit their doctrines. They teach that the man who turned to the Lord on the cross and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42), did not go to be with Christ in Paradise that day. **Rather, they claim that he was annihilated at death, has not existed anywhere at all for the past two thousand years, and will eventually get to be with the Lord in Paradise at some time during the future millennium.** It was difficult for Jehovah's Witnesses to teach this doctrine in view of Jesus' words to the dying man. Therefore, when they produced their own Bible, they changed his words—or at least the punctuation, which changes the meaning of the words.

If you challenge Witnesses on this point, they will likely defend the change by reading from the footnote to verse 43 in the 1984 reference edition of their New World Translation: "Although WH [the Westcott and Hort Greek text] puts a comma in the Gr. text before the word for 'today,' commas were not used in Gr. uncial mss. In keeping with the context, we omit the comma before 'today.' " However, what the JW translators should really say is that "in keeping with their doctrine," they move the comma.

However, since they mention context, it would be useful to look at the rest of the Book of Luke and the other three Gospels. Jesus used the expression "truly I tell you," or "truly I say to you," on many different occasions. (The same Greek word is rendered both "tell" and "say.") How did the New World Bible Translation Committee punctuate the same expression in every other place where it appears? Where did all the commas go?

There is a very easy way to find out. Ask the Jehovah's Witness you are speaking with to show you Comprehensive Concordance that the Watchtower Society published in 1973 for the New World Translation. Since the concordance is arranged alphabetically, have the Witness look up the word "truly." There you will find a convenient listing of the six verses where the Lord used this same expression in the Gospel of Luke, as well as all seventy-one passages where he used it in the four Gospels. In addition to the chapter-and-verse numbers, the concordance shows the words immediately before and after "truly" in each text. Just glance at the list: the commas all line up, except for Luke 23:43. This is the only verse that they punctuated differently, so as to include the time element in the first half of the sentence—obvious proof that Watchtower translators altered this verse to fit the sect's doctrines. For further discussion on what happens to people when they die, see Psalm 146:3–4 and Luke 16:22–28.

QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said, "Today you will be with me in paradise"?](#)

ANSWER - It is common knowledge that punctuation, including commas, was introduced into the biblical manuscripts centuries after the books were completed. Therefore, commas are not authoritative.

However, the placement of commas can affect our understanding of a text. For example, in Luke 23, one of the [thieves](#) crucified next to Jesus says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in [paradise](#)" (verses 42-43). Commas help us keep the original phrasing intact. Was Jesus saying, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me . . ." (meaning that "today" is when the thief would be in paradise)? Or was He saying, "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me . . ." (meaning that "today" is when Jesus was speaking)?

First, we note that every major Bible translation inserts the comma **before** the word *today*. Thus, the KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV, and RSV all agree that Jesus was speaking of the time that the thief would enter paradise. The thief would be in paradise with Jesus on that very same day.

Also, Jesus prefaced His response with the phrase, "I tell you the truth" ("[Verily](#) I say unto thee" in the KJV). Many scholars have noticed that Jesus uses this as a **prefix phrase** when He is about to say something that should be listened to with care. Seventy-six times in the New Testament, Jesus uses the phrase. Interestingly, no one but Jesus ever says it. When the Lord says "I tell you the truth," He is affirming that what He is about to say is worthy of special attention. It was Jesus' way of saying, "Listen up! What I'm about to say is very important and should be listened to carefully." We're too used to hearing the phrase to appreciate the astonishing authority it expresses and the often solemn nature of the announcement that follows. In every one of the 76 times Christ uses this introductory phrase, He simply says it and then makes a startling statement.

It would be strange indeed if, in this one instance, Jesus departed from His normal way of making His signature statement by adding the word *today* to it. In every case where this sort of introductory phrase is used, Greek scholars add a punctuation break **after** the phrase in question and **before** the rest of the statement. So, the translators have it right. The comma in Luke 23:43 belongs where they put it.

This brings us to another question. If Jesus was buried and rose after three days and then many days later ascended to heaven, how could He have been in paradise with the thief?

After Christ died, it was His body that was buried in the tomb. However, Jesus' spirit/soul was not in the tomb. Jesus' spirit was in the Father's presence (Luke 23:46; Ephesians 4:8). See more information in our article [here](#).

As Jesus was hanging on the cross, paying our penalty for sin, He made a promise to a dying, repentant thief. By the grace of God and the power of Christ, that promise was kept. The thief's sins were washed away, and his death that day was his entrance to paradise. [GotQuestions.org](#)

Luke 23:44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,

KJV Luke 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

- **It was now about the sixth hour** Mt 27:45; Mark 15:33
- **darkness fell over the whole land** Ex 10:21-23; Ps 105:28; Joel 2:31; Amos 5:18; 8:9; Habakkuk 3:8-11; Acts 2:20
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [THE SIGNS](#) - James Stalker
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Parallel Passages -

Matthew 27:45-51 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?" 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. 49 But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." 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 (ONLY MATTHEW SAYS) the earth shook and the rocks were split.**

[Believer's Study Bible](#) - The "**sixth hour**" reckoned according to **Hebrew time** would be **12 o'clock noon**. A strange darkness engulfs the land. A natural eclipse, unlikely at Passover, does not completely explain the phenomenon. The darkness signifies a miracle of God designed to draw attention to the darkness of the hour when men crucified the Savior of love. The Lord's cry from the cross, a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew quoting Ps. 22:1, is in many respects as impenetrable as the darkness of the hour. All that is involved can never be known. This much can be ascertained: in that black hour the judgment of the sins of the entire world was placed upon Jesus in isolation. He alone must drink the cup of God's indignation against sin.

Mark 15:25-32+ It was the **third hour** when they crucified Him. 26 The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." 27 They *crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. 28 [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] 29 Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 32" Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" **Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.** (THIS MEANS ONE THIEVE EXPERIENCED A SUPERNATURAL CHANGE OF HEART!!!)

Henry Morris explains that "The **third hour**" means the **third hour** after sunrise, using the usual Jewish nomenclature at the time, making it about **9:00 a.m.** Many years later, John, writing mainly for Gentile readers, used the Roman nomenclature, commenting that Jesus was before Pilate at "**about the sixth hour**" (John 19:14). Since the Roman day started at midnight, this would have been about **6:00 a.m.**

Mark 15:33-38+ - When the **sixth hour** came (SEE MORRIS' NOTE ABOVE), darkness fell over the whole land until the **ninth hour**. 34 At the **ninth hour** Jesus cried out with a loud voice, '**ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?**' which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." 36 Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. 38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two **from top to bottom.**

HIGH NOON DARKNESS FOR 3 HOURS

It was now about the sixth hour (Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33) - Note first that Mark 15:25+ gives us the morning starting time of Jesus' crucifixion recording "**it was the third hour when they crucified Him**" where "**third hour**" by Jewish time is 9 AM ([see note by Henry Morris above](#)). Using the Jewish method of reckoning time this would be about 12 Noon or "high noon" when the sun would have been the most brilliant, and yet instead, darkness falls over the land. For context remember that the crucifixion began about 9 A.M. Don't be confused by John's account that says it was "**about the sixth hour**" when Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (Jn 19:14). John used the Roman method of reckoning time, which counted the hours from midnight. Thus John's "**sixth hour**" would have been about 6:00 A.M. three hours before the actual crucifixion.

- See also [previous notes](#) on timing of events of the Crucifixion.

[A T Robertson](#) adds "It was six o'clock in the morning **Roman time** when the trial occurred before Pilate (Jn 19:14). The crucifixion began at the **third hour** (Mark 15:25) **Jewish time** or nine A.M. The darkness began at noon, the **sixth hour Jewish time** and lasted till 3 P.M. Roman time, the ninth hour Jewish time (Mark 15:33; Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:44)." (Word Pictures in the New Testament - Matthew)

Robert Stein - The coming of darkness is frequently a portent of an eschatological event. (Cf. Deut 28:28–29; Isa 13:9–11; Jer 15:9; Joel 2:30–31; Amos 8:9; Mark 13:24–25; Acts 2:19–20) (NAC-Luke)

MacArthur - The cross was a place of immense divine judgment, where the sins of the world were poured out vicariously on the sinless, perfect Son. It was therefore appropriate that great supernatural darkness express God's reaction to sin in that act of judgment. (See context in [Matthew 24-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Darkness (skotos) **fell over the whole land** - This is supernatural darkness from God. It is not darkness related to the earlier statement that now the power and the hour of darkness are yours! (Lk 22:53+) Satan the prince of darkness was not responsible for this darkness. This darkness is not an eclipse because it is April and the moon was full and no solar eclipse would last 3 hours! Yes, Luke says "the sun was obscured" (Lk 23:45), but it was obscured by an eclipse but by divine darkness, not naturally darkened but supernaturally darkened! This darkness is nothing less than God's hand of judgment, His holy wrath poured out in full measure on His Own Son Who bore the sins of the whole world!

The word **land** is Greek **gē** which can be translated earth (as it is 165x in the NAS) and thus could indicate the entire world. However it is not possible from the text to determine how widespread the darkness was but obviously God could make the darkness local or universal.

MacArthur - according to the Babylonian Talmud many rabbis had long taught that darkening of the sun was a judgment of God on the world for an unusually heinous sin. ([Matthew 24-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Until the ninth hour - This would have been 3 PM, which was normally the time when the Passover lambs were beginning to be sacrificed! One cannot miss the irony that the religious Jews who rejected Jesus were preparing to sacrifice their Passover lambs, while being spiritually blinded to the fact that the Son of God was being sacrificed as the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7+, cf Jn 1:29+). Every lamb sacrificed for thousands of years had been like a "**flashing neon sign**" pointing to this day and this Lamb, when all the OT shadows would be [consummated](#) in Christ! The sacrificial animals, the Jewish feasts, etc, etc, were ALL like divine "fingers" pointing to the once for all time sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Heb 7:27, Heb 9:12, Heb 9:26, Heb 9:28, Heb 10:10), for all these Old Testament "things which are a **mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.**" (Col 2:17+) As the writer of Hebrews said "the Law (WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE LAWS GOVERNING THE ANIMAL SACRIFICES), since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near." (Heb 10:1). In a very real sense, the Law was like a divine map given to lead men to find their way to the "final destination," the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the Cross at Calvary. (See Purpose of the Law - see 4 pictures that summarize its purpose)

John MacArthur gives a summary of what transpired in those **three hours of darkness** - The **darkness** was not caused by the absence of God, but rather by His presence in full judgment, vengeance, and fury. Infinite wrath moved by infinite righteousness released infinite punishment on the Son. Because He is infinite, in just three hours He was able to absorb all the punishment of eternal hell for all who will ever believe. He bore in His own body our sins (1 Peter 2:24), though He who knew no sin was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isa. 53:5), and was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). This was the cup that He pleaded with the Father in Gethsemane to remove, if possible. (See context in [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Darkness (4655)(**skotos**) is derived from **skia** = shadow thrown by an object. Skia it can assume the meaning of skotos and indicate the sphere of darkness) is literally that sphere in which light is absent. **Skotos** describes the moral (spiritual) "**darkness**" of this present evil world, John explaining that "the Light has come into the world, and men loved the **darkness** (**skotos**) rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." (Jn 3:19, cp "the deeds of darkness" Ro 13:12) Indeed, Jesus came to earth "TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN **DARKNESS** (**skotos**) AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH." (Lk. 1:79) And now because Jesus endured this three hours of darkness on the Cross, men can be supernaturally rescued by the Gospel which (enabled by the Spirit) causes them to "turn from **darkness** (**skotos**) to

light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in" Jesus (Acts 26:18+). Paul says "God, Who said, "Light shall shine out of **darkness** ([skotos](#))," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6+). All who believe in Christ are "rescued from the domain of **darkness** and transferred to the kingdom of" Christ (Col 1:13+) Those who reject Christ "will be cast out into the outer **darkness** ([skotos](#)); in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 8:12+, Mt 22:13) In short, Jesus "the Light of the world" (Jn 8:12) endured these three horrible hours of **darkness** ([skotos](#) and 6 hours total on the Cross), so that men will not have to experience an eternity of **darkness** in hell there will weeping and gnashing of teeth!

To a Jew, especially one familiar with the OT prophecies, **darkness** was clearly associated with the horrible [Day of the Lord](#), which was in turn a reflection of God's judgment against sin, even as it was during these three hours when God judged His Son Who bore the sin of the world. Jesus' crucifixion however is not part of the [Day of the Lord](#), for this time will come at the end of the age.

John MacArthur gives an excellent explanation of the **darkness** - The Jewish people understood that supernatural darkness was associated with divine judgment (cf. Joel 2:1-2+, Joel 2:10+, Joel 2:30-31+; Amos 5:20; 8:9; Zeph. 1:14-15), which is why after the darkness lifted, "when they observed what had happened, [they] began to return, beating their breasts" (Luke 23:48). God arrived in the blackness at Calvary that day to unleash judgment, not in an eschatological sense against the ungodly, but in a soteriological sense against His Son. **God brought the outer darkness of hell to Jerusalem that day** (cf. Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) **as He unleashed on Jesus Christ the full extent of His wrath against the sins of all who would ever be saved. The darkness was not caused by the absence of God, but rather by His presence in full judgment, vengeance, and fury. Infinite wrath moved by infinite righteousness released infinite punishment on the Son. Because He is infinite, in just three hours He was able to absorb all the punishment of eternal hell for all who will ever believe. He bore in His own body our sins** (1 Peter 2:24), **though He who knew no sin was made sin for us** (2 Cor. 5:21), **was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities** (Isa. 53:5), **and was made a curse for us** (Gal. 3:13). **This was the cup that He pleaded with the Father in Gethsemane to remove, if possible.** (See [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

J N Darby writes "It was as the **Sin Offering** that Christ suffered when there was "darkness over the whole land"

Here is an anecdotal historical note ""**Origen** (Contra Celsus, ii,33) and **Eusebius** (Chron.) quote words from Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he makes mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion." (Geldenhuis - Borrow [Commentary on the Gospel of Luke](#)) That is interesting but the Bible is God's History ("His-Story") and it does not need any secular, historical confirmation, as interesting as those things are. If God's Word of truth states it, that settles it whether we believe it or not or whether we understand it or not!

I agree with **Norman Crawford** that "All eternity will not exhaust the story of what the holy soul of the Lord Jesus endured in those dark hours on Calvary's cross." (What the Bible teaches – Luke)

The whole land - Was this just Israel? Was it regional? Was it global? The Scriptures do not really tell us. Lk 23:45 does say "the sun was obscured" which might suggest global darkness (but I am speculating). The main point is that Jesus bore the WHOLE sin debt for the WHOLE world so "that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16). And that's NOT speculation!

R C Sproul - It is the cross ... that reveals the most violent and mysterious outpouring of the wrath of God that we find anywhere in Scripture.

Until the ninth hour - That is about 3 PM (see Kenneth Bailey below for what else transpired at 3 PM). Apparently Jesus spoke nothing during the 3 hours of darkness, but at the end of the darkness, the other Gospels record three sayings from Jesus not recorded by Luke.

(1) About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "**ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?**" that is (Mk 15:34 has "which is translated"), "**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?**" 47 And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48 (AFTER SAID "I AM THIRSTY") 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 (Jn 19:29). 49 But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." 50 (THIS NEXT VERSE PARALLELS Lk 23:46) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. (Mt 27:46-50, cf Mark 15:34-35)

Comment: Jesus quotes from Ps 22:1. Matthew uses the Greek "Eli" while Mark 15:34 uses the Aramaic "Eloi" both of which mean "My God." Now think about this for a moment. First, note that Jesus is not "whispering" but is in essence using a "megaphone" so to speak for the word loud is megas and voice is phone, giving us our English [megaphone](#)! Secondly, Jesus is quoting from a Jewish Psalm which would have been familiar to the onlookers. The point is that there would have been little doubt among the Jewish onlookers that Jesus was crying out to God. And yet they mockingly assert He is calling for Elijah. They were cruel, callous and cynical to the very end of His life! Why is Jesus crying out? The darkness has presumably lifted and in the mysterious workings known only to the Trinity, Jesus had for the first time in eternity been separated from His Father. And thus it is notable that this is the only time in the Gospels that Jesus did not address God as "Father." When Jesus took the sin of the world on Himself, the Father turned away, an action that is incomprehensible to the human mind. And we may never be able to insight into this moment in time, for as Deuteronomy 29:29 says ""The secret things belong to the LORD our God."

We can but fall on our faces in wholehearted love and devotion to Jesus Who manifested matchless grace and infinite love to accomplish our eternal redemption. The Father turning from the Son reminds us of Habakkuk's declaration "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." (Hab 1:13+) The Greek verb for **forsaken** is [egkatalaipo](#) (from **en** = in + [katalaipo](#) = forsake, desert) means literally to leave down in and conveys the sense of the Father abandoning the Son. The word forsake means to leave someone who needs or counts on you; to leave in the lurch.

John MacArthur explains that "The Father forsook the Son because the Son took upon Himself "our transgressions,... our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). Jesus "was delivered up because of our transgression" (Ro. 4:25) and "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). He "who knew no sin [became] sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21) and became "a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Pet. 2:24), "died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), and became "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)....Jesus Christ not only bore man's sin but actually became sin on man's behalf, in order that those who believe in Him might be saved from the penalty of their sin..."to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). When Christ was forsaken by the Father, their separation was not one of nature, essence, or substance. Christ did not in any sense or degree cease to exist as God or as a member of the Trinity. He did not cease to be the Son, any more than a child who sins severely against his human father ceases to be his child. But Jesus did for a while cease to know the intimacy of fellowship with His heavenly Father, just as a disobedient child ceases for a while to have intimate, normal, loving fellowship with his human father. As already mentioned, the mystery of that separation is far too deep even for the most mature believer to fathom. But God has revealed the basic truth of it for us to accept and to understand to the limit of our ability under the illumination of His Spirit. And nowhere in Scripture can we behold the reality of Jesus' sacrificial death and the anguish of His separation from His Father more clearly and penetratingly than in His suffering on the cross because of sin. In the midst of being willingly engulfed in our sins and the sins of all men of all time, He writhed in anguish not from the lacerations on His back or the thorns that still pierced His head or the nails that held Him to the cross but from the incomparably painful loss of fellowship with His heavenly Father that His becoming sin for us had brought. (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

(2) After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, **"I am thirsty."** (Jn 19:28)

Comment: After Jesus said **"I am thirsty"** John records "A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth." (Jn 19:29) **Sour wine** is also called **posca** ([Wikipedia](#)), which was a cheap wine diluted with water and commonly used by the soldiers to quench thirst. Note that a **hyssop branch** is at most 24 inches in length, so for the sponge on the end of this branch to reach Jesus' lips indicates that His crossbar had to be placed fairly low, so that overall the cross itself was relatively close to the ground (unlike many artistic renderings which suggest Jesus was in a relatively elevated position -- this would have made reaching His mouth with a hyssop branch virtually impossible!). While this may have been an act of mercy, note the crowd persisted in their cruel mockery as recorded in Mt 27:49. One would have thought 3 hours of darkness (to a Jew suggesting God's hand of judgment) would have shaken some sense into their evil hearts! Amazing cruelty juxtaposed with amazing love! O my!

(3) Therefore 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)

Comment: See in depth study of **It is Finished**, one word in the Greek text, **Tetelestai**. For an in depth discussion of John 19:30 see separate commentary notes.

Matthew 27:50 and Lk 23:46 record the seventh and final saying from the lips of our Lord (see comments with Lk 23:46).

Kenneth Bailey - The only daily service in the temple area was **the atonement offerings** that took place **at dawn** and again at **three o'clock** in the afternoon ([Here is a depiction of what the altar may have looked like](#)). Each service began outside the sanctuary at the great high altar with the sacrifice for the sins of Israel of a lamb whose blood was sprinkled on the altar, following a precise ritual. In the middle of the prayers there would be the sound of silver trumpets, the clanging of cymbals and the reading of a psalm. The officiating priest would then enter the outer part of the sanctuary where he would offer incense and trim the lamps. At that point, when the officiating priest disappeared into the building, those worshipers in attendance could offer their private prayers to God. An example of this precise ritual appears in Luke 1:8+, where Zechariah had the privilege of offering up the incense in the sanctuary. Lk 1:10+ states, **"At the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside"** (my translation). Many pious Jews who were not at the temple would offer their private prayers at the time of day when they knew the incense offering was being made in the Temple. In this way they could participate even when they were not able to be present. This particular service afforded the opportunity for what we today would call both public worship and private prayer. It is for this service that the **Pharisee** and the **tax collector** **"went up"** to the temple. The language of the text and what is known of the twice daily atonement sacrifice in the second temple assume such a setting. (See [Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies](#)) (Bolding added)

Comment: It is fascinating and more than mere coincidence that at **3 PM (ninth hour)** by Jewish time, the time when the lamb was offered on the altar for **the second atonement offering**, was also the same time when the veil of the Temple split in two from top to bottom (see explanation in Heb 10:19-20+) and the Messiah, **the Lamb of God** [cf John 1:29+] cried out in a loud voice "Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." And having said this, He breathed His last." - Luke 23:44-46+. (See parallel descriptions in Mt 27:46-53, 54, Mark 15:34-38, 39, cf "It is finished" in John 19:30+) Note that the **ninth hour** in Lk 23:44 is about 3 PM. If you have time, compare what the writer of Hebrews says about the lamb offered at 3 PM (Hebrews 10:1-3+, Heb 10:4+) and the Lamb of God offered at 3 PM on the "altar" of the Cross on Calvary (Hebrews 10:5-9, 10+)

Excursus on the [Altar in Herod's Temple](#) - During Herod the Great's extensive building activity on the Temple Mount, it was likely refurbished. Talmudic scholars give a very precise description of the altar during the Second Temple period. The altar was built as a perfect square and was quite large: it reached a height of 10 cubits (app. 5 meters ~16 feet high) and its width was 32 cubits (app. 16 meters = 52.5 feet wide). It was constructed of two main parts: the altar itself, and the ascent ramp. Both were constructed of stones and earth. On top of the altar at its four corners, there were hollow boxes which made small protrusions or "horns." These horns measured one cubit square and 5 handbreadths high, each (or, app. 18" x 18" x 15").^[3] In this form, the altar remained in its place until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. ([Wikipedia](#))

J Oswald Sanders - Mysterious Darkness Luke 23:44 (Earthen Vessels)

Darkness came over the whole land" (Luke 23:44). This was no ordinary darkness. God darkened the sun by His own means. It was not caused by an eclipse. The longest eclipse lasts but a few minutes, but this darkness continued for three hours. Again, it occurred during the Feast of the Passover, the time of full moon, when the moon was at its furthest from the sun.

This unique occurrence has historical support beyond the Bible. In Egypt, when Diogenes saw the darkness, with unconscious insight he exclaimed, "Either the Deity Himself suffers at this moment, or sympathizes with one that does."

In the second century Tertullian challenged his heathen adversaries with the following words, "At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land was darkened at noonday, which wonder is related in your own annals, and is preserved in your archives to this day."

This darkness was unique and symbolic. "The darkness was not caused by the absence of the sun, the occasion of our night," wrote W. R. Nicholson. "It was darkness at noon-time, a darkness in the presence of the sun, and while the sun was un eclipsed by the intervention of another celestial body, a darkness we might say, which was the antagonist of light and the overcomer of it . . . The darkness of Calvary smothering the sun at noon! What an impressive thing! What a trembling conception of the almightiness of God!"

But why this darkness? It is because darkness and judgment go together. It assuredly was an awesome sign to the sign-seeking but Christ-rejecting Jews. It was an inspired commentary on the character and extent of His sufferings for us while He was being "stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). Peter, James, and John, intimates of Jesus, were admitted into the secrets of Gethsemane, but at Calvary God enveloped His Son's anguish in a darkness that concealed its full meaning. (31 Days)

Steve Green sings a beautiful tribute to [Calvary's Love](#)..

Only Jesus, Only He
Brings redemption, full and free
There's a yearning, in all our lives
That only Jesus satisfies

Calvary's love will sail forever
Bright and shining, strong and free
Like an ark of peace and safety
On the sea of human need

Through the hours of all the ages
Those tired of sailing on their own
Finally rest inside the shadow
Cast by Calvary's love across their souls

Chorus:
Calvary's love, Calvary's love
Priceless gift Christ makes us worthy of

The deepest sin can't rise above
Calvary's love

Calvary's love can heal the Spirit
Life has crushed and cast aside
And redeem til Heaven's promise
Fills with joy once empty eyes
So desire to tell His story
Of a love that loved enough to die
Burns away all other passions
And fed by Calvary's love becomes a fire

Luke 23:45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

KJV Luke 23:45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. (See note below on phrase "was darkened")

- **the veil of the temple was torn in two** Ex 26:31; Lev 16:12-16; 2 Chr 3:14; Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Eph 2:14-18; Heb 6:19; 9:3-8; 10:19-22
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE VEIL TORN TOP TO BOTTOM

Because the sun was obscured - As discussed above, this was not a natural phenomenon ([eclipse](#)) but a supernatural phenomenon, divine judgment of the Father on His only begotten Son.

Was obscured (1587) ([ekleipo](#) from **ek** = out or an intens. + **leipō** = to fail, to leave out or off) means to leave out, leave off, by implication to cease. Transitive = to relinquish, desert. Intransitive = to leave off, to fail, cease (Lk 22:32; Heb. 1:12 quoting Ps 102:27) In classical Greek applications of **ekleipō** meant "to abandon a responsibility or a thing," consequently, "to desert an army or abandon a city." Figuratively, the sun might "eclipse". Thus one can see why attempts were made to avoid using this verb (see NET Note below)!

NET Note on manuscript differences - The wording "**the sun's light failed**" is a translation of *tou he liou ekliPontos/ ekleipontos*, a reading found in the earliest and best witnesses as well as several ancient versions. The majority of manuscripts have the flatter, less dramatic term, "**the sun was darkened**" (eskotisthe see [skotizo](#) used in Textus Receptus and thus in KJV translation), a reading that avoids the problem of implying an eclipse. This alternative thus looks secondary because it is a more common word and less likely to be misunderstood as referring to a solar eclipse. That it appears in later witnesses rather than the earliest ones adds confirmatory testimony to its **inauthentic** character.

MacArthur explains that the tearing of the veil "happened immediately after the lifting of the darkness. Just as the priests resumed the slaughter of the Passover lambs, they were startled to hear a loud tearing noise coming from inside the Holy Place. God was ripping the curtain separating it from the Holy of Holies from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). **The atonement was complete; access to God was opened, and the New Covenant was ratified, rendering everything connected with the temple worship obsolete** (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:19). Jesus had predicted the temple's physical destruction (Luke 21:5-6); **God's tearing of the veil symbolized its spiritual destruction**" (See context in [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commenta](#))

Matthew tells us more specifically that "**torn in two from top to bottom**" (Mt 27:51; also in Mk 15:38), clearly indicating it was God Who did the supernatural tearing. If it had just been natural tearing, as it sagged, it was torn from the bottom up, not the top down. The veil was a vivid demonstration of the separation between God and man, and the tearing an even more vivid reminder that now there is no separation between God and men who are in Christ Jesus by grace through faith.

Leon Morris on the **veil** or curtain - It symbolized the separateness, the remoteness of God. The tearing of the curtain at this time gives symbolic expression to the truth that the death of Jesus has made the way open into the very presence of God (cf. Heb. 9:3, 8; 10:19-21). (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke PAGE 330](#))

Spurgeon - As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage!"

The veil of the temple was torn in two - As shown in the schematic below, the veil separated the Holy of Holies (with the Ark of the

Covenant and Mercy Seat) symbolic of God's very presence from the Holy Place. The Jews could enter into His presence only one day each year, the Day of Atonement (See **commentary** this Day described in Leviticus 16:1-34), which foreshadowed this final "Day of Atonement" on Calvary.

Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle (HOLY PLACE IN DIAGRAM BELOW) performing the divine worship, but into the second (HOLY OF HOLIES), only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. (Hebrews 9:6-7+)

The writer of Hebrews gives us the commentary on what transpired when Jesus died and the veil of the Temple tore. When His flesh was torn and the sacrificial offering finished (as He breathed His last), the veil was torn and the way into the presence of God was opened forever!

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, **20by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh**, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22+)

Now instead of entering into God's presence once per year like the high priests, we as priests of God, can enter continually into God's presence through Christ Jesus! Amazing grace! Are you daily taking advantage of this privilege that OT Jews who were believers could not even imagine! The New Covenant was inaugurated on Calvary giving us a say into the Holy of holies.

Therefore let us draw near with confidence (boldness) to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16+)

Paul explains the incredible privilege believers now have as result of the torn veil writing

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2through Whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand**; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2+)

Related Resources:

- See Simple Study on "Through Him"
- [What was the significance of the temple veil being torn in two when Jesus died?](#) (Includes short video)
- [What was the Holy of Holies?](#)
- [Did the high priest have a rope tied to him when he entered the Holy of Holies?](#)

Veil (2665) (**katapetasma** from **kata** = down + **petomai** = flies) literally means that which is spread out over or downward and hence a veil, a curtain or a cloth drape. It describes that which falls down and thus a curtain or cloth hanging over an opening. The **katapetasma** was the veil of the tabernacle or temple used to separate the Most Holy Place (Holy of holies - place of the Ark of the Covenant) from the Holy Place. When Jesus died on the Cross, He opened the way to the Father, which underscored His earlier teaching to the disciples when Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; (ABSOLUTELY) no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6). "Through Me" now replaces "through the veil" which was only allowed to one person, once a year. Now all who believe in Him can enter through Him today, tomorrow and forever. Amen!

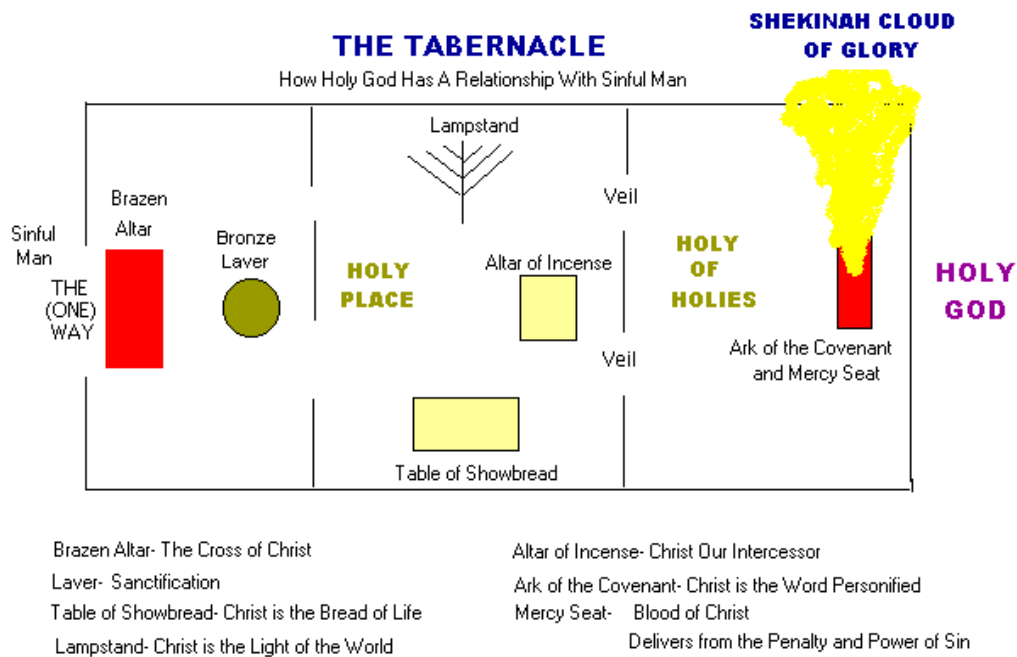
Gotquestions on the physical characteristics of the Temple veil - Solomon's temple was 30 cubits high (1 Kings 6:2), but Herod had increased the height to 40 cubits, according to the writings of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. There is uncertainty as to the exact measurement of a cubit, but it is safe to assume that this veil was somewhere near 60 feet high. An early Jewish tradition says that the veil was about four inches thick, but the Bible does not confirm that measurement. The book of Exodus teaches that this thick veil was fashioned from blue, purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen.

Norman Crawford - Many descriptions have been given of its weight, strength and thickness, but the truth that was symbolised by the veil is far greater than a physical curtain. The tabernacle and the temple were patterned after a heavenly reality (Heb 9:24). Let us not mistake the earthly picture for that of which it speaks. Sin had shut man out from God, but the suffering of the Saviour in His flesh has opened the way into the very presence of God (Heb 10:20-22). He who suffered on the tree has entered heaven itself and because He is there, we have confidence to draw near within the veil, not the one in the earthly temple, but the heavenly veil. (What the Bible teaches - Luke)

Katapetasma is used in Hebrews 6:19+ "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil." The hope, the anchor, takes hold in the very presence of God in Hebrews 6:19+. Christ Himself is there and anchored to Him we are kept from "shipwreck." Trust Him as the anchor of your soul when the waves of adversity threaten to overwhelm you! He is able! He is secure! He is trustworthy!

Luke places this dramatic event before Jesus breathed His last (Lk 23:46). Matthew places it after Jesus yielded His Spirit...

Matthew 27:50-56 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. Mt 27:51 has "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split."



Life Application Bible Commentary – ULTIMATE COMMITMENT - It's one thing to be committed to God when life is going well. It's a different matter to trust in him when everything is coming apart and death itself rears its dark visage. To be able to trust God in those circumstances takes a gutsy, gritty kind of faith, one rarely seen. But Luke wrote that this was the kind of faith Jesus had in his Father. As Jesus drew his last breaths on the cross, surrounded by spiritual and physical darkness like no one else has ever experienced, it would have been understandable for him to cry out in anguish and bitterness against God the Father. Instead, Jesus submitted to the Father in perfect obedience. Life turns dark and bitter for everyone from time to time, and death comes to all. When you "walk through the valley of the shadow," remember the Lord and his example. Trust God even in the dark times, even in the final moments. He will see you through and meet you on the other side.

Luke 23:46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "**Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.**" Having said this, He breathed His last.

KJV Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

- **And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said** Mt 27:46-49; Mark 15:34-36
- **Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.** Ps 31:5; Acts 7:59; 1 Peter 2:23
- **Having said this, He breathed His last.** Mt 27:50-56; Mark 15:37-41
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- THE SEVENTH WORD FROM THE CROSS
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Parallel Passages:

Matthew 27:50-54 (WORDS IN BOLD ONLY IN MATTHEW) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51 (LUKE DESCRIBES THE TEARING BEFORE THIS CRY BY JESUS) And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 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.** 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!"

Comment: Matthew's strange record of the resurrection of **many bodies of the saints** is unique to his Gospel. Notice he says "many" not "all" so it was a limited number of OT believers, some possibly in the graves for 100's of years! Can you imagine the amazement in Jerusalem, especially in families that had previously buried this loved one. And what would be the effect on those Jews who witnessed this miracle and were not yet saved? Only Heaven will reveal if some were saved by the witness of these resurrected believers! In any event, their presence in the city testified to God's power to resurrect one from life to death. One would have thought this would convert the entire city, but clearly this did not occur demonstrating once again that stupendous miracles do not guarantee salvation of those who witness the miracles! As to what happened to these resurrected saints, notice that the Scripture is silent so it is useless to speculate.

John MacArthur has an interesting comment on these resurrected saints writing that "Those saints did not appear in Jerusalem until after the Lord's own resurrection, because He was divinely appointed to be "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20). And just as Christ Himself appeared after His resurrection only to those who already believed in Him, it would also seem that the many to whom the resurrected saints appeared were all believers. We are not told what they said to their brethren in the holy city, but their appearance in bodily form not only testified to Christ's resurrection but also to God's promise to raise all those who put their trust in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22, 51-53). (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Spurgeon comments on the earthquake - "Men's hearts did not respond to the agonizing cries of the dying Redeemer, but the rocks responded: the rocks were rent. He did not die for rocks; yet rocks were more tender than the hearts of men, for whom he shed his blood."

Warren Wiersbe - The earthquake reminds us of what happened at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to Moses (Ex. 19:16-18). The earthquake at Calvary signified that the demands of the Law had been met and the curse of the Law forever abolished (Heb. 12:18-24, Ro 10:4, Gal 3:10-14). The torn veil indicates that He conquered sin; the earthquake suggests that He conquered the Law and fulfilled it; and the resurrections prove that He defeated death. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Loyally - Matthew). In his comments in his Mark commentary Wiersbe adds "Through His sacrifice, Jesus had purchased not only freedom from the Law, but also freedom from the entire sacrificial system." (See context in [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Mark 15:37-39 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. 38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

As discussed above ([see notes](#)) Jesus had just said "**I am thirsty**" (He did not cry this out loudly, by the way) followed by the single Greek Tetelestai or "**It is finished.**" Luke 23:46 then records His very last words before He died.

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said - The synoptic accounts are similar - Mt 27:50 has "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice." Mark 15:37 has "and Jesus uttered a loud cry."

It is easy to read over these words and miss what Luke is saying. Have you ever been at the bedside of a dying person? One day I received an urgent call that my mom had suffered an abdominal aneurysm beginning to leak and since she did not want surgical repair, probably had only hours to live. I was 300 miles away but God allowed me to make it to her side. She was conscious but weak and clearly near death's door. I leaned over to tell her that Jesus was there with her and He would take care of her (SHE WAS A TRUE BELIEVER). The next words she could only whisper but they were emphatic "What's taking Him so long?" She fell asleep in Jesus several hours later that night as I lay on the floor at the side of her bed. Jesus had answered her weak cry for Him to come quickly. Here in Luke 23:46 Jesus is near death but the difference is that He cries out with a loud voice. Recall that the Greek words for "**loud voice**" are "*megas*" and "*phone*" (gives us English [megaphone](#)) which indicate this was a very audible cry. To even speak while being crucified was difficult enough, but to cry out loudly would be far more difficult. Was Jesus supernaturally enabled? Perhaps we will discover the answer in heaven. **In any event, it was not a cry of defeat, but a triumphant cry of victory, victory over sin and Satan, and paradoxically victory over death even though He would die in the next moment!**

MacArthur has an interesting thought on Jesus' ability to cry out with a **loud voice** even after the scourging and beating and six hours on the cross - Jesus did not gradually fade away His life ebbing little by little until gone. Even now He made it evident that He was not at the point of utter exhaustion and that He had the resources to stay alive if He so desired. (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. (See [Table of Jesus Seven Sayings from the Cross](#)) - Notice that after addressing God as "My God" Jesus again addresses God as His **Father**. The parallel passages in Matthew 27:50 and Mark 15:37 do not record Jesus' actual words but just that "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice." So only Luke records Jesus very last words. What better hands to be in than the One Who holds everything in His hands!

Commit (3908) ([paratithemi](#) from **para** = beside + **tithemi** = to place) means literally to place beside. Jesus uses the middle voice here which is interesting as in secular Greek **paratithemi** in the middle voice was a commercial term for

giving something to someone in trust for safekeeping! God the Son entrusted Himself to God the Father's hands! In

Don't miss the fact that Jesus is quoting Scripture with His dying breath! That alone should tell us all something very important about Jesus' estimation of the living word on His dying lips and our need to store it in our "prone to wander" hearts so that we can live well and die well! Are you **memorizing Scripture**? If not begin today and make this a regular discipline until you breathe your final breath! The Scripture Jesus quotes is from David in Psalm 31:5 "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth." Of course Jesus left off the last phrase of Ps 31:5 because the very purpose of His life was not to be ransomed but **"to give His life a ransom for many!"** (Mt 20:28, Mk 10:45+). And don't miss the **"for"** which in Greek is the preposition *"anti"* which means *"in place of"* which clearly speaks of His sacrifice as a substitution. In other words instead of being ransomed, His life became the ransom for our life, His sacrifice being the **substitution** (see [note](#)) for sinners. He paid a debt He did not owe, while I owed a debt I could not pay! **Play the great little song "He Paid a Debt He Did Not Owe!"** The Greek word for **ransom** ([lutron/lytron](#)) is found in Mt 20:28 and in Mark 10:45 and refers to the payment of a price in order to purchase the freedom of a slave. The idea of Jesus as the "ransom" is that he paid the price with his own life by standing in our place as a substitute, enduring the judgment that we deserved for sin.

Having said this He breathed His last - Mark 15:37 has the same phrase, while Mt 27:50 says Jesus **"yielded up His spirit."** The verb **yielded** is [aphiemi](#) (apo = from + hiemi = to send) which literally means Jesus sent away His spirit from Himself (His body). Like a King, He "dismissed" His spirit! **Yielded** is in the active voice which speaks of volitional choice. In other words, Jesus actively, by a conscious act of His Own sovereign will, surrendered His spirit. The point is that Jesus' life was not taken from Him by these evil men. He did exactly what He had predicted He would do in John 10:17-18 declaring "I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." Jesus was in full control even to His very last breath! Beloved, that truth ought to encourage us and remind us that He is sovereign over the events in our life, yea, even sovereign over our every breath, including our last breath! (Da 5:23b+).

THOUGHT - In Genesis 2:7+ we read that "the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and **breathed into** his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." When Jesus was on the Cross, Mk 15:37+ says "And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and **breathed His last.**" The Greek word **breathed his last** is one word *ekpneo* meaning to breath out (to expire), in the active voice signifying this was His volitional choice, the choice of His will (cf Jn 10:18). In Ge 2:7+ God breathed in the **first Adam** to give him life, while in Mk 15:37+ (and Lk 23:46+) the **last Adam** breathed out, thus assuring that all Adam's descendants who believed in Him would have eternal life ("breathe forever")! Hallelujah!

Breathed His last ([1606](#))(*ekpneo* from *ek* = out + *pneo* = breath, to blow upon as wind Jn 3:8, Mt 7:25, etc) means literally to breathe out and so to breath out one's life/soul, thus to expire or die. To engage in the final act of dying. Only in Lk 23:46 and Mk 15:37, 39+ (Not in Lxx).

THOUGHT - Here is another thought to ponder - How did death enter the world? Sin of course. Was Jesus a sinner? Of course not! So what is the point? I would submit that since Jesus had never sinned, He was not subject to death as every other man or woman ever born for we were all born in sin and the wages of sin is death. Had Jesus not willingly surrendered Himself to death (cf Jn 10:18), He would not have died. And recall that He had been on the cross only 6 hours and some men were known to hang for several days before dying. His death was clearly much sooner than would be expected and this reflects the fact that He was in control of the timing! So why did He voluntarily die? He loves us with infinite, amazing love! He consciously chose to die so that we might live. He died in our place. He died because He loved the world. He died in order to pay the price of redemption, a price which had to be paid with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19+). In summary, in His Own words "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10+), "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45+).

[Amazing love! how can it be](#)

That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

David Guzik agrees writing "Death had no righteous hold over the sinless Son of God. He stood in the place of sinners, but never was or became a sinner Himself. Therefore He could not die unless He yielded up His spirit." ([Luke 23](#))

Adam Clarke writes that "Every man, since the fall, has not only been liable to death, but has deserved it; as all have forfeited their lives because of sin. Jesus Christ, was born immaculate, and having never sinned, had not forfeited his life, and therefore may be considered as naturally and properly immortal."

Augustine - He gave up his life because He willed it, when He willed it, and as He willed it.

Brian Bell - The Timing,...Impeccable! He was our Passover Lamb, it was Passover, it was 3 PM! Ex.12:6 "Now you shall keep it(lamb) until the 14th day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight." (lit. "between the evenings" – i.e. between sunset & dark. To the Jews that was between 3-6pm) It was a death by appointment (not an accident! This is how we die also, not according to the will of cancer, or from an erratic drunk driver. No we die under God's providential care! We do not pray, "Father into the hands of accidents or the apparent randomness of ill health I commit my spirit." As Irvin Lutzer says "We will pass through the curtain according to God's clock, not the timetable of random fate!"

In addition, the fact that Jesus was in complete control of the timing of His death helps us understand John's statement that "So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when **they saw that He was**

already dead, they did not break His legs." (John 19:32-33) In other words, Jesus determined when He would give up His spirit, and did so before the Romans soldiers came to break the legs of the two criminals to cause their speedy death. Instead of breaking Jesus' legs the "soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." (Jn 19:34). The result was that two more Messianic prophecies regarding the crucifixion were fulfilled - (1) **"NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."** (Jn 19:36 fulfilling the prophecy in Ps 34:20, but also alluded to in Ex 12:46 and Nu 9:12) and (2) **"And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."** (Jn 19:37). This prophecy is alluded to in Psalm 22:16,17, but is more directly stated in Zechariah 12:10+ which says "they (JEWS) will look on Me Whom they have pierced." (cp also Rev 1:7+). So it is interesting that Jn 19:37 is in a sense a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, the ultimate fulfillment will be when the **believing Jewish remnant** during the **Time of Jacob's Trouble** see and mourn over the scars in their Messiah as He makes His triumphant entry to defeat His (and Israel's) enemies (Rev 19:11-16+). It is fascinating that these Roman soldiers had no idea they were fulfilling centuries old prophecies, but in God's supervening providence they were led to do so! [God is in control!](#)

Dying Well - Dying words, especially when spoken in the throes of persecution or great suffering, are significant. They often reveal a man's true values. Some of my favorite last words came from the English martyr Hugh Latimer. He was tied back to back with Nicolas Ridley as the two were burned at the stake. He called out as the flames were lit, "Be of good comfort, brother Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out." As the fire was kindled, Ridley cried out, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: Lord, receive my spirit!" He repeated the latter phrase often. Latimer cried out, "Father of heaven, receive my soul!" (J. C. Ryle, Light from Old Times [Evangelical Press], p. 163.)

Another English martyr, John Bradford, turned to a young man who suffered with him and said, "Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night." His final words as the flames licked around him were, "Strait is the way, and narrow is the gate, that leadeth to eternal salvation, and few there be that find it" (Ryle, p. 197).

Shortly before he died, John Calvin dictated a letter to his friend, William Farel, in which he said, "I have great difficulty in breathing and expect at any time to breathe my last. It is enough for me to live and to die in Christ, who is gain to those who belong to him, whether in life or in death." Calvin's friend and successor, Theodore Beza, who was with him at his death, wrote, "We can truly say that in this one man God has been pleased to demonstrate to us in our day the way to live well and to die well" (Theodore Beza, The Life of John Calvin [Evangelical Press], pp. 116, 118). (Steven J. Cole)

Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."

KJV Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

- **he began praising God** Lk 23:41; Mt 27:54; Mark 15:39; John 19:7
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Related Passages:

Matthew 27:51-54 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 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. 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!"

Mark 15:39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Now when the centurion saw what had happened - To what is Luke referring? Matthew helps answer this question recording that "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 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. 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!" (Mt 27:51-54). It is interesting to note that the verb "said" (in Mt 27:54) is not singular but plural (Mk 15:39 said = singular) indicating that it was not only the centurion who acclaimed Jesus' deity, but the other Roman soldiers who were on guard. Note also that the soldiers undoubtedly had heard the Jewish by passers referring to Jesus as the "Son of God." (Mt 27:40).

Wiersbe on the reaction of the centurion - He must have been shocked when Jesus shouted and then instantly died, for victims of crucifixion often lingered for days and did not have the strength to speak. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Courageous - Luke).

Norman Crawford comments that "Matthew tells us that he was "watching Jesus" and adds, "and those things which were done" (Mt 27:54). He saw a sight that day that he had never seen before and would never see again. It was customary for four soldiers to crucify a victim (John 19:23) because not only did victims curse with rage, but the cruelty of being nailed often made it necessary to forcibly wrestle with a victim and by brute strength hold the arms and legs while another soldier with a hammer drove in the nails. Such sights must have been common, but on this day, the victim offered no resistance; when His hands were held against the wood to be nailed there was no struggle, no drawing back of the hand, but He was "as a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7). (What the Bible teaches – Luke)

Keep in mind the [centurion](#) and those who were with him had sat through three hours of supernatural darkness. One can only imagine how they processed this divinely orchestrated cosmic phenomenon! Then superimposed on that frightening heavenly sign, God then sent an tumultuous earthly sign in the form of an earthquake that split rocks. What was happening? I submit that all creation was giving witness to the Creator. Heaven and earth were bearing witness to the divinity of Jesus! (cp "I call heaven and earth to witness..." in Dt 4:26, Dt 30:19, cf 2 Ki 19:15, 2 Chr 2:12). And the [centurion](#) and his associates acknowledged that indeed "**Truly, this was the Son of God.**" Note they did not say "this *is*" which would have implied they understood that though Jesus was physically dead, He was still alive.

Mark's version adds that the it was not just the external changes that impacted the [centurion](#), but it was something about the way Jesus died. Mark recording that "When the [centurion](#), who was standing right in front of Him (Greek [enantios](#) = FACE TO FACE WITH THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE!!!), **saw the way He breathed His last**, he said, "**Truly this man was the Son of God!**" (Mark 15:39)

What was it that the Roman soldier witnessed? Undoubtedly he had witnessed many executions (as we mentioned up to 30,000 crucifixions had been performed in Israel in Jesus' day) and yet he had never seen a man die with such control and dignity as Jesus. He heard the reviling, but witnessed a Man of Whom Peter wrote "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (1 Pe 2:23). He had also heard all the words Jesus had spoken from the Cross, including the promise to a penitent thief (who had previously mocked Jesus) that he would be with Jesus today in paradise. And it is fascinating this is Mark's first record of a confession of the divinity of Jesus from the lips of a human being, and a pagan at that! Did he remain a pagan? I think not and so it is very possible that we will see him in heaven! (see MacArthur's comment below). Won't heaven be an interesting place? Paul acknowledges that "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known." (1 Cor 13:12) Interesting thought to ponder!

He began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." While several of the soldiers had declared "Truly this man was the Son of God," (Mt 27:54), the Gospels record that only the [Centurion](#) actually praised God. What was the fate of the other soldiers? We do not know but here Luke records that a mocker is turned into a praiser! A pagan testifies to two profound theological truths that all the erudite, legalistic, hypocritical religious leaders could not see and/or refused to acknowledge -- (1) that Jesus was **innocent** and (2) that "**Truly this was the Son of God.**" (Mt 27:54) He did not go so far as to say Jesus was sinless, but the word Luke uses for innocent is [dikaios](#) which means **righteous**, the very word Pilate's wife had used when she warned her husband "Have nothing to do with that **RIGHTEOUS** ([dikaios](#)) Man." (Mt 27:19) John refers to our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the **righteous** ([dikaios](#))." (1 Jn 2:1, cf 1Jn 2:29, Rev 15:3+)

Peter uses [dikaios](#) in his summary of the crucifixion writing "Christ also died for sins once for all, the **just** ([dikaios](#)) for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." (1 Peter 3:18).

Thomas Constable writes that "The torn veil was a Jewish testimony to Jesus' identity, and the centurion's confession was a Gentile testimony to the same thing. Taken together they provide a double witness that Jesus was the Son of God (Mk 15:39)."

Praising is the verb [doxazo](#) which means this pagan soldier was so moved that he began giving glory and honor to God and in the imperfect tense he was doing so again and again. **Crawford** notes that ""He glorified ([doxazo](#)) God" is an expression that can be traced through this Gospel, but it only once in Mark and four times in Matthew. The nine occurrences in Luke are 2:20; 4:15; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47."

MacArthur writes that the centurion's "worshipful exclamation was both an affirmation of Jesus' blamelessness and a declaration of His divine righteousness. From the crucified thief to this pagan commander, trophies of divine grace were on display even in the midst of Jesus' suffering and death. One was a scoundrel, the other a soldier; and both were blasphemers who mocked and persecuted the Son of God. Yet, in His infinite mercy, God reached down and rescued them eternally, granting them salvation through the very One whose crucifixion they witnessed. Their sudden conversions demonstrate that even the worst sinners and blasphemers are not beyond the reach of God's sovereign love and unmerited favor (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12-15)..(See context in [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Hughes on the spiritual condition of the centurion's praise to God and acknowledgement of Jesus innocence - This does not mean he was saved, but he had clearly become convinced of spiritual truth. He saw far deeper into Jesus than did his fellow Roman, Pontius Pilate, and was thus a likely candidate for conversion...Thus, in the centurion's declaration at the foot of the cross we see that Jesus' death was not only for Jews but also for Gentiles. Luke tells us in the beginning of his Gospel that the first person to address Jesus in Jerusalem after his birth was Simeon, who praised God and said, "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:30-32a). And Luke tells us here at the end of his Gospel that the first one to speak of Jesus in Jerusalem after his death was the centurion who glorified God and, by confessing Jesus, became a proclaimer of the salvation possible for Gentiles.(Preaching the Word – Luke)

In **MacArthur's** comments in his Luke Commentary, he writes "This was more than merely the seventh affirmation of Jesus' innocence; it was an affirmation of His divine righteousness as the Son of God. These Roman soldiers became the first converts to Christ at His crucifixion, just moments after He died." (See context in [Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

I tend to agree with **Norman Crawford's** more cautious comment regarding the state of the centurion's soul (and his associates) - We must await the day when the saved will be all joined in the Father's house to know with certainty if this man was saved, but it may well be that he saw in Christ his Saviour God....The thief was a Jew and the centurion a Gentile, giving an example of blessing reaching out to all men from the cross. (What the Bible teaches – Luke)

Luke 23:48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts.

KJV Luke 23:48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

- **beating their breasts** Lk 18:13; Jeremiah 31:19; Acts 2:37
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle - Crucifixions always had spectators, but this one must have drawn a sizable crowd. The crowds undoubtedly included some who had acclaimed Him and King at His entry into the city at the beginning of "Passion Week," and may have changed their chant to "Crucify Him," by the end of the week. In any event, their reaction recorded only by Luke expresses some degree of personal conviction regarding the events they had just witnessed. It would have been virtually impossible to not be struck in one way or another by the most important event in all eternity!

Spectacle (2335) (**theoria** from **theoreo** = to behold) means a beholding, a sight, or a spectacle and is found in classical Greek denoting "an object that one looks at." In classic Greek and the Septuagint **theōria** is used mostly of public and religious events, festivals, and processions.

When they observed what had happened, began to return - As we have noted before, crucifixions in Israel during this time were common, by one report being up to 30,000! Of course, this crucifixion was not just any crucifixion, but was the central event in all of human history. While they did not understand that fact, they had witnessed enough unusual phenomena, that it must have been quite obvious this was not a routine crucifixion! Was the Spirit of God beginning to work in their hearts? That certainly is possible as we see a striking response 50 days later (Pentecost) when Peter confronts the Jewish crowd with the bold accusation "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—**this Jesus whom you crucified.**" (Acts 2:36) The response to Peter's invitation to "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (Acts 2:40) was that " those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41)

Beating their breasts - Their reaction was not typical reaction of a crowd that had seen a public crucifixion. This was typically a traditional sign of lamentation, mourning or even [contrition](#). Their reaction would seem to be more of an expression of remorse, not necessarily brokenness, but as noted above it may have been preparatory to the powerful Pentecostal preaching of Peter. It is interesting that the last individual Luke recorded as **beating his breast** was the tax collector in Luke 18:13 writing "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was **beating his breast**, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'" This man's anguish was clearly accompanied by contrition, for Jesus Himself testified "'I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Lk 18:14).

Matthew 27:36. Twelve views of the cross. Luke 23:48.

- The soldiers saw in Christ a criminal, with cruelty.
- The women saw in Christ a benefactor, with sorrow.
- His mother saw in Christ a son, with anguish.
- The disciples saw in Christ blighted hopes, with perplexity.
- The first thief saw in Christ a malefactor, with hardness.
- The second thief saw in Christ a King, with penitence.
- The centurion saw in Christ divinity, with conviction.
- The priests saw in Christ an impostor, with mockery.
- Angels saw in Christ love, with wonder.
- Devils saw in Christ the seed of woman, with dismay.
- Jehovah saw in Christ obedience, with affection.
- The passers-by saw in Christ nothing, with indifference.

The cross cannot be explained. To nail our poor theories on that tree but shows how our love has cooled and stiffened and expired. D L Moody

Luke 23:49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

KJV Luke 23:49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

- **And all His acquaintances** Job 19:13; Ps 38:11; 88:18; 142:4
- **the women who accompanied Him from Galilee** Lk 23:27,55; 8:2; Mt 27:55,56,61; Mark 15:40,41,47; John 19:21-27
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Parallel Passages:

John 19:25 (REGARDING "ACQUAINTANCES") Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

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.

Mark 15:40 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things-

Yes at a distance, but nevertheless willing to witness Jesus' agonizing death. Their example of love and concern contrasted dramatically with the mocking of many in the crowd.

His acquaintances would have included His faithful disciple John for in John 19:26 we read "When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (JOHN) standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

The women - Who composed this group? Matthew and Mark give us insight...

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 (Salome) the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John).

Mark 15:40-41 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were **Mary Magdalene**, and **Mary** the mother of James the Less and Joses, and **Salome**. 41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Comment: The verb follow is [akoloutheo](#) which means to walk the same road (Ponder that simple definition dear believer - Am I willing to walk the same road as Jesus?) Literally it meant to follow (like the crowds followed Jesus) but more importantly in a figurative sense it meant to follow Jesus as a disciple. Yes there were 11 faithful followers of Jesus for 3 years, but Mark points out that there were faithful female followers or disciples. As we will see in Luke 24 female disciples played a pivotal role regarding Jesus' resurrection.

John 19:25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Related Resources:

- [Who was Mary Magdalene?](#)
- [How many Marys are in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Salome in the Bible?](#)

These women were present at His burial (Lk 23:55; Mt 27:61; Mk 15:47) and His resurrection (Lk 24:1; Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1) and thus were eyewitnesses to all the crucial events of the Gospel (cf. 1 Co 15:3, 4).

A T Robertson says this is a "Melancholy picture of the inner circle of the acquaintances of Jesus and the faithful band of women from Galilee. And helpless either to prevent them or to understand them. They could only stand and look with blinded eyes."

WOMEN WHO OBSERVED THE CRUCIFIXION		
Matthew 27:56	Mark 15:40	John 19:25
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
		Mary mother of Jesus
Mary mother of James & Joseph =	Mary mother of James the less & Joses =	Mary the wife of Clopas
Mother of Zebedee's sons =	Salome =	Sister of Jesus' mother

Luke 23:50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man

KJV Luke 23:50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:

- **And a man named Joseph** Mt 27:57,58; Mark 15:42-45; John 19:38
- **a good and righteous man** Lk 2:25; Acts 10:2,22; 11:24
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Parallel Passages:

Mt 27:57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

Mark 15:42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA A SECRET BELIEVER

John 19:31-37 gives us the background preceding Joseph of Arimathea's approach to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body. First, the Jewish leaders come to Pilate asking him to remove Jesus' body (probably based on Dt 21:22-23), if necessary breaking His legs, so the Sabbath would not be defiled. The apostle John writes...

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN ([suntribo](#))."
37 And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

Comment: Normally the Romans would leave bodies on the cross until they died and this could take as long as 2-3 days. However the Jews were taught in Dt 21:22-23 that a "corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day...so that you do not defile the land." This is an amazing section, for these Jewish legalistic hypocritical leaders were zealous to keep the Mosaic Law, which ironically had been fulfilled perfectly by Jesus (cf Ro 10:2-4). They did not want to defile the land but could care less about their own defilement by having Messiah's blood on their hands! As Spurgeon said "Their consciences were not wounded by the murder of Jesus, but they were greatly moved by the fear of ceremonial pollution. Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience."

And so the Jews asked Pilate to carry out [crurifragium](#), in which "the legs of the person executed were broken or shattered with an iron club." (Praise God that one of the criminals would that very day be in Paradise, because a mallet blow to the legs would be incredibly painful! **What irony!** A mallet blow producing unimaginable momentary pain, would in turn produce instantaneous, eternal pleasure in Paradise! cf Ps 16:11!) The breaking of the victim's leg resulted in quick suffocation, because pushing up with the legs was necessary for a crucified victim to breathe ([See legend on Figure 6](#)). The criminals were still alive and therefore their legs were smashed. There is a sense in which the breaking of their legs was necessary to fulfill Jesus' prophetic promise that the penitent thief would be

with Him TODAY. Had he been allowed to die naturally, it could have take 2-3 days! Jesus of course was dead to the eyes of these soldiers who knew a dead man when they saw one! By not breaking Jesus' legs, they fulfilled OT Messianic Prophecies in Ex 12:46 and Nu 9:12 which stated that no bone of a Passover lamb was to be broken. The Messianic Prophecy in Psalm 34:20 stated "He keeps all his bones, **Not one of them is broken**" which was quoted directly in Jn 19:36. And just to be sure Jesus was dead the soldiers pierced His side which is a Messianic Prophecy from Zechariah 12:10 that will be consummated at the return of Messiah (see commentary; see also Zechariah 13:6+). When the soldiers pierced His side "**blood and water came out**" (Jn 19:34). I was a pathologist for 30 years. While many have discussed what "**blood and water**" means, in my experience it seems relatively straightforward -- the **water** was the clear serous fluid in the pericardial cavity (see [pix - note "pericardial fluid"](#) which normally is the consistency of water and very slightly straw colored) and the **blood** was the uncoagulated blood in the underlying heart chamber pierced by the spear ([scroll down for example](#)). I see absolutely no reason to postulate that Jesus' heart ruptured as some have suggested, as there were no obvious predisposing factors (See [causes of myocardial rupture](#) or [here](#)). As an aside, the incredibly accurate fulfillment of these OT prophecies by Pilate and these pagan Roman soldiers is clear evidence that **God's providence** is immutably, perfect! Beloved, this should give you comfort that your Father holds every event and circumstance in your life in His loving, omnipotent, wise and good hands!

Rock of Ages, cleft for me.

Let me hide myself in Thee
 Let the water and the blood,
 From Thy riven side which flowed
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power

This last section is a description of the burial of Jesus, a truth we don't hear preached about that often today, but a truth which Paul saw as an integral component of the **Gospel** for it demonstrated the reality of Jesus' death...

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and **that He was buried**, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,(1 Co 15:3, 4+)

And a man named Joseph - The **NAS** unfortunately often fails to translate *idou* which is a command that means **behold** and is inserted by the Spirit to get our attention. The KJV has a more accurate rendering "And, **behold**, there was a man named Joseph." This man is mentioned only in the context of Jesus' burial but is mentioned in all four Gospel accounts, which give us several details which will be summarized below:

- **Name** - Joseph (Lk 23:50, Mt 27:57, Mk 15:43, Jn 19:38) ([Wikipedia](#))
- **Home town** - Arimathea (Mt 27:57, Mk 15:43, Jn 19:38), a city of the Jews (Lk 23:51)
- **Social status** - A rich man (Mt 27:57)
- **Spiritual status** - A disciple of Jesus (Mt 27:57), A secret one for fear of the Jews (Jn 19:38), a good and righteous man (Lk 23:50)
- **Spiritual outlook** - Waiting for the Kingdom of God (Mk 15:43, Lk 23:51)
- **Jewish status** - a member of the Council (Greek word [bouleutes](#), synonymous with the Sanhedrin - sunedrion) (Lk 23:50), a prominent ([euschemon](#)) member (Mk 15:43)
- **His desire** - Take away the body of Jesus (Jn 19:38)

Who was a member of the Council- Joseph is a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the 71 member council, the council which sentenced Jesus. Many think that Joseph was not present when they voted to accuse Jewish, but we cannot be certain. In any event Luke 23:51 makes it clear that Joseph did not consent to the vote to condemn Jesus. Matthew adds that Joseph was "**a rich ([plousios](#)) man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.**" (Mt 27:57) There is an important principle in this fact - Joseph was a believer in the midst of non-believers, even overtly antagonistic and hateful non-believers, which should encourage us that it is possible to be a genuine believer in Jesus even though the group one belongs rejects Him.

A good and righteous man - How would you like the Spirit to say this about your life?

Good (18)([agathos](#)) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good). **Agathos** is one whose goodness and works of goodness are transferred to others. Good and doing good is the idea, this latter characteristic certainly being on display in Luke 23:50-53 to put it mildly!

Righteous (1342) ([dikaios](#) from **dike** = right, just) defines that which is in accordance with high standards of rectitude. It is that which is in right relation to another and so in reference to persons defines the one who is morally and ethically righteous, upright or just. A righteous person is a saved person for Jesus declared "at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the **righteous.**" (Matt. 13:49) and "the **righteous** will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." (Mt 13:43). Joseph was not like the Pharisees who "outwardly appear **righteous** to men, but inwardly are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. " (Mt 23:28) and thus they "will go

away into eternal punishment, but the **righteous** into eternal life."

John gives us a Scriptural "definition" of **dikaiois** writing

Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices (present tense = habitually, as a lifestyle) righteousness is **righteous** (dikaiois), just as He is **righteous** (dikaiois). (1Jn 3:7+)

The one who habitually (not perfectly) does what is right is **righteous** (dikaiois). **Righteous** character expresses itself in **righteous** conduct. If a man knows God, he will obey God. A man cannot claim genuine salvation if he is habitually living in sin. On the other hand, a man can only practice genuine righteousness because he possesses the nature of the One Who is righteous. Notice that the practice of righteousness is not what makes the individual "righteous", but reveals the inner nature of the one who is practicing righteousness.

[Joseph of Arimathea](#) was righteous, just as was Jesus' earthly father Joseph in Mt 1:19!. Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, "were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in and the commandments and requirements of the Lord." (Lk 1:6)

SECRET BELIEVER - The evangelist Billy Sunday used to tell of a professing Christian who got a job in a lumber camp that had the reputation of being very ungodly. A friend, hearing that the man had been hired, said to him, "If those lumberjacks ever find out you're a Christian, you're going to be in for a hard time!" The man responded, "I know, but I need the job!"

The next morning he left for camp. A year later, he came home for a visit. While in town, he met his friend who asked, "Well, how did it go? Did they give you a hard time because you're a Christian?"

"Oh no, not at all," the man replied. "They didn't give me a bit of trouble—they never even found out!"

WHY - On February 15, 1947 Glenn Chambers boarded a plane bound for Quito, Ecuador to begin his ministry in missionary broadcasting. But he never arrived. In a horrible moment, the plane carrying Chambers crashed into a mountain peak and spiraled downward. Later it was learned that before leaving the Miami airport, Chambers wanted to write his mother a letter. All he could find for stationery was a page of advertising on which was written the single word "WHY?" Around that word he hastily scribbled a final note. After Chambers' mother learned of her son's death, his letter arrived. She opened the envelope, took out the paper, and unfolded it. Staring her in the face was the question "WHY?"

No doubt this was the questions Jesus' disciples asked when He was arrested, tried, and crucified. And it was probably the questions Joseph of Arimathea asked himself as he approached Pilate and requested the Lord's body (Mt 27:58). It must have nagged at him as he wrapped the body in a linen cloth, carried it to his own freshly hewn tomb, and rolled the massive stone into its groove over the tomb's mouth. In the face of his grief, Joseph carried on. He did what he knew he had to do. None of Jesus' relatives were in a position to claim His body for burial, for they were all Galileans and none of them possessed a tomb in Jerusalem. The disciples weren't around to help either.

But there was another reason for Joseph's act of love. **In Isaiah 53:9, God directed the prophet to record an important detail about the death of His Messiah.** The One who had no place to lay his head would be buried in a rich man's tomb. Joseph probably didn't realize that his act fulfilled prophecy. The full answer to the why of Jesus' death was also several days away for Joseph and the others. All he knew was that he was now a disciple of Jesus -- and that was enough to motivate his gift of love. (Today in the Word, April 18, 19920

Luke 23:51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;

KJV Luke 23:51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

- **he had not consented to their plan and action** Genesis 37:21,22; 42:21,22; Exodus 23:2; Proverbs 1:10; Isaiah 8:12
- **a man from Arimathea** 1 Samuel 1:1
- **who was waiting for the kingdom of God** Lk 23:42; Lk 2:25,38; Genesis 49:18; Mark 15:43
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel
- Play the video [Arimathea](#)

He had not consented to their plan and action - This refers to the Jewish religious leaders' (the Sanhedrin's) decision to condemn Jesus to death. Matthew records "Now when morning came (SANHEDRIN COULD RENDER AN OFFICIAL, "LEGAL" VERDICT ONLY IN THE DAYTIME NOT AT NIGHT), all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death (cf Mt 26:66)." (Mt 27:1, Mk 15:1 says "the whole [council](#)", cp also Mk 14:64) Luke's statement would suggest that the "ALL" of Mt 27:1 clearly

excludes Joseph of Arimathea, so he must not have been present. If he had "abstained" Matthew could not have said "ALL" (which implies a unanimous decision among the members of the Sanhedrin.)

John MacArthur explains Joseph's non-consent in the Sanhedrin meeting in Mark 14:64 ("they ALL condemned Him to be deserving of death") this way - It might be noted that Joseph of Arimathea, whom Luke 23:50-51 indicates was a member of the Sanhedrin who did not approve of Jesus' condemnation, was apparently not present for this part of the proceedings. (See context in [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Consented (4784) (**sugkatatithemai** from **sun/syn** = together, speaks of an intimate union + **katatithemi** = to put down) means literally to place or deposit together. It presents a fascinating picture as it is derived from the custom of putting something into a pot as a vote and so depositing one's vote in the same urn as another. I suppose given this definition, Joseph may have been present in the morning Sanhedrin trial of Jesus and simply abstained from putting in a vote so to speak. If that is the case then the "all" would be all that actually voted, voting of course to condemn Christ to death.

Sugkatatithemai is used twice in the Septuagint where it translates the expression "to join hands with" and "to make a covenant with." One cannot help but wonder whether Joseph was familiar with the warning prohibition in Exodus 23:1 as he certainly refused to "join hands" (so to speak) with the wicked Jewish leaders. The other use refers to the prohibition of making a covenant with idol worshippers!

Exodus 23:1 You shall not bear a false report; **do not join your hand** with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

Exodus 23:32 "You shall **make no covenant** with them (Ex 23:23) or with their gods.

A man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews - We have no other Biblical record of this city (see [Wikipedia](#)). Jesus never visited there (at least not in the Gospel records) and yet this man came to believe in Him. Why does Luke say **a city of the Jews**? Most likely to identify it as within the confines of Israel (most likely Judea), in contrast to one of the outlying provinces such as in the identity of Simon of Cyrene. Note the fact that Joseph had a burial tomb in Jerusalem strongly suggest while originally from Arimathea, he had come to reside in Jerusalem, which would also enable him to attend the meetings of the Sanhedrin. The other consideration is that Arimathea was near Jerusalem.

Who was waiting for the kingdom of God - **Joseph of Arimathea**, unlike [modern day amillennialists](#) (cf the non-biblical teaching of [replacement theology](#)), was expecting Messiah to bring in the **Kingdom of God** on earth (cf even as were Jesus' disciples after His resurrection - Acts 1:6+). The verb **waiting** is in the imperfect tense signifying Joseph was **waiting** again and again so to speak, as if the thought of the future **Kingdom of God** was one that frequently came to his mind! Joseph had what I like to call [Vertical Vision](#), spiritual vision of the future which motivates horizontal living in the present!

For more in depth analysis of **the Kingdom of God** see the comments on Luke 17:20.

Waiting (4327) (**prosdechomai** from **pros** = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward + **dechomai** = a deliberate and ready reception) means to accept favorably, to receive one into intercourse/companionship, to give access to oneself or receive to oneself. This great Greek verb describes one who is waiting for something (in most contexts actually **Someone**) with a sense of expectancy ("like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast" = Lk 12:36, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus," = Titus 2:13+, "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." = Jude 1:21+). Does this verb typify your life beloved? If not what "earthly cargo" do you need to jettison in order to assure a safe voyage and an "abundant" arrival at port (see 2Pe 1:10, 11-[see note](#), He 6:19, 20-[see note](#))?

This is a characteristic of many of the believers in Luke.

Luke 2:25+ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous (dikaios - same word for Joseph in Lk 23:50) and devout, (continually) **looking for** ([prosdechomai](#) in present tense = this was his lifestyle!) the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:38+ At that very moment she (Anna the prophetess) came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who **were looking for** ([prosdechomai](#) in present tense = this was their lifestyle!) the redemption of Jerusalem (i.e., they were looking for the REDEEMER!).

Luke 23:52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

KJV Luke 23:52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

- John 19:38-42
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Mt 27:58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

Mark 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

JOSEPH REQUESTS JESUS' BODY FROM PILATE

See [comments above on John 19:31-37](#) which give the background preceding the events described in this next section.

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus - Luke does not give us any indication of the time when Joseph went to Pilate. However the other two synoptic Gospels say it was **evening**. Matthew says "**it was evening**," (Mt 27:57, cp Mk 15:43) which has a different meaning when compared to the American term "evening." For the Jews the **evening** was sometime between 3 PM and 6 PM, the time they considered to be the end of the day. Recall Jesus had spoken His last words "**about the ninth hour**" (about 3 PM) (Mt 27:46ff), or when the Jewish "evening" would just be beginning.

Matthew 27:58 records Pilate's response "This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him."

What is so important about establishing the time of "**evening**" (defined as from 3 PM to 6 PM)? From a religious standpoint, as observant Jews, Joseph and Nicodemus would have been zealous to complete their work before the Sabbath began at 6 PM and also to comply with the OT law in Dt 21:22-23 that a body would not "not hang all night on the tree." Recall also that no work was to be done on the Sabbath. However there is an even more profound reason, and one regarding which they were probably not aware. Recall that Jesus had given a prophecy explaining the "Sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39) in declaring "for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be **three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**" (Mt 12:40) In other words, Jesus had to be buried in the grave before the day ended and the Sabbath began at 6 PM. If He were buried before 6 PM (which He was) then Friday is one day, Saturday (Sabbath) is the second day and Sunday is the third day. You might be saying that Friday was almost finished with less than 3 hours left. That is not a problem because the Jews counted any part of a day as constituting a day (Compare 1 Ki 12:5 with 1 Ki 12:12 and Esther 4:16 with Esther 5:1). This is an amazing story for God sovereignly used two men to accomplish Jesus' burial on Friday which resulted in fulfillment of His prophecy in Mt 12:40! As MacArthur says "In His burial, as well as His death, Jesus orchestrated all the details to accomplish God's already revealed purpose." And I would add He did so using men who were "sold out" to Him, two men who did not at the time even comprehend that they were playing a critical role in the fulfillment of one of the greatest prophecies in the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead after 3 days! God grant us by Your Spirit to be in the sweet center of Your good and acceptable and perfect will (Ro 12:2) in our lives just as were these two Old Testament saints! In the Name of the Resurrected Lord. Amen.

Related Resource -

- [Where was Jesus for the three days between His death and resurrection?](#)

Mark adds that Joseph "**gathered up courage.**" (Mk 15:43). He was coming forward to in essence confess Christ as His Lord and King and petulant Pilate was unpredictable except that he undoubtedly was predictably angry at the Jews for harassing him and forcing him to convict a man he thought was innocent. And so here comes another Jewish man, a prominent man in the Sanhedrin (which had been the main "thorn" in his side) and he is asking for more favors. So this took great courage on the part of Joseph.

After Joseph asked Pilate for Jesus' body here in Lk 23:52 (cf Mt 27:58, Mk 15:43b), **Mark** adds that

"Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion (THIS IS MORE, UNEQUIVOCAL EVIDENCE THAT JESUS WAS TRULY DEAD AND DID NOT JUST "SWOON"!), he granted the **body (ptoma SEE BELOW)** to Joseph." (Mark 15:44-45)

Constable's comment on Jesus' dead **body** or corpse - It was also unusual to give the corpse of a person condemned for treason to anyone but a near relative. Consequently Pilate's willingness to give Jesus' body to Joseph shows that he really did not believe that Jesus was guilty of treason (cf. vv. 14-15). This is the only place in the New Testament where someone referred to Jesus' dead body as a corpse (Greek = ptoma). Mark's use of the word further stressed the reality of Jesus' death.

Body (4430)(**ptoma** from **pipto** = to fall) means literally what has fallen in the NT always denotes a dead body (as that which has fallen to the ground), a corpse or a carcass. In classical Greek **ptoma** denotes a fall such as a physical fall, a blunder, a defeat, or a misfortune. The meaning was extended to include the person or thing which had fallen. Thus ptōma can denote a human corpse or animal carcass, especially one which had fallen in a violent death (Bauer). **Ptōma** can also denote the ruins of buildings or walls or fallen trees or fruit. Another use designated a payment which had fallen due.

Ptoma - 6x in 6v - body(3), corpse(1), dead bodies(3). Matt. 14:12; Matt. 24:28; Mk. 6:29; Mk. 15:45; Rev. 11:8-9.

Ptoma - 24x in 22v in Septuagint - Jdg. 14:8; Job 15:23; Job 16:14; Job 18:12; Job 20:5; Job 31:29; Job 33:17; Job 37:16; Ps. 110:6; Prov. 16:18; Isa. 8:14; Isa. 30:13; Isa. 30:14; Isa. 51:19

Related Resources -

- [What is the Swoon Theory? Did Jesus survive the crucifixion?](#)
- [What is the Hallucination Theory?](#)

As an aside, as John 19:38 says Joseph as a **secret believer**, but in asking for the body of Jesus he makes a clear confession of Christ. Joseph reminds me of Paul's words in Romans writing that "with the heart man believes (Joseph the secret believer), resulting in righteousness (a good and righteous man), and with the mouth he confesses (asking Pilate for Jesus' body), resulting in salvation." (Ro 10:10+) Lest we be too hard on Joseph, are not we all from time to time "secret believers"? We are in some social situation and have an opportunity to speak His Name or defend His Name and what do we so often do? I'll let you answer for yourself. I can think of situations almost daily when I am in essence a "secret believer!"

Life Application Bible Commentary – NONCONFORMITY - In every organization, every institution, every society, there is an "inner circle," a privileged few who seem to have disproportionate power and influence over others in that field. Most long to be in that "inner circle" and to have the power and enjoy the prestige that come with it. Unfortunately, some will do almost anything to become a part of it and, once in, almost anything to stay in it. Contrast this with Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Council and a secret believer in Jesus. He was a member of the "inner circle," yet he risked giving it all up when he asked to be given Jesus' body for burial. This must have put Joseph at odds with the other Council members and possibly even caused them to ostracize him. He was willing to risk it all for Jesus. How much are you willing to risk for the one who gave his life for you?

Luke 23:53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

KJV Luke 23:53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

- Isaiah 53:9; Mt 27:59,60; Mark 15:46
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

Matthew 27:59; 60 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 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.

Mark 15:46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

And he took it down - This is an important act by Joseph because Romans would let the bodies of crucified criminals rot on the cross and not even bury them! One needed to obtain permission to bury someone. Joseph had jumped that first hurdle, but now taking the body down would have been no small task, for Jesus was impaled with iron spikes up to one inch thick in His hands and feet. And the "[dead weight](#)" of Jesus' body as a full grown man would have been fairly heavy for a single individual. How Jesus was removed from the nails is not clear. Apparently Joseph carried out the removal of Jesus' body from the Cross by himself, for Nicodemus did not join him until he had brought Jesus' body to the tomb (Jn 19:39). Imagine, lovingly removing the hands and feet from the iron spikes and carrying the bloodied body of the Creator in your hands as you walked probably many yards to the site of the tomb! What thoughts must have coursed through Joseph's grieving mind as he carried out this labor of love! As **G. Campbell Morgan** said "No hand but the hand of love ever touched the dead body of Jesus."

Wrapped it in a linen cloth - It should be noted that some have proposed the **Shroud of Turin** is the linen cloth in which Jesus was wrapped, but this has been clearly proven to be a [hoax](#). ([Is the Shroud of Turin authentic?](#)) ([see pictures](#)) John 19:40 adds that Joseph and Nicodemus "took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews."

Robert Stein - With the negative results from carbon 14 testing, all speculation about the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin should now cease. This was not the linen cloth spoken of in this verse. (NAC-Luke)

None of the Gospels record the details of preparing Jesus' body before wrapping, but given the fact that it was almost the Sabbath, the

preparations had to be performed expediently.

The **NET Note** comments on a **linen cloth** ([sindon](#)) in Luke 23:53 (Mt 27:59, Mk 15:46) versus **linen wrappings** in John - The Fourth Gospel uses ([othoniois](#)) to describe the wrappings, and this has caused a good deal of debate, since it appears to contradict the synoptic accounts which mention a [sindon](#), a large single piece of linen cloth. If one understands [othoniois](#) to refer to smaller strips of cloth, like bandages, there would be a difference, but diminutive forms have often lost their diminutive force in Koine Greek, so there may not be any difference.

Linen cloth (4616)([sindon](#)) a light piece of clothing like a chemise. Liddell-Scott- sindon, a fine cloth, a kind of cambric or muslin." Friberg - (1) as a loosely fitting sleeping garment tunic, (night)shirt (Mk 14:51); (2) as a cloth used to wrap a corpse for Jesus' burial clothes - "Joseph bought a **linen** cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the **linen** cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb." (Mk 15:46, Mt 27:59) 5x in NT - Matt. 27:59; Mk. 14:51; Mk. 14:52; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 23:53 Septuagint uses - Jdg. 14:12; Jdg. 14:13; Prov. 31:24;

And laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock where no one had ever lain- And so these men fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a **rich man** in His death (ONLY DESCRIBED BY MATTHEW - Mt 27:57), Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth." (Isaiah 53:9) Matthew tells us this was Joseph's "**own new tomb**." Mark and Matthew add that after laying Jesus' body in the tomb, Joseph "rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb." (Mk 15:46) "and went away." (Mt 27:60)

Morris comments that "The tomb was rock-hewn and had not been used previously (tombs, being expensive, would tend to be given maximum use; surviving Jewish tombs of the period often have several chambers so that they can accommodate a number of bodies). Elsewhere we learn that Joseph had prepared this tomb for himself ("his own new tomb" = Mt. 27:60). (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke PAGE 330](#))

Constable on the **tomb** - Joseph's new tomb, a sign of his wealth, was probably near the present Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This area had been a stone quarry centuries earlier out of whose walls the Jews had cut tombs.

D A Carson gives us some details about ancient **tombs** - "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." (Matthew Commentary)

Stein - The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a far more probable site of the tomb than the so-called Gordon's Tomb....As in 19:30, where Israel's king deserves and receives an unused colt, so here he receives an unused tomb. Compare John 19:41 and Matt 27:60, which state that the tomb was "new."

MacArthur notes that "As soon as a victim was declared dead, his body was taken down from the cross and ordinarily was thrown into a common grave for criminals, as Isaiah had prophesied the Messiah's enemies had planned for Him (Isa. 53:9). The Romans had absolutely no respect for the corpses, which often were thrown into a grave left open to scavenger animals and birds. Sometimes the bodies were simply cast onto a burning garbage dump, such as the one that continually smoldered in the [Hinnom Valley](#) (Gehenna) just south of Jerusalem. (See context in [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

ONLY JOHN TELLS OF THE HELP FROM NICODEMUS

John's account (not in the synoptics) of Jesus' burial adds that Joseph had assistance in taking down Jesus' body and preparing it for burial writing

John 19:39 [Nicodemus](#), who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. 40 So they (APPARENTLY JOSEPH AND NICODEMUS) took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Comment - What a dramatic ironic contrast we see in the two disciples, Joseph and [Nicodemus](#), who had kept their allegiance to Jesus secret during His life now stepped into the open at His death, while the eleven disciples who had followed Jesus openly for three years of His life now shrunk away into the shadows at His death! Note the irony on the **Garden** - Sin entered the Garden and brought death, whereas death entered this garden and brought life! **Tasker** says it this way - "The fall of the first Adam took place in a garden; and it was in a garden that the second Adam redeemed mankind from the consequences of Adam's transgression."

Myrrh ([smyrna](#)) was an aromatic resin derived from the trunk and branches of a small thorny tree. **Myrrh** at His birth (Mt 2:11) and **myrrh** at His death (Jn 19:39) and both offered in acts of worship! Aloes derived from wood

from the aloe tree reduced to powder.

Spurgeon on no one had yet been laid - If they buried him in an old tomb, the Jews would say that he had touched the bones of some prophet or other holy man, and so came to life."

MacArthur - After first making sure Jesus was really dead (Mark 15:44-45), Pilate granted permission for Joseph to take His body. Having received the governor's approval, Joseph immediately came and took away Christ's body and hurriedly began preparing it for burial. In this Joseph was assisted by [Nicodemus](#), another member of the Sanhedrin who, as John's footnote indicates, had first come to Christ by night (Jn 3:1-21). Though they kept their allegiance to Him secret while Jesus was alive, Joseph and Nicodemus courageously braved the wrath of the rest of the Sanhedrin to bury His body. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight (about sixty-five pounds by modern standards). That amount of spices would have been used to anoint the body of a king, or a wealthy, prominent person. Myrrh was a fragrant, gummy resin, which in powdered form was often mixed with aloes, an aromatic powder made from sandalwood. Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Unlike the Egyptians, the Jews did not embalm their dead; they used fragrant spices to stifle the smell of putrefaction for as long as possible. The spices were probably sprinkled along the entire length of the strips of cloth that were wrapped around the Lord's body. More spices were then packed around and under His body once it was placed in the tomb. It should be noted that neither Joseph or [Nicodemus](#) or the women (Luke 23:55-24:1) were expecting Jesus to rise from the dead. If they had believed His repeated predictions that He would do so (Jn 2:19; Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 24:6-7), they would not have bothered to prepare His body so thoroughly for burial.

Only John relates that in the place where He was crucified there was a **garden**, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Matthew reveals that the tomb was Joseph's own tomb (Mt. 27:60). With the Sabbath—when all work would have to cease—nearly upon them, the nearness of the tomb was providential. (See context in [John 12-21 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

Luke 23:54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

KJV Luke 23:54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

- Mt 27:62; John 19:14,31,42
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin- This was still Friday afternoon and the day of preparation refers to the day before the Sabbath which would begin soon.

Mark 15:42 says "it was the **preparation day**, (THEN MARK GIVES A "DEFINITION") that is, the day before the Sabbath." Recall it was evening, sometime between 3 PM and 6 PM, and the Sabbath would begin at 6 PM (or more generally at "sundown" which at this time of year would have been about 6 PM) and the Passover meal would also be celebrated.. John 19:14 says that Jesus' trial and crucifixion took place on "the day of preparation for the Passover." So as the lambs were being prepared for the Passover meal that evening at the same time Jesus was dying on the Cross as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29).

Preparation day (3904)(**paraskeue** from **paraskeuazo** = make preparation from **para** = for + **skeuazo** = to prepare) in secular Greek was generally used to mean "preparation," hence "to equip oneself" but all the NT uses the word to denote the day of preparation for the Jewish Sabbath. Six uses all in the Gospels - Matt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14; Jn. 19:31; Jn. 19:4.

Luke 23:55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

KJV Luke 23:55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

- Lk 23:49; 8:2; Mt 27:61; Mark 15:47
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

**THE WOMEN WHO
FOLLOWED JESUS**

These women came with Jesus, so surely these women were His disciples. They counted the cost, leaving their homes in Galilee to follow Him. It was the women disciples who were at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. It was women who were first to the open tomb. In this passage, only Luke describes the women's preparation of spices in preparation for Easter morning.

Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed (katakoloutheo - means to follow closely), **and saw the tomb and how His body was laid** - These women followed Jesus body in life and now in death! What incredible devotion by these courageous women. Matthew tells us that the women who saw the tomb were "Mary Magdalene...and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave." (Matthew 27:61) Mark adds that "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were looking on to see where He was laid. (Mark 15:47) Some commentators (Robert Stein) add that **Joanna** who is mentioned in Lk 8:3+ and then in the resurrection chapter, in Luke 24:10. **Susanna** was said to also be present but there is no specific mention in the Gospel accounts, her name only being mentioned in (Lk 8:3+).

The phrase **saw the tomb and how His body was laid** is important because it excludes the skeptics explanation of an empty tomb saying they returned to the wrong tomb Sunday morning. (See [Who Moved the Stone? by Frank Morison](#)) That is absurd! Luke 24:1 says "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, **they** came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." If you read the Bible without chapter breaks, Luke 23:56 leaves no doubt that the they in Luke 24:1 is the women. Luke 24:10+ gives their specific identification. Remember that the chapter breaks are not inspired but were compiled by [Stephen Langton](#) in 1205 AD.

Gotquestions on **the other Mary** or **Mary the mother of Joseph** - A fourth Mary in the Bible is identified as Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph and the wife of Clopas (also called Alphaeus in Luke 6:15). She is mentioned in Mark 15:40, Matthew 27:56, and John 19:25 as watching the crucifixion of Christ. She is mentioned again in Mark 15:47 as seeing the place where Jesus was buried. And this Mary appears again in Mark 16:1 and Matthew 28:1 (where she is called "the other Mary") in connection with the empty tomb, as she was one of the women who brought spices for Jesus' body and met an angel instead.

Constable on **Mary Magdalene** and **Mary the mother of Joseph** - The writer mentioned the presence of these two women at the tomb during Jesus' burial to prepare for his statement that they were present to witness the empty tomb (Mk 16:1, 5). They had seen Jesus die (Mk 15:40), and now they saw Him buried. There was no question that they went to the right tomb on Sunday morning since they had been there Friday afternoon. Again Mark guarded against any wrong conclusion that the disciples were mistaken about Jesus' resurrection. The Servant of the Lord had paid the ultimate price for the sins of humankind, His own life. Mark's narrative stressed Jesus' exemplary service and the reality of His death. (Expository Notes - Mark)

Related Resources:

- [Who was Mary Magdalene?](#)
- [How many Marys are in the Bible?](#)

QUESTION - [Can the various resurrection accounts from the four Gospels be harmonized?](#)

ANSWER - The events surrounding Jesus' resurrection can be difficult to piece together. We must remember two things: first, the news of Jesus' resurrection produced much excitement in Jerusalem, and in the ensuing chaos many people were going many different directions. Groups were separated, and several different groups paid visits to the tomb, possibly more than once. Second, the writers of the Gospels did not attempt an exhaustive narrative; in other words, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had no intention of telling us every detail of the resurrection or every event in the order that it happened.

In the battle with skeptics regarding Jesus' resurrection, Christians are in a "no-win" situation. If the resurrection accounts harmonize perfectly, skeptics will claim that the writers of the Gospels conspired together. If the resurrection accounts have some differences, skeptics will claim that the Gospels contradict each other and therefore cannot be trusted. It is our contention that the resurrection accounts can be harmonized and do not contradict each other.

However, even if the resurrection accounts cannot be perfectly harmonized, that does not make them untrustworthy. By any reasonable evaluation, the resurrection accounts from the four Gospels are superbly consistent eyewitness testimonies. The central truths - that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and that the resurrected Jesus appeared to many people - are clearly taught in each of the four Gospels. The apparent inconsistencies are in "side issues." How many angels did they see in the tomb, one or two? (Perhaps one person only saw one angel, while the other person saw two angels.) To how many women did Jesus appear, and to whom did He appear first? (While each Gospel has a slightly different sequence to the appearances, none of them claims to be giving the precise chronological order.) So, while the resurrection accounts may seem to be inconsistent, it cannot be proven that the accounts are contradictory.

Here is a possible harmony of the narratives of the resurrection of Christ and His post-resurrection appearances, in chronological order:

1. Jesus is buried, as several women watch (Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42).
2. The tomb is sealed and a guard is set (Matthew 27:62-66).
3. At least 3 women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, prepare spices to go to the tomb (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1).

4. An angel descends from heaven, rolls the stone away, and sits on it. There is an earthquake, and the guards faint (Matthew 28:2-4).
5. The women arrive at the tomb and find it empty. Mary Magdalene leaves the other women there and runs to tell the disciples (John 20:1-2).
6. The women still at the tomb see two angels who tell them that Jesus is risen and who instruct them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee (Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:2-8; Luke 24:1-8).
7. The women leave to bring the news to the disciples (Matthew 28:8).
8. The guards, having roused themselves, report the empty tomb to the authorities, who bribe the guards to say the body was stolen (Matthew 28:11-15).
9. Mary the mother of James and the other women, on their way to find the disciples, see Jesus (Matthew 28:9-10).
10. The women relate what they have seen and heard to the disciples (Luke 24:9-11).
11. Peter and John run to the tomb, see that it is empty, and find the grave clothes (Luke 24:12; John 20:2-10).
12. Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb. She sees the angels, and then she sees Jesus (John 20:11-18).
13. Later the same day, Jesus appears to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
14. Still on the same day, Jesus appears to Cleopas and another disciple on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32).
15. That evening, the two disciples report the event to the Eleven in Jerusalem (Luke 24:32-35).
16. Jesus appears to ten disciples—Thomas is missing (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25).
17. Jesus appears to all eleven disciples—Thomas included (John 20:26-31).
18. Jesus appears to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-25).
19. Jesus appears to about 500 disciples in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6).
20. Jesus appears to His half-brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7).
21. Jesus commissions His disciples (Matthew 28:16-20).
22. Jesus teaches His disciples the Scriptures and promises to send the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5).
23. Jesus ascends into heaven (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-12).

Pausing At The Tomb

Read: Luke 23:50-24:12

They observed the tomb and how His body was laid. —Luke 23:55

My youngest daughter and I were walking through a store a few weeks before Easter. “Look at all this stuff,” she said. “Nothing but candy and bunnies. I’ll bet there’s not a tomb for sale anywhere in this store.”

I thought it was interesting that she mentioned a tomb rather than a cross or a lily as a symbol of Easter. She may have hit on something I often rush past in my haste to celebrate the resurrection. Jesus was placed in a tomb, and in the minds of those closest to Him that was where He was going to stay.

In Luke 23 and 24, note how many times the body of Jesus and the tomb are mentioned. On that first Easter morning, the women came to a grave to anoint a corpse with spices for proper burial. In the deep sorrow of that awful finality, they were stunned by news that seemed too amazing to be true: “He is not here, but is risen!” (Lk. 24:6).

Our own sorrows and shattered dreams that seem so final have been changed forever by Jesus’ empty grave. It shouts of the victory He won over sin and death, and of the living hope we have in Him.

The great event of Easter is only part of the story. Its full significance comes when we first pause at the tomb. By David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Between His death and resurrection,
 Christ lay in a tomb—
 Now all believers are assured
 That death does not mean doom.
 —Hess

Christ’s empty tomb guarantees our victory over death.

Luke 23:56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

KJV Luke 23:56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

- **they returned and prepared spices and perfumes** Lk 24:1; 2 Chr 16:14; Mk 16:1

- **on the Sabbath they rested** Ex 20:8-10; 31:14; 35:2,3; Isaiah 58:13,14; Jer 17:24,25
- Luke 23 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- See Trial & Crucifixion of Jesus - Parallel Passages - arranges events chronologically and brings out details unique to each Gospel

MARY AND MARY PREPARE SPICES

Then they returned and prepared ([hetoimazo](#)) spices and perfumes - They had to work fast for it was evening and the Sabbath would soon come when all work must cease. Luke continues this subject in the next verse (BAD CHAPTER BREAK!) writing "**But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.**" (Lk 24:1)

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. (Mt 28:1)

Mark has the names of the women - "And when the Sabbath was over, [Mary Magdalene](#), and Mary the mother of James, and [Salome](#), bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen." (Mk 16:1-2) John 20:1 mentions [Mary Magdalene](#) coming early to Jesus' tomb (on Easter Morning) but makes no mention of spices. (See

Leon Morris - John 19:40 says the spices [Nicodemus](#) brought were buried with the body, while in Luke the women prepared spices before the sabbath, in Mark they brought them after the sabbath, while in Matthew there is nothing about the spices at all. Perhaps we should understand all this to mean that the burial on the Friday had to be hurried, but that use was made of the spices that were to hand. Then the faithful women, before and after the sabbath, did what was necessary to complete the burial. (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke](#) PAGE 332)

Walter Leifeld - He carefully notes that the women did not do this on the Sabbath, even though Jewish tradition apparently would have allowed care for the dead on a Sabbath (SBK, 2:52-53). In this way Luke stresses one more time the fidelity of Jesus and his followers to the Jewish laws. (SEE [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Volume 10](#))

And on the Sabbath ([sabbaton](#)) they rested ([hesuchazo](#)) according to the commandment - Just as Zechariah and Elizabeth observed all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly (Lk 1:6), so the women also rest on the Sabbath according to the Commandment "the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work," (Ex 20:10; cf Dt 5:14)

Leon Morris - The faithful Galilean women saw things through to the end. The Jewish custom was to wrap spices and ointments with the body, but for this there was not adequate time. Actually it was not forbidden to anoint a body on a festival (Shabbath 23:5), but there were other restrictions such as those on preparing a coffin or grave (Shabbath 23:4), or on moving even a limb of the deceased (Shabbath 23:5). So the burial had to be hurried. They placed the body in the tomb and then the women went off to the places where they were staying and prepared the necessary ingredients for a proper anointing when the sabbath had passed. Their preparations completed, they complied with the Law and rested on the sabbath. (BORROW [Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke](#) PAGE 332)

Warren Wiersbe - When after six days God finished the work of the "old Creation," He rested (Ge 2:1-3). After six hours, our Lord finished the work of the "new Creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), and He rested on the Sabbath in Joseph's tomb. But that was not the end of the story. He would rise again! ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

Prepared (2090) ([hetoimazo](#) from **heteos** = fitness) means to make ready, specifically to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity.

Sabbath (4521) ([sabbaton](#) from **shabath** - 07676 = to cease from work, intermission - see note on [shabath](#)) is the seventh day of the week, held sacred by the Jews with rest commanded by God.

Rested (2270) ([hesuchazo](#) from **hesuchos** = quiet, still) means to be still or to be silent, with different connotations suggested by the context (see the 5 NT uses below). **Hiebert** notes that [hesuchazo](#) basically means "to be at rest" and was used of silence after speech, rest after labor, peace after war, and the like; it was also used of tranquility or peace of mind." And so the idea of this verb includes being quiet and inwardly calm.

THOUGHT - Ponder the preceding definition of [hesuchazo](#) - Beloved is these women could rest and be inwardly calm on the Sabbath after what they had seen and experienced, what is our excuse?

Related Resources:

- [Who was Mary Magdalene?](#)
- [How many Marys are in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Salome in the Bible?](#)

Hughes - A small boy was turning the pages of a book of religious art. When he came to a picture of the Crucifixion he looked at it for a long time, and a sad look came to his face. Finally he said, "If God had been there, he wouldn't have let them do it." So the Crucifixion seems—until we understand what it really meant. Then we learn that God was there on the cross. We learn that he willed it. We learn that because of the cross, grace flashed in the lives of Simon the Cyrenian, the daughters of Jerusalem, the crucifying soldiers, the thief, the centurion—and thousands upon thousands since that day. ([Wrestling With Wonder: A Transformational Journey](#))

Life Application Bible Commentary – DO WHAT YOU CAN - These women could not do "great" things for Jesus—they were not permitted to stand up before the Jewish Council or the Roman governor and testify on his behalf—but they did what they could. They stayed at the cross when most of the disciples had fled, and they got ready to anoint their Lord's body. Because of their devotion, they were the first to know about the Resurrection. Believers may feel that they can't do much for Jesus. But they must take advantage of the opportunities given to them by doing what they can do and not worrying about what they cannot do. (BORROW [Life application New Testament commentary](#))