

The Church of the Servant King

Mid-Week Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew

(Mid Week_Matt 27)

Jesus is Delivered to Pontius Pilate (27:1-2)

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

Jesus' first Jewish trials had occurred in the night time as we have studied in our review of the six trials of Jesus. Also, as we noted, Jewish law required that trials be conducted during the day. Therefore, the religious leaders of Israel knew that an official trial was necessary since they did not have the power to execute Jesus (John 18:31).

Pilate was the governor or procurator of Judea and Samaria from A.D. 26-36. Judea was a senatorial province and the procurator was responsible for administering the region and collecting taxes for Rome. Pilate's home was in Caesarea (to the north and on the coast), but at this time of the Passover, he was in his Jerusalem palace.

Isn't it interesting that the Roman empire took note of the significance of the Passover holiday. No doubt even Rome knew the story of Israel's departure from Egyptian bondage, the significance of the lamb's blood on the doorposts, the Law's sacrifice and ordinance requirements associated with Passover, the leadership of Moses, and the conquering history of Israel over the Canaanites under the leadership of Joshua. The Gentile nations were not without witness to the one true God – Yahweh. The most notable example of belief in Yahweh within the Roman empire was the centurion of Matthew 8:5-13. Another example is Cornelius in Acts 10.

We obtain a little more insight into the religious leader's activities on this occasion through the writing of the apostle John. John 18:28 informs us that the religious leaders did not go into the Praetorium (the governor's residence) lest they be defiled for entering the house of a Gentile. They feared not being able to eat the Passover. Evidently Jesus' last supper the night before was not the Passover meal.

It is also interesting to note the hypocrisy of religion. In the name of religion, none more innocent than Jesus Himself have been murdered while the murderers hid behind the laws and rules of their religion. (See Unger's description of Pilate on page 1010 of *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*)

Judas' Final Hours (27:3-10)

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

Whatever Judas had hoped to accomplish with his betrayal of Jesus is not explicitly stated in Scripture. However, it is possible that Judas thought that by betraying Jesus, it might force Jesus to take action against His enemies and inaugurate His kingdom. When he realized the consequences of His actions, i.e. Jesus' death, he felt remorse and guilt that he had played a role in an innocent man's death. The money would serve as a continual reminder to him of his betrayal. He had to rid himself of it.

While the religious leaders had no problem giving the money in the first place to pay for the death of an innocent man, they were perplexed as to what to do with it when it returned since it was blood money (verse 6). Once again, we see the hypocrisy of religion. In the end, they decided to use it to buy a field in which to bury foreigners, the potter's field where potters dug for clay. This field became known as the "Field of Blood" (verse 8).

Matthew viewed these events as the fulfillment of a prophecy of Jeremiah (verse 9). However, Matthew quoted primarily from Zechariah, not Jeremiah. Matthew 27:9-10 closely resembles Zechariah 11:12-13, but there are some similarities to the ideas in Jeremiah 19:1, 4, 6, and 11.

¹² I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. ¹³ Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. (Zech 11:12-13)

¹ Thus says the LORD, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. (Jer 19:1)

⁴ "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. (Jer 19:4)

⁶ therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter. (Jer 19:6)

¹¹ and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial. (Jer 19:11)

There are two acceptable explanations. **First**, Matthew had both prophets in mind but only mentioned the "major" prophet by name. Mark does the same thing in Mark 1:2-3 where Mark mentions the prophet Isaiah but quotes directly from both Isaiah and Malachi. **Second**, in the Babylonian Talmud (a collection of ancient Rabbinic writings that form the basis for interpretation and tradition in Judaism), Jeremiah was placed first among the prophets, and Jeremiah's book represented all the other prophetic books.

Jesus Faces Pilate and Fulfills Prophecy (27:11-14)

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.

Matthew only mentions one appearance before Pilate. However, we know from Luke's account (Luke 23:6-12) that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod when he learned that Jesus was a Galilean.

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. 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. ¹² Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other. (Lu 23:6-12)

Matthew also only mentions one accusation, i.e. that Jesus was the king of the Jews. Of course, this is consistent with Matthew's main theme and purpose.

As John records in John 18:33-37, Jesus' kingdom would not come through worldly means, i.e. force. Pilate realized this; therefore, he desired to release Jesus. Jesus did not open His mouth. This was in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7.

³³ 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." (Jn 18:33-37)

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. (Isa 53:7)

Jesus Takes the Place of Barabbas (27:15-26)

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." ²⁰ But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. ²¹ But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called

Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!"²³ And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."²⁵ And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"²⁶ Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate had assumed that the Jews would certainly choose a well-known insurrectionist and murderer (John 18:40 and Mark 15:7) for death instead of one who had only done good things. Perhaps Pilate thought that only the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus and the rest of the Jews would love Him. The crowd only threatened to report him to Caesar (John 19:12) and that only spelled great trouble for Pilate since his record with Caesar was not good. (See Unger).

Only Matthew records the dream of Pilate's wife. It is most likely that Pilate's wife was an unbeliever. Therefore, the source of this dream was either her conscience and sub-conscience working together during her hours of sleep or it could have been the result of demonic related influence upon her. If this is correct, it is my opinion that this was Satan's last attempt to keep Jesus from going to the Cross. Satan knew what was at issue on the Cross.

We see Jesus being scourged in verse 26. It is possible that this was an attempt by Pilate to punish Jesus so severely that the crowds would be appeased and accept scourging as a sufficient punishment. Regardless, scourging was a life-threatening punishment.¹

Jesus Is Mocked (27:27-31)

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

Jesus was brought into the Praetorium sometimes called the judgment hall. While the term was generally used to refer to the headquarters of a Roman leader such as the tent of the commander in a Roman camp, in Jerusalem it referred to the palace which was built by Herod the Great and which the Roman procurators occupied whenever they came from Caesarea to Jerusalem on public business.² Sometimes the word is translated "judgment hall" as in the King James Version. The Praetorium must have been a large area since it housed a garrison or cohort which was one-tenth of a legion or 600 men.³ Only the most spiritual man with a personal sense of destiny could have faced 600 hardened Roman soldiers with the poise that Jesus demonstrated. This fact was a fulfillment of such prophecies as Psalm 38:13-14; Isaiah 42:2 and 53:7 and His poise in the face of such extreme adversity is documented by Peter in 1 Peter 2:23.

¹ See quotation of James M. Stalker, *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ* (1894; Reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1961), 59 in J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 474. See also selected excerpts from William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel and Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 25:11 (March 21, 1986), 1455-1463. Both of these sources, as well as numerous others, document the horrible wounds inflicted upon the person scourged when the instrument used contained leather strips with bits of bone, iron or other sharp objects attached.

² Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1988), 1024.

³ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, gen. ed. (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 88.

The Roman soldiers basically tortured Jesus for their own amusement. They removed His clothing, put a scarlet robe on him, placed a crown of thorns on his head, gave him a staff for a scepter, and knelt before Him in mockery. All the while, they spit upon him and repeatedly struck Him in the head with the staff. All of this was in fulfillment of such prophecies and descriptions of the sufferings of Israel's Messiah as Psalm 22:6-8, 12-13; 31:11-12; 35:15-16; 38:18-19; 69:19-20; Isaiah 50:6; 52:14; and 53:3. Jesus was unrecognizable by those who had known Him at this point after all of the beating.

The King Placed on a Cross (27:32-44)

³² As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross. ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. ³⁵ And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. 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.'" ⁴⁴ The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

Crucifixion was considered by the Romans to be the cruelest form of execution since it took some time for the person crucified to die. Sometimes the victim died after two or even three days of agonizing pain and suffering that included thirst and asphyxiation. Many times, the death was as much the result of attack by animals since the person being crucified hung much closer to the ground than is sometimes depicted by artists.

Obviously, Jesus was unable to carry His own cross beam after what He had already endured. Therefore, the Romans required a Simon of Cyrene (located in North Africa and the home of many Jews)⁴ to bear the burden. All three of the synoptic Gospels identify Jesus' cross bearer as Simon of Cyrene, but only Mark adds that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Paul greets a Rufus in Romans 16:13. It is possible that Simon became a believer as a result of this experience; however, there is no Scriptural evidence of it.

The soldiers offered Jesus sour wine (vinegar) and myrrh to numb the pain, but Jesus refused. The offer of vinegar was in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21. Today, we take the making of wine in abundance for granted; however, it has not always been the case. In addition, storage mechanisms for wine were not as plentiful as today. Wine turns to a form of vinegar as it goes bad. No doubt, Jesus wanted to be in complete control of His senses as He fulfilled prophecy and uttered His final and very important words on the Cross. The soldiers also cast lots for His

⁴ J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1946), 594 in J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 478.

garments in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18. He was crucified with two robbers in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12.

The Romans, at the direction of Pilate, placed a sign over Jesus' head on which was written "Jesus, the King of the Jews." John noted that Pilate had the sign written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (Jn 19:20). Even while on the Cross, Jesus was an object of their viewing pleasure and subjected to verbal torment from by-passers. This was in fulfillment of Psalm 22:6-8; 35:21; and Zechariah 12:10. Even the robbers who were being crucified joined in the verbal abuse. However, Luke records that one of the robbers believed in Him (Luke 23:39-43).

Jesus Dies on the Cross (27:45-56)

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 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 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!" 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 indicates that the crucifixion began at the "third hour" (Mark 15:25) or at 9:00 am. Matthew indicates that from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3:00 pm), there was darkness over all the land. During this three hour period, Jesus suffered spiritual death and became the sin offering for the world (John 1:29; Ro 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pe 2:24; 3:18).

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

²¹ He made 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)

²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Pet 2:24)

¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just 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 Pet 3:18)

So, Jesus really died twice on the Cross – once spiritually to pay for sin and once physically for himself. Jesus made the connection between His physical and spiritual suffering on the Cross and the prophetic message in Psalm 22 when He cried out "My God, My God, why

have you forsaken Me?" (Matt 27:46 cf. Psa 22:1). The Father had to make a judicial decision regarding His Son and turn from Him (Ro 3:25-26).

²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom 3:24-26)

When the Bible refers to the blood of Christ as the means for such provisions connected with salvation as redemption (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Pe 1:18-19), justification (Ro 5:9), sanctification (1 Co 1:30) and propitiation (Heb 13:12), it is referring to His spiritual death and not His physical blood or His physical death. When His spiritual death was completed and before He died physically, He cried out "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus was referring to the fact that His work of paying for the sins of mankind was finished. At the moment He spoke these words He was still alive.

Matthew records several phenomena that occurred simultaneously with Jesus' death. The curtain that separated the holy place and the holy of holies in the temple was torn in two. This curtain was as thick as a man's hand is wide and its dimensions were about 60 feet long and 30 feet wide.⁵

Next, Matthew records that there was an earthquake and many graves were opened in connection with the earthquake so that some of dead who had been believers were resuscitated (like Lazarus), came out of their graves after Jesus' resurrection and appeared to many.

They could not have received a resurrection body prior to Jesus since He is the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18; Re 1:5) and the first-fruits of those who are asleep (1 Co 15:20, 23). Most likely, these people so raised had been contemporaries of those still alive at the time of Jesus' death. All of these things greatly impressed the Roman soldiers to the point of exclaiming that Jesus must have been a deity. However, their statement doesn't necessarily indicate a saving faith.

Jesus is Buried in Joseph's Tomb (27:57-61)

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus. Arimathea was approximately 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It is interesting to note each of the Synoptic Gospel writer's accounts of this man.

- Matthew 27:57 – "a rich man"
- Mark 15:43 – "a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God"
- Luke 23:50 – "a good and just man"

⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 2* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1912), 589 in J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 488.

These descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea should dispel any notions that Jesus taught that a rich man could not enter the kingdom (see Matt 19:23-24). Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin council who, according to Luke 23:5 “had not consented to their decision and deed.” Therefore, he was one of the many disciples of Jesus who had accepted Jesus’ claim that He was the Messiah of Israel and that as the Messiah and Son of God, the kingdom of God/heaven was at hand (see Matt 10:5-7).⁶ For Joseph to have asked Pilate for the body of Jesus placed Joseph in opposition to the Sanhedrin and identified him as a follower of Jesus.

Once again, we see fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in connection with Jesus’ death. Isaiah 53:9 states that “they made His grave with the wicked [the two robbers], but with the rich [Joseph of Arimathea] at His death.”

The two Marys mentioned in verse 61 were also mentioned in verse 56 as having observed Jesus’ crucifixion from afar. Mary Magdalene is named after the town from which she came. Magdala is on the northwest shore of Galilee and one of the largest lakeside towns.

The first three Gospels give little evidence of Mary’s character. Only Luke comments that ‘seven demons had gone out’ of her, but there is no evidence that Jesus had exorcized her and she was probably an epileptic, for epilepsy was commonly attributed to possession by evil spirits. This reference in Luke’s Gospel immediately follows the story of a sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus during a meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee. The tradition of the Church has from early times identified Mary of Magdala with the woman living an immoral life in the city. Rightly or wrongly, Mary has become for all Christians the type of passionate penitent.⁷ [See Luke 7:44-50 for the situation to which Brownrigg refers.]

Pilate’s Guard for the Tomb (27:62-66)

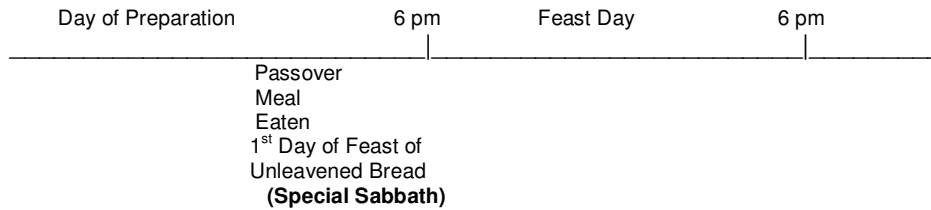
⁶² Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' ⁶⁴ "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until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

The “next day, which followed the Day of Preparation” was the special Sabbath during Passover week. As we have previously studied, I believe that it is very likely that “the next day” referred to here is the special Sabbath (per Lev 23:5-7 and Ex 12:15-16) that during Passover Week was known as the “Feast Day” or the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.⁸ The first and last days of this Feast were considered special Sabbaths. Just to recap –

⁶ Of course, Jesus’ and His disciple’s teaching that the kingdom of God/heaven was at hand did not mean that if Israel had accepted Jesus as her Messiah/Savior that there would have been no Cross. As we have previously discussed, it was quite to the contrary. The Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah’s sufferings (e.g. Psa 22; Isa 52-53) would still have been fulfilled. Rome would have most certainly crucified as a criminal any Jew who claimed to be Israel’s king, especially had that person been accepted by Israel en masse.

⁷ Ronald Brownrigg, *Who’s Who in the New Testament* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 299.

⁸ See the lesson notes entitled “SB_MT26A_Intro_Passover Week” for more information on this topic.



This means that the day of crucifixion was on the “Day of Preparation” (27:62) and could have been on Thursday or even Wednesday of Passover Week.⁹ This still allows for Jesus to have been taken off of the cross prior to the Sabbath as described in such passages as John 19:31.

The Sadducees and the Pharisees described the Lord Jesus as a deceiver when, in reality, they were the deceivers and hypocrites (23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 26:4). It is a fact of the Angelic Conflict that Satan will inspire his own to charge those who oppose his agenda with reversing the truth.

Jeremiah described the religious leaders of Israel this way in Jeremiah 6:14 – “And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.” The religious leaders of Jeremiah’s day had reversed the truth so as to deceive the inhabitants of Jerusalem prior to the Babylonian siege contrary to the warnings of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 6:1. Such deception and distortion of the truth was still practiced by religious leaders during Jesus’ day and it is no different today.

The religious leaders of Israel distorted Jesus’ words even though they understood exactly what He meant. In Matthew 26:60-61, they encouraged two false witnesses to testify against Jesus with a distorted interpretation of what Jesus had said. The false witnesses testified that Jesus had spoke of the temple when Jesus had stated that He would rise in three days (John 2:19-21). Obviously, the religious leaders knew exactly what Jesus meant since they asked Pilate to place a guard against the tomb (Matt 27:63-64). What a contrast to Jesus’ disciples who seemed to draw no comfort from Christ’s predictions that He would rise (12:40; 16:21; 17:9, 22-23; 20:17-19; 26:32).

The guard to which Pilate referred is a Latin word and as such refers to the Romans and not the Jewish temple guard. They could have used their own temple guard without asking Pilate’s permission. All of these religious leaders efforts to prevent a forced fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy through some deceitful action of His disciples only served to establish the validity of the resurrection. Every precaution was taken to prevent the fulfillment of the sign of Jonah (Matt 12:39).

⁹ We examined this issue in a previous Easter special entitled “The Day of Christ’s Crucifixion” as a lesson in the series entitled “Christ – His Person and Work.”