

(Through the Bible) Matthew 27-28

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the trial of Jesus and the significance of Pilate's decision, emphasizing the importance of making a choice about Jesus and its impact on one's destiny.

Duration: 1:27:40

Topics: "The Crucifixion", "Faith Evidence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the punishment and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He explains that the Roman government would typically sentence prisoners to receive 40 stripes, but they would only lay on 39 as a form of mercy. The purpose of the scourging was to force the prisoner to confess their crimes against Rome. The speaker then transitions to the topic of belief in Jesus and emphasizes the importance of examining all the evidence before making a judgment. He advises against relying on the testimony of Jesus' enemies or those who have never met him.

Transcript

This sign shall be turned in our Bibles to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27. In the 26th chapter, we left Jesus before the high priest, the Sanhedrin, and Peter had just, outside of this group, denied his Lord, and at this moment he's out somewhere weeping bitterly over his failure. Now when the morning was come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

And when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Now the reason for the pre-trial of Jesus was that they might be able to frame some charges against him to bring to the Roman governor. What they accused Jesus of was blasphemy because he said that he was the Son of God.

The priest, the high priest, said, I adjure you by the living God, tell us, are you the Messiah, the Son of God? And Jesus said, you said it. And this guy ripped his clothes and he said, what need we have any further witnesses? You've heard him with his own mouth, that's blasphemy. However, the Roman government had taken away from the Jews the right of capital punishment just a few years earlier.

And so the Jews did not have the authority to order a person put to death. And they were desiring that Jesus should be put to death. So they could not bring the charges of blasphemy before Pilate.

Because Pilate would say, that's your own religious matter, you guys settled it on your own. So they had to bring charges against Jesus that would hold in the Roman court. And so they made actually charges of insurrection against the Roman government.

The charge that Jesus was saying that they shouldn't pay taxes to Rome. And the charge that Jesus declared himself the king and thus was setting himself up against the Roman government because he said that he was king. Now these three charges are actually false charges that were made against Christ.

Scurrilous charges of which they could not offer any real proof. Pilate being a seasoned judge was able to see through their charges. And having examined Jesus of course he realized that Jesus was innocent of these charges made against him.

However at this point they were seeking to develop the charges. They bound him and then brought him to the governor Pontius Pilate. Then Judas which had betrayed him when he saw that he was condemned repented himself.

And brought again the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and to the elders. Now there is the theory by some. And it is plausible that Judas Iscariot by his betraying of Jesus was trying to force the hand of Jesus to establish the kingdom.

That Judas didn't like Jesus talking about the kingdom being prolonged. And he was getting impatient even as John the Baptist earlier had gotten impatient and sent his disciples to Jesus and said hey are you the one that we are looking for or shall we look for someone else. In other words let's get this show on the road.

And that Judas himself was actually seeking to force Jesus to declare the kingdom. To manifest himself as the king. And thus it was actually a plan gone awry in a sense.

So that when he saw that Jesus was condemned suddenly he realized that the whole plan had backfired on him and he repented for what he had done. However that's reading into Judas motivations of which we have no way of proving. It's just interesting speculation.

It should be noted that there are two kinds of repentance. I think that if you would go to San Quentin you would find that every prisoner there was repentant. They are all of them sorry.

Very few of them sorry for what they did but most of them sorry that they got caught. And there's two kinds of repentance that way. Sorry that the plan backfired perhaps.

Or really sorry for what he did. Now just what it was we do not know. But Peter failed the Lord and he repented and he went out and wept bitterly.

Contrasted with Judas he repented. And we read he went out and hanged himself. He brought the 30 pieces of silver back to the chief priest and the elders and he said I have sinned.

There is the confession of sin on Judas' part. In that I have betrayed innocent blood. It is interesting to me how that God all the way through was bearing witness to the innocence of his son Jesus Christ.

Judas who betrayed him said I have betrayed innocent blood. Pilate as he examined him said I have examined him and I find no fault in him. Later the thief on the cross said to the other one look this man has done nothing amiss.

Look how many places God was attesting to the innocence of Jesus Christ. So that we would realize that he was dying not for his own guilt. Not for his own sin.

But he was dying for our guilt and for our sin. For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And so the priest at this point having finished with Judas said to him What is that to us? That's your problem.

And so he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went out and hanged himself. Now according to the account in the book of Acts he fell on the ground and his body burst open. So that the theory is that when he hanged himself the rope broke and his body actually then fell to the ground.

Now the chief priest took the silver pieces and said it's not lawful to put them into the treasury because they are the price of blood. Interesting that they are interested in this little point of the law. When their trial of Jesus was actually illegal.

Under their law it was illegal to try a man the day that he was arrested. And yet they arrested him in the garden and brought him right in and tried him. Also we read that the day was the preparation for the Passover.

And it says the next day because it was the Sabbath day. They wanted to hasten the death of Christ by breaking his or the prisoners by breaking their legs because it was the preparation for the Passover and they didn't want the bodies hanging there. But the interesting thing is this.

The next day they came to Pilate and said now we heard that while he was alive he said he was going to rise after three days. And their coming to Pilate on a business issue on the Sabbath day was completely against their law. And that violation of the Sabbath was one of the chief causes that they had against Jesus.

How convenient it is to use the law. But how easy it is to abuse the law when the necessity is there. So they took counsel and they bought with them in the potter's field to bury the strangers in.

And wherefore that field is called the field of blood and to this day. Al-Saddam then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying and they took the 30 pieces of silver and the price of him that was valued whom the children of Israel did value and they gave them for the potter's field as the Lord appointed me. Now at this point a problem arises because that prophecy really doesn't appear in Jeremiah but in Zechariah.

And just what the answer is to that I don't know. If Matthew made a mistake and I know that it is very possible when a person is writing or speaking to make a mistake in references and if you will go back over my tapes I'm certain that you'll find that I have made a lot of mistakes in making reference to the Old Testament prophets. In fact I have a crazy crossover network in my mind that many times when I'm talking about Noah I'll call him Moses or I'm talking about Moses I'll call him Noah and there's a crossover network.

There's a switch loose up there and it vibrates and gives a crossover every once in a while or it is possible that one of the early copyist who was copying the Scripture as he was copying made the mistake and put Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. But it is obvious that this prophecy is in Zechariah chapter 11. And so there is that problem that does exist in this particular verse and I only call it to your attention before someone else does and you can work with it.

And Jesus stood before the governor that is Pilate and the governor asked him saying Are you the king of the Jews? Now this was the one of the charges one of the three charges that they had laid against Jesus. He said are you the king of the Jews and Jesus said thou sayest it or you said it. Affirming yes I am you said it.

And when he was accused of the chief priests and the elders he answered nothing. As a sheep before her shears is done so he openeth not his mouth. Then said Pilate unto him don't you hear how many things they are witnessing against you? And he answered him never a word in so much that the governor marveled greatly.

Surely he had never had a prisoner quite like this before an accused man quite like this. Who did not say anything to defend himself against the obvious false charges that were being made. Boy I mean if it were us and those charges being made we would be yelling liar.

And you know we would we would surely be speaking up to defend ourselves. Now it was the custom of the Roman government to release a prisoner during the feast as a gesture of goodwill from Rome to the people and sort of to just ingratiate the people to the Roman government. And as a general rule the prisoner that was released was a political prisoner and quite often the people's favorite.

One that the people admired for his courage and his crime really wasn't a felonious type of a crime except it was against the Roman government as a rule and usually they were political prisoners that they would release. Now at this time they had a very notable prisoner who was guilty of insurrection and also of murder. His name was Barabbas which is an interesting name it is son of the father.

Abba you know his father and Bar in the Hebrew his son Bar Yaakov the son of Jacob. Barabbas the son of the father. It is thought that his name and there are some accounts in the Syriac the Peshitta virgins they say his name was Jesus Barabbas.

And that is why Pilate was saying and referring to Jesus as Jesus which is called the Messiah to sort of distinguish him from Jesus Barabbas. Jesus is the Hebrew name Joshua it was a very popular name and so to identify which Jesus he was speaking to of they would either say Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus who which is called Christ which Pilate used. Whom will ye that I release unto you Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ or the Messiah.

For Pilate realized that it was only for envy that Jesus had been delivered. The chief priests were envious of him because of the multitude following after him. And actually they were jealous and also fearful.

If the crowds went after Jesus completely then they would lose their authority in their positions. So knowing that it was only for envy that they delivered Jesus he figured for sure that the crowd would call for the release of Jesus. Now when he was set down on the judgment seat his wife sent unto him saying have nothing to do with that just man for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

There are certain apocryphal writings which say that his wife's name was Claudia Percula. That actually they had a little son Pilatus who was healed by Jesus. And that Claudia was actually a Christian.

And there's quite a story whether or not it is true is something that we of course do not know. But it is quite an interesting story to say the least and does put a little extra drama into this whole story. His wife sent unto him saying have nothing to do with that just man.

I mean she calls him that just man. Again God testifying of the innocency of Jesus for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priest and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

And the governor said unto them whether of the two will ye that I release unto you. And they said Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them what shall I then do with Jesus which is called the Messiah.

Very interesting question. A question that is not limited to Pilate. But a question that every one of you must face.

For every one of you have to make the same kind of a decision that Pilate made. You must decide what you are going to do with Jesus who is called the Messiah. You can't escape it.

Jesus will not allow you any neutrality. He said he that is not for me is against me. Therefore you must decide what you are going to do with Jesus.

Either believe or not believe. Either accept or reject. Either confess or deny.

The interesting thing about Pilate's decision is that in the final analysis it had nothing to do with the destiny of Jesus. For what Jesus was to do, he had to do because the Scriptures declared and prophesied the crucifixion. That was inevitable.

It was inescapable. No matter what Pilate did, the crucifixion was inescapable. He was crucified from the foundations of the earth according to God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge.

The crucifixion took place. Therefore, Pilate's decision really didn't determine the destiny of Jesus. What it determined was his own destiny.

Even as though you sit as judge concerning Jesus and you judge in your own heart whether he was the son of God or not, whether he was a liar, a fraud, or the way, the truth, and the life, and you yourself make your judgment concerning Jesus, but the judgment you make doesn't determine his destiny. What Jesus is, he is. Makes no difference what you believe about it, but what you determine concerning Jesus and your judgment concerning him does determine your own destiny.

So, though you sit as judge, ultimately, you have judged yourself by choosing to accept or to reject. And thus, no one can blame God for their destiny because God has given to each man the capacity of choice and you must determine what you are going to do with Jesus, who is called the Christ, and what you do with him does determine your destiny. For as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to those who believed upon his name.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. But if you don't believe in him, then you will perish. But that's where your seat and the judgment seat is determining your destiny as you choose to believe or not to believe.

Now, surely a person should not make a judgment concerning Jesus Christ without, first of all, personally, carefully examining all of the evidence. Before you reject Jesus, before you walk away as an unbeliever, it would be very wise for you to carefully examine all of the evidence. And not the testimony of his enemies.

Not the testimony of people who don't know him. Not the testimony of people who have never met him. And yet, it's unfortunate, but that's where the majority of people's determinations concerning Christ has

come.

In a college classroom or in a high school classroom when the teacher or the professor is making some slanderous remarks about Jesus and ridicule him, making fun of it, and saying, well, Jesus said this or that and, you know, makes a joke out of it. And if he were really the Son of God, then this would have been it all. Oh, yeah, well, you know.

You know, professors, he's always smart. And so a person is gullible and they take the word of some professor rather than examining for themselves the evidence. It's tragic because the professor doesn't know him.

He's never met him. If you really want to know about Jesus Christ, if you really want to make a reasoned judgment, then you must examine all of the evidence fully. And I am convinced if you will honestly, with an open heart, examine all of the evidence, there will be no problem.

You'll immediately accept Jesus. It's the most reasonable thing anybody could do. For what have you got to lose? But think of what you've got to gain.

Pilate was in a difficult position. He was under tremendous pressure. Inward pressure.

He knew what was right. He knew that Jesus was innocent. He knew what he should do.

As a righteous judge. But there was this outside pressure of the crowd forcing him to a decision that he knew was wrong. Unfortunately, many times we're under that kind of pressure too.

The crowd forcing us to a decision or to an action that we know to be wrong. I feel sorry for a person in that condition. In your heart, you know what's right.

You're going against your own conscience, your own heart. What you know to be right and true and going against it is always a difficult thing. And you suffer many times for years for something like that.

A while back, I did something that I knew was wrong. And it still bothers me. It still bothers me.

Because I knew it was wrong. But I was pressured. And I went ahead and did it.

And it bothers me still that I would go against what I know to be right. Just because of pressure that is being put on you. The crowd said, let him be crucified.

The governor said, why? What evil has he done? But they cried out the more saying, let him be crucified. Now when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing. And notice there was no rationale.

Just louder cries. There's never any rationale with a mob. But it seems that so often it's just the loudest voice that prevails.

Such was the case here. No justice really. Just the loudest voices prevail.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather only a ruckus, a tumult was being created. He took water. And he washed his hands before the multitude saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person.

See you to it. Now, under the Old Testament law, if a man was found dead in a field, there are no witnesses, just a dead body found in the field. They would measure from that body to the villages around.

And the closest village to where the dead body was found, the elders would have to offer a sacrifice. And then they would have to wash their hands declaring, we are innocent. We don't know how this man was killed.

So, Pilate is picking up a traditional Jewish law and saying, look, I'm innocent. You want to murder the man, but I'm innocent. See you to it.

And the people answered, his blood be on us and on our children. I wonder if they really knew what they were saying. You read in Josephus of the Holocaust, when Titus came with the Roman legions and destroyed Jerusalem, that horrible carnage.

You begin to get a little of the implication of what these men were saying when they said his blood be upon us and on our children. However, the Lord said that the children will not suffer or be punished for the parents' sin nor the parents for the children, but each man for himself. Now, indirectly, our children often suffer for our sins.

God help us, there are a lot of children today suffering for their parents' sins. If their parents are using drugs or their parents are alcoholics, or if their parents are child abusers, the child is suffering for their parents' sin. But when that child comes to stand before God, he will not be responsible for what his parents did, but will only be responsible for what he did.

Many parents have the heartbreak of seeing their children go out and do horrible things. But when they stand before God, and the parent suffers, and the parent is hurt by the consequences that have fallen upon their children for the deeds that they have done. But when they stand before God, every man stands for himself.

I do not have to answer for anybody but me. You have to answer for yourself when we stand before God. Then he released Barabbas unto them.

And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Now, scourging before crucifixion was a common Roman practice. The prisoner would be tied to a post in such a way, in such a position, that his back would be bent over.

And then the Roman guard would take a leather whip in which there were bits of bone and pieces of lead embedded. And over the stretched back, the prisoner, of course, was stripped naked. And over his back he would lay this whip, which as he would pull it back would pick up pieces of flesh with it with these little bits of lead and bone embedded in the whip.

The prisoners oftentimes died at the whipping post. Most generally, they fainted two or three times during the beating. The purpose of the scourging was to solve the unsolved crimes in the community.

The idea being that if the prisoner would confess to a crime, that the executioner applying the whip would make it a little easier each time. But if he was stubborn and refused to confess some crime against Rome, then he had laid on harder and harder and harder until the prisoner, because of the excruciating pain, was forced to cry out his crimes against Rome. They always had a man standing by, a scribe, ready to write down the things that the prisoner confessed.

And thus, the Roman government was able to solve many of the crimes in the community by this method of torture. Again, "...and as a sheep before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." He had absolutely nothing to confess. The sentence was 40 stripes.

For 40 is the number of judgment in the Scriptures. However, there would only be 39 stripes laid upon the prisoner. 39 being the number of mercy.

Not much mercy. But to show mercy, the Roman government would only lay on 39, though 40 was always the sentence. Many times the prisoners bled to death.

Having received the scourging, they would be physically weakened. Their back torn to shreds, looking like hamburger. And then, they were taken out and placed on the cross with their hands nailed, and their feet were usually tied rather than nailed.

But with their hands nailed, there was no way that they could shoo away the flies and the bugs that would begin to just cover their bodies. Death by crucifixion was a very inhumane. And yet, Jesus, because He loved you so much, knowingly went to the cross, endured the suffering, despising the shame, in order that He might have that joy of being able to say to you, you are forgiven every sin you have committed.

Enter into My kingdom. Oh, such love. Hard for us to fully comprehend.

I'm sure we don't. So when He had scourged Jesus, He delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall.

And they gathered unto them the whole band of soldiers. And there they stripped Him. And they put on this scarlet robe.

And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it on His head. And they put a reed in His right hand. And they bowed their knees before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! A historian records how this similar scene happened once before, where there was an idiot who was proclaiming himself as king.

And so the Roman soldiers, just for sport, took a piece of cloth and sort of wove it around and put it on His head for a crown. And they took a stick that was nearby and put it in His hand. And they began to say, Hail, King! And they began to bow down and pretend like He was the king and were making fun of this idiot.

That is the kind of mockery they subjected Jesus to. The mockery that they had subjected the idiot to. However, they made for Him a crown of thorns.

Here He is, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, wearing a crown of thorns that's been pressed into His skull. But really, how fitting. Where did thorns come from? When Adam sinned, God said, Cursed be the earth, thorns shall it bring forth.

The thorns came as a result of God's curse against man's sin and how appropriate that His Son who was coming to bear the curse of sin should wear a crown of thorns. And then they began to take the reed and with it they began to smite Him on the face. And they began to spit on Him.

Now already He had been buffeted earlier in the high precincts where they covered His head and began to hit Him. And so already, no doubt, His face was marred, swollen, bruised, eyes probably swollen shut.

Isaiah said His face was so marred you could not recognize Him as a human being.

Have you ever seen a person really beaten up? Huge welts, bruises, face distorted. That's what Jesus looked like when they were finished with Him. You couldn't even tell that He was a human being.

And after they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him and put on His own raiment and led Him away to crucify Him. Usually the prisoner had to carry the cross arm. The post was already implanted in the ground.

As they came out, they found a man, a Cyrene, Simon by name, and they compelled him to bear His cross. Simon probably was a Jew who had come for the Passover. Maybe saved up his money for years in order to come to Jerusalem.

If a Roman soldier put his sword on your shoulder, he'd just say, do this, do that, and you had to do it. They could compel you to do whatever. All they had to do was take out their sword and lay it on your shoulder.

And that was the badge of authority. And they could compel you to carry their gear for a mile. And Jesus made reference to that earlier.

He said, look, if they compel you to carry it a mile, take it too. When they say, hey, what's the matter with you? How come you're taking it too? I'll tell you why. Just a good chance to witness.

So they compelled this Simon to carry His cross. Now, we are told that He is the father of Alexander and Rufus in another gospel. So that there are some interesting stories concerning Simon and his sons and the commitment that they made to Jesus Christ.

When they were coming to a place called Golgotha, that is to say the place of a skull, and of course just outside of the Damascus Gate, there is this face of the cliff that has the caves that give the appearance of a skull as the result of the coring of the stone from that area. And so that is where Jesus was crucified outside of the walls of the city of Jerusalem, outside the gate. And interestingly enough, over in Jerusalem now, they have excavated the Damascus Gate, which is below the modern-day Damascus Gate.

But this gate that has been excavated is the very gate of the Roman period, the gate through which Jesus walked on His road to Golgotha. We got to go into it for the very first time this last year. One of the most exciting experiences as you stand in that gate and as you walk out and realize this is the very Roman gate of the Herodian period that Jesus went out going to the cross.

Heavy, heavy. And they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall. Now, the wealthy women of Jerusalem made up this concoction of sour wine mixed with frankincense, which was an anesthesia.

It was a drug. And it sort of put you out so that you didn't feel the pain and the suffering of the cross so much. It was sort of a gesture of kindness because dying on a cross was such a painful experience.

You hang there until your muscles finally give way and then as your muscles give way, your body begins to fall out of joint. And I don't know if you've ever had a knee go out or whatever. Man, it's excruciatingly painful.

And so this was sort of a kind gesture to give a little bit of anesthesia or drug to the prisoner so that he could endure more easily the horrible pain of crucifixion. Significant that Jesus did not take it. Later on,

when He cried, I thirst and they gave Him the mixture again, then He did take it.

But He wanted to taste for every man the cup of God's indignation against sin. And He suffered completely for you and for me. When He had tasted of it, He did not drink.

He knew what it was. And they crucified Him and parted His garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet. They parted My garments among them and upon My vesture did they cast lots.

Psalm 22 And sitting down, they watched Him there. And they set up over His head the accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Now, they would carry... Actually, when the prisoner was going to the cross, there would be a square of Roman soldiers around Him.

And the sergeant over the group would carry a little sign and on the sign was the accusation against the prisoner. And they usually did not take them directly to the cross, but took them through the streets of the city so that all of the people would be terrified by the power of the Roman government and the fellow would hold up the accusation as they were walking through the streets and all of the people would see this guy on the way to the cross and they would see the accusation that was made against him. And so then when they came to the cross, they would nail the accusation on the post going up on the top of it so that the people would know this man was being crucified because... And of course, with Jesus, He claimed to be, according to the accusation, the King of the Jews.

He's actually the King of the universe. Then there were two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, the other on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him as they were wagging their heads.

Now, the wagging of their heads was cultural. And sometimes they still do that today. There's a shrill cry that they'll give.

They'll wag their heads. They will wave their hands and all. And so they that passed by were reviling Him as they wagged their heads.

And they said, You that destroyed the temple or you that said you could destroy the temple and build it in three days, save thyself if you are the Son of God. Come down from the cross. Likewise, also the chief priest mocking Him with the scribes and the elders said, He saved others.

Himself He cannot save. What an interesting statement and how true it is. He saved others.

In fact, the priest said two things about Him. First of all, in verse 42, He saved others and in verse 43, He trusted in God. What a testimony concerning Jesus.

He saved others and He trusted in God. With that testimony that the high priest made against Jesus, He was really condemning Himself. We are condemning a man who saved others and trusted in God.

He saved others. Himself He cannot save. How true that is.

If He saved Himself, He could not save others. It was only by not saving Himself that He was able to save you. When Peter pulled the sword and began to flail there in the garden, Jesus said, Put it away, Peter.

They who take the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realize, Peter, I'm in control. At this moment, I could call for ten legions of angels to deliver me out of their hands.

But then, how could the Scriptures be fulfilled? How could I save man? How could I redeem mankind if I would deliver myself from this? He saved others. Himself He cannot save. True, if He is to save others, He cannot save Himself.

He's got to go through with it if He's going to save others. Interesting statement, I'm sure, made by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit only because the man was the high priest. And that happened many times in the history of Israel.

The high priest wasn't such a godly man, but because he was the high priest, there was that certain anointing with the office, and he would speak prophetically just because he was in the office of the high priest. He said, If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God.

Let Him deliver Him now, if You will have Him. For He said, I am the Son of God. Now the thieves also which were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth until later on when one of them repented and asked forgiveness, and we'll get that when we get to Luke's Gospel.

Now from the sixth hour, that is noon, the clock began with morning, sunrise, six o'clock in the morning. Third hour would be ninth hour, so that's when Jesus was put on the cross, the ninth hour, early in the morning. Now three hours later, having been hanging there for three hours, from the sixth hour, noon, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour, three in the afternoon.

Impossible that it could have been an eclipse because this was the Passover season, and the Passover is full moon, and you can't have an eclipse during the full moon because the moon is on the opposite side of the sun. And so this is just some phenomena that God created. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice about three in the afternoon, saying, that is to say, my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me? Now with this, He immediately calls our attention to Psalm 22 because Psalm 22 opens with that statement.

Perhaps it was just to His disciples standing by that He gave this first verse and sort of saying, go home and look it up and read it and you'll know what's going on. For as they would read through Psalm 22, they would realize that God had prophesied this whole thing. They would understand so much of what was happening.

It is there in Psalm 22 that He speaks about, I cried in the daytime and thou hearest not. And in the night season, and I am not silent, spoke about the darkness that would come. In Psalm 22, it speaks about them casting lots for His vesture.

In Psalm 22, it talks about His tongue cleaving to the roof of His jaw, that tremendous thirst that they get as their body dehydrates because of the loss of blood and all. In Psalm 22, it describes my bones are all out of joint, that slipping out of joint that happened to a person who was crucified. And so by crying, my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? He's giving them a reference point to look up in order that they might have understanding, a more full understanding of just what's going on.

But also, as we hear this cry, we begin to understand the agony in the garden the night before when He began to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground as He was pleading with the Father if it was possible, let the cup pass. This is the bitterness of the cup that He had to drink. That effect that sin has of separating a man from God.

Through the eternity past, He had always been one with the Father. Never separated. But when God laid on Him the iniquities of us all because God cannot look in agreement upon sin, there came that separation as He tasted for a moment that separation from God in order that you would not have to be separated from God eternally.

God laid on Him the iniquities of us all. And when the sins of the world were laid on Jesus, He was forsaken of God. And thus that cry that rang out, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? I'm certain that none of us have ever experienced quite like He did that awesomeness of being forsaken of God because God has never forsaken any of us even though we've rebelled.

God has always been there. Some of them that stood by when they heard Him say, Eli, Eli, they thought He was calling for Elijah. They said, listen, He's calling for Elijah.

And immediately one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed to give him to drink. They thought he was delirious in the pain is actually what it was. And so the fellow ran to get the anesthesia to sort of put him out of his head.

And the other said, no, no, wait a minute, let's see if Elijah will come. Now Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. He said, no man takes my life from me, I give my life.

They didn't take His life, He dismissed His spirit. He said, I have the power to lay down my life and I have the power to take it up again. No man takes my life.

He had the power to say to His spirit, all right, you may leave the body now. And He dismissed His spirit. But the cry that He made, that other loud cry, was the cry of victory.

It is finished. The redemption of man is complete. And having made that cry, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.

And He dismissed His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Not from the bottom to the top.

God was the one that ripped that thing. From the top to the bottom. The veil of the temple had always shown to the people the difficulty of the approach to God by sinful man.

The only way a sinful man could approach God was through the High Priest. And that only once a year on the Day of Atonement, or one day a year, in which He would come in actually twice, but only the one day of the year, the approach to God, and that only after many sacrifices. And He would have to enter in through the veil of the temple.

But that heavy veil hanging there, and there are some records that say that it was 18 inches thick. That heavy veil hanging there was to man a prohibition. God cannot be approached by sinful man.

Don't attempt it, lest you be destroyed. But having established now the new covenant in His blood, the door is open for all men to come to God. And that, of course, is the significance of the veil being rent in two.

God is declaring, come on in. The provision has now been made for your sins, for you to be forgiven, and now you can have access to God through Jesus Christ, who has entered through the veil for us in order that He might make access for each of us to come to God. Paul the Apostle, as he is talking to the

Ephesians in chapter 1 concerning the tremendous spiritual blessings that we have in Christ, as he is listing these spiritual blessings, he says, by whom also we have access through His blood.

So, the veil of the temple has been rent through Jesus Christ. Any of you can now come to God. The door is open and the invitation has been given to come.

All you that labor and are heavy laden, He'll give you rest. Along with the veil being torn, the earth did quake and the rocks were torn. You remember Jesus had said these very rocks would cry out.

Now these rocks are being torn at this convulsion of nature against the horror of man's sin. The first recorded sin of man was fratricide, or suicide actually. Go back one.

When Adam ate, he committed suicide. God said, the day you eat thereof, you're going to die. And when he ate of the forbidden fruit, he committed suicide.

The second sin was fratricide when Cain killed his brother Abel. But surely the worst sin recorded against man was deicide when man attempted to kill God, hung him on the cross. All nature was repelled by it.

And the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection. Now Matthew is inserting this a little early in the record, but it took place after his resurrection. The graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.

And they went into the holy city and appeared unto many. Now, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4, He who has ascended is the one who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth. And when he ascended, he led the captives from their captivity.

And he gave gifts unto men. Jesus tells us in Luke 16, and we'll be getting to that, that there were two compartments in Hades. Abraham was in charge of one as he was comforting those righteous who died.

Peter tells us that Jesus went and preached to those souls that were in prison. And, of course, opened the doors of hell to set at liberty those that were bound. And that, of course, is part of the prophecy of Isaiah.

To set at liberty those that were bound. To open the prison doors to the captives. You see, it was impossible that those Old Testament saints could be made perfect apart from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Because it was impossible that the blood of goats and bulls could put away sin. All it could do was cover it. It took the blood of Jesus Christ to put away sin.

So they could not come into that perfected state until the perfect sacrifice had been made. And once it had been made, then they could come into the perfected state. Now when the centurion and those that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things were done, they feared greatly saying, truly, this was the Son of God.

And many women were there beholding afar off which followed Jesus from Galilee ministering unto Him. And among which was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of Zebedee's children. The women stuck by Him.

And when the evening was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea named Joseph who also himself was Jesus' disciple. And he went to Pilate and he begged for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and he laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Marys sitting over against the sepulchre.

The women were still there, faithful, hanging on, sitting by the door of the sepulchre. Now the next day that followed, this would have been the Passover or the Sabbath day, the day that followed the day of preparation, the next day that followed the day of preparation, the chief priest and the Pharisees came together unto Pilate saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive that after three days he was going to rise again. Now the disciples had forgotten that.

They were totally devastated at this point. But yet the enemies remembered it. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day lest the disciples come by night and steal him away and say to the people, he is risen from the dead so that the last error will be worse than the first.

Pilate said unto them, you have a guard, go your way, make it as sure as you can. I like that. Hey, just make it as sure as you can.

You think you can keep him in there? Go ahead, try. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting the watch. Now in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to the sepulchre.

And behold, there was a great earthquake for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. And his countenance was like lightning and his raiment was as white as snow. And for fear of him, the keepers did shake and became as dead men.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay.

And then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. And behold, he goes before you into Galilee and there shall you see him. Lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, that is his disciples, saying, All hail! And they came and they held him by the feet and worshipped him. Oh, imagine the excitement.

Imagine the joy of this morning. Now, how is it that they held him by the feet and worshipped him when earlier he said to Mary, Don't touch me. I have not yet ascended to my father.

It lies in the Greek where Jesus said, Don't touch me. Or it's translated, Don't touch me. Literally from the Greek it is, Don't cling to me.

Mary no doubt got a death grip around his neck like a person who is drowning. You got away from me once, you'll never get away from me again, you know. And so he said, Mary, don't cling to me.

You got a job to do. Go tell the disciples I'm risen. But here they come and they're clinging, they're holding him by the feet as they worship him.

Then Jesus said unto them, Be not afraid. Go and tell my brothers that they go into Galilee and there they will see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city and they showed the chief priest all of the things that were done.

And when they were assembled with the elders, they had taken counsel and they gave them large sums of money saying, You say that his disciples came by night and stole him while we slept. And if the word of this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and take care of you. So they took the money and they did as they were taught.

And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then when the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Can you imagine how much power that must be? All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore. Interesting.

He said, All power is given to me. You go. But then he said, I will be with you.

As you go to proclaim God's love to a needy world, the Lord is with you and backing you up with all of the power that exists in the universe. Oh, what power is ours as we go out to proclaim the risen Savior to the lost world. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Not in the name. There is a group called Jesus Only and they say in the name.

And the name is Jesus, so you should only baptize in Jesus' name only. But in the Greek it is into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So it sort of blows their little theory.

Teaching them. Notice the command is to go and to teach. The real ministry of the church should be that of teaching God's truth to man.

Teaching them to observe all of the things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of this age. Not, you know, if you go to Africa or you go to the South Pole, but even to the end of the age, to the consummation of the age or down to our present time.

As you go, He's with you. Even to the end of this age. Now, some of the early church fathers, Eusebius, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr, declared that Pilate wrote an account to the Roman government concerning the crucifixion of Jesus and those things that happened around the crucifixion.

There is a document that was found in the Vatican library that purported to be the letter that Pilate sent to Caesar as he explained to him his part and the place of Rome in the crucifixion of Jesus. The letter is called the Acti Pilate and it is an interesting letter. However, the authenticity is something that cannot be fully attested to.

But it does make very interesting reading. I have a book called The Archaeological and Historic Writings of the Sanhedrin and Talmuds of the Jews. And in this book, there is a copy of the Acti Pilate.

I'd like to just read a couple of little segments out of it to you. To Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of Rome, noble sovereign, greeting. The events of the last few days in my province have been of such character that I will give the details in full as they have occurred, as I should not be surprised if in the course of time they may change the destiny of our nation.

For it seems of late that all the gods have ceased to be propitious. I'm almost ready to say, cursed be the day that I succeeded Valerius Facius in the government of Judea. For since then, my life has been one of continual uneasiness and distress.

And he goes on and tells of some of the problems that he had as he took over as the governor there in Israel. He said, I granted unto Jesus unlimited freedom. It is true that Jesus was severe on the rich and the powerful.

And this was a political reason, in my opinion, for not restraining the liberty of the Nazarene. Scribes and Pharisees, he would say to them, you are a race of vipers. You resemble painted sepulchers.

You appear well unto men, but you have death within you. At other times, he would sneer at the alms of the rich and the proud, telling them that the might of a poor was more precious than the sight of God. And new complaints were daily made at the Praetorium against the insolence of Jesus.

I was even informed that some misfortune would befall him and that it would not be the first time that Jerusalem had stoned those that called themselves prophets. And if the Praetorium refused justice, an appeal would be made to Caesar. However, my conduct was approved by the Senate, and I was promised reinforcement after the termination of the Parthian War.

Being too weak to suppress the sedition, I resolved upon adopting a measure that promised to establish the tranquility of the city without subjecting the Praetorium to the humiliating concessions. I wrote to Jesus, requesting an interview with him at the Praetorium. He came.

You know that in my veins there flows Spanish mixed with Roman blood as incapable of fear as it is of puerile emotion. When the Nazarene made his appearance, I was walking in my basilic, and my feet seemed fastened with an iron hand to the marble pavement. And I trembled in every limb as a guilty culprit, though he was calm.

The Nazarene was as calm as innocence itself. When he came up to me, he stopped, and by a signal sign, he seemed to say to me, I am here, though he spoke not a word. For some time, I contemplated with admiration and awe this extraordinary type of man, a type of man unknown to our numerous painters who have given form and figure to all the gods and the heroes.

There was nothing about him that was repelling in his character, yet I felt awed and tremulous to approach him. Jesus, said I unto him at last, and my tongue faltered, Jesus of Nazareth, I have granted you for the last three years ample freedom of speech, nor do I regret it. Your words are those of a sage.

I know not whether you have read Socrates or Plato, but this I know, there is in your discourses a majestic simplicity that elevates you far above these philosophers. The emperor is informed of it, and I, his humble representative in this country, am glad of having allowed you that liberty of which you are so worthy. However, I must not conceal from you that your discourses have raised up against you powerful and inveterate enemies.

Neither is this surprising. Socrates had his enemies and he fell victim to their hatred. Yours are doubly incensed against you on account of your discourses being so severe against their conduct.

Against me, on account of the liberty I have afforded you. They even accuse me of being indirectly leagued with you for the purpose of depriving the Hebrews of the little civil power that Rome has left them.

My request, and I do not say my order, is that you be more circumspect and moderate in your discourses in the future, and more tender toward them unless you arouse the pride of your enemies and they rise against you, this stupid populace, and compel me to employ the instruments of law.

The Nazarene calmly replied, Prince of the Earth, your words proceed not from true wisdom. Say to the torrent, stop in the midst of the mountain gorge. It will uproot the trees of the valley.

The torrent will answer you that it obeys the laws of nature and the creator. God alone knows whether flow the waters of the torrent. Verily I say unto you, before the rose of Sharon blossoms, the blood of the just shall be spilt.

Your blood shall not be spilt, said I with deep emotion. You are more precious in my estimation on account of your wisdom than all of the turbulent and proud Pharisees who abused the freedom granted them by the Romans. They conspire against Caesar and convert his bounty into fear, impressing the unlearned that Caesar is a tyrant and seeks their ruin.

Insolent wretches. They are not aware that the wolf of the Tiber sometimes clothes himself with the skin of sheep to accomplish the wicked ends. And he goes on with his conversation there.

And then, the interesting part I feel is concerning the resurrection. Talking of the crucifixion, he said, I returned to the praetorium was pensive on ascending the stairs, the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene. I perceived an old man in a suppliant posture and behind him several Romans in tears.

He threw himself at my feet and he wept most bitterly. It is painful to see an old man weep and my heart already overcharged with grief. We, those strangers, mutually wept together.

And in truth, it seemed that the tears lay very shallow that day on many whom I perceived out of the vast concourse of people. I never saw such a complete division of feeling, both on the extreme, those that betrayed and sold him, those that testified against him, those that said crucify him, we will have his blood all slunk off like cowardly curse and wash their teeth with vinegar. As I am told that Jesus taught a resurrection and separation after death, if such should be the fact, I am sure it commenced in this vast crowd.

Father, I said to him after gaining control of my feelings, who are you and what is your request? I am Joseph of Arimathea, he replied, and I've come to beg of you upon my knees the permission to bury Jesus of Nazareth. Your prayer is granted, I said to him, and at the same time ordered Manlius to take some soldiers with him to superintend the interment lest it should be profaned. A few days after the sepulcher was found empty, his disciples published all over the country that Jesus had risen from the dead as he had foretold.

This last report created more excitement than the first. As to its truth, I cannot say for certain, but I have made some investigation in the matter, so you can examine it for yourself and see if I'm at fault as Herod represents me. Joseph buried Jesus in his own tomb.

Whether he contemplated the resurrection or calculated to cut himself another, I cannot tell. The next day after he was buried, one of the priests came to the praetorium and said that they were apprehensive that the disciples intended to steal the body of Jesus and hide it and then to make it appear that he had risen from the dead as he had foretold in which they were perfectly convinced. I sent him to the captain of the

royal guard, Malchus, to take him the Jewish soldiers into places many around the sepulchers were needed and then if anything should happen, they would blame themselves and not the Romans.

And when the great excitement arose about the sepulcher being found empty, I felt deeper solicitude than ever. I sent for Malchus who told me that he had placed his lieutenant, Benishim, with 100 soldiers around the sepulcher. He told me that Benishim and the soldiers were very much alarmed at what had occurred there that morning.

I sent for this man, Benishim, who related to me as near as I can remember the following circumstances. He said that about the beginning of the fourth watch they saw a soft and beautiful light over the sepulcher. He at first thought that the women had come to embalm the body of Jesus as was their custom.

They could not see how they had gotten through the guards. And while these reflections were passing through his mind, behold, the whole place lighted up and there seemed to be crowds of the dead in their grave clothes all seemed to be shouting and filled with ecstasy while all around and above was the most beautiful music he had ever heard. And the whole air seemed to be filled with voices praising God.

And at this time there seemed to be a reeling and a swimming of the earth so that he turned so sick and faint that he could not stand on his feet. And he said the earth seemed to swim from under him and his senses left him so that he did not know what did occur. I asked him in what condition he was when he came to himself.

He said he was lying on the ground with his face down. I asked him if he could not have been mistaken as to the light. Was it not maybe the day coming in the east? He said at first he thought of that but only as stones cast away it was exceedingly dark.

And then he remembered it was too early for day. I asked him if his dizziness might not have come from being awakened and getting up too suddenly for it sometimes has that effect. He said he was not and that he had not been asleep all night as the penalty was death for him to sleep on duty.

He said he had let some of the soldiers sleep at a time and some were asleep then. I asked him how long the scene lasted. He said he did not know but he thought nearly an hour.

He said it was hid by the light of day and I asked him if when he went to the sepulcher after he had come to himself he said no because he was afraid that just as soon as relief came they all went to their quarters. I asked him if he had been interrogated by the priest. He said he had.

They wanted him to say that it was an earthquake and to say that they were asleep and offered him money to tell that the disciples had come and stolen the body. But he saw no disciples. He did not know that the body was gone until he was told so.

I asked him what was his private opinion of the priest that conversed with him. He said some of them thought that Jesus was no man that he was not a human being that he was not the son of Mary that he was not the same that was born of the virgin in Bethlehem that the same person had not been on earth that the same person had been on earth before with Abraham and Lot and at many times and places. It seems to me if the Jewish theory be true these conclusions would be correct for to sum up his life it would be in accord with this man's life as is known and testified by both friends and foes.

For the elements were no more in his hands than clay in the hands of a potter. He could convert water into wine. He could change death into life diseases into health.

He could calm the seas still the storms call up fish with a silver coin in its mouth. Now I say if he could do all these things which he did and many more as the Jews all testified and it was doing these things that created this enmity against him he was not charged with criminal offenses nor was he charged with violating any law nor of wronging any individual in person. All of the facts are known to thousands as well as by his foes and his friends.

So I am almost ready to say as did Manlius at the cross truly this was the son of God. So that is the Actae Pilate. There are sources in here that try to attest to its authenticity.

We do not know as I say the early church fathers did say that Pilate wrote this letter to the Roman government to explain the circumstances. Irenaeus refers to it as I said and Justin Martyr and the early church historian Eusebius. So interesting to say the least and whether or not that is true I do know that the story that we read out of Matthew is true.

That Jesus indeed is risen from the dead has ascended into heaven and is coming again to receive us unto himself and to establish his kingdom and his reign over the earth. And whether or not you are a part of his kingdom depends upon your decision of what you will do with Jesus. Will you crown him as the king and the lord of your life? If so then you've become a citizen of his eternal kingdom and you will share in the glory of that kingdom.

For surely the father will answer that prayer. Father I would that these that have been with me should see me in the glory that I have with you before the world ever existed and God affirmed and said I have glorified thee and will glorify thee again. Oh glorious day and as I look around the world today and I see the misery and the suffering and the strife and the problems as they seem to be mounting and multiplying with John at the end of the book of Revelation when Jesus said behold I come quickly he responded even so will come quickly Lord Jesus.

So we come to the end of Matthew's gospel and next week we begin another account these are known as the synoptic gospels in that they all of them cover pretty much the same period of the history of the life of Jesus Matthew, Mark and Luke. When we get into John's gospel John concentrates mainly in the latter part of the ministry of Christ and does not follow the same accounts or record all of the same events as do Matthew, Mark and Luke. So we pray.

Father we thank you for your word we thank you for the death of Jesus Christ the suffering that he endured that we might be redeemed from all of our sin. Father we pray that tonight thy Holy Spirit will make the things of Jesus Christ very real to us and as we stand in the place of Pilate and as we make our own determination concerning Jesus help us oh God not to give in to the pressures of the world around us but may we yield to that still small voice of thy spirit within as we obey our own conscience our own heart as you bear witness to what is right and what is true and may we then Lord just surrender our lives fully completely unreservedly to the lordship of Jesus Christ in his name we pray Amen.

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