CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 27 — Pilate's Trial, the Crucifixion, and the Burial of Jesus

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 26 ended in the dark.

Jesus had been arrested, condemned by the council, spit on, and beaten.

Peter had denied Him three times and gone out weeping.

Now in Matthew Chapter 27, the morning comes.

But it brings the darkest day in human history.

This chapter records:

- **The handing over** — the leaders bring Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.
- **The end of Judas** — filled with regret, he returns the silver and takes his own life.
- **The trial before Pilate** — Jesus stands silent as He is accused.
- **The choice** — the crowd chooses Barabbas instead of Jesus.
- **The mocking** — soldiers dress Jesus as a king and beat Him.
- **The crucifixion** — Jesus is nailed to a cross between two criminals.
- **The darkness** — for three hours, darkness covers the land.
- **The cry** — **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**
- **The death** — Jesus gives up His spirit.
- **The signs** — the temple curtain tears, the earth shakes, tombs open.
- **The burial** — Joseph of Arimathea lays Jesus in a new tomb.
- **The guard** — the tomb is sealed and guarded.

In this chapter, everyone seems to be against Jesus.

The religious leaders.

The Roman governor.

The soldiers.

The crowd.

Even the criminals beside Him.

And yet, in the middle of all this hatred, God is doing His greatest work of love.

The cross looks like defeat.

But it is the place of victory.

The cross looks like the end.

But it is the beginning of salvation for the whole world.

It is important to read this chapter carefully.

For centuries, some people wrongly blamed the Jewish people as a whole for Jesus' death.

That is not what the Bible teaches.

Jesus was handed over by certain leaders, condemned by a Roman governor, and crucified by Roman soldiers.

And the Bible teaches that Jesus laid down His life willingly, for the sins of the whole world.

In the deepest sense, **our sins** put Him there — and **His love** kept Him there.

Matthew 27 therefore shows two great truths:

Jesus, the innocent King, was condemned and crucified according to God's plan to save sinners.

And:

Through His death, Jesus opened the way for people to come to God.

The central truth of Matthew 27 is:

Jesus, the innocent Son of God and true King, was rejected, mocked, and crucified in fulfillment of Scripture, and through His death He opened the way to God for all who believe.

I. EARLY IN THE MORNING

Matthew 27:1 — Planning His Death

“Early in the morning, all the chief priests and elders planned to have Jesus put to death.”

Early in the morning.

The night trial was over.

Now the council met again at dawn.

Their rules seem to have required that serious decisions be made in the daytime.

This morning meeting made the night's decision official.

All the chief priests and elders.

The whole council agreed.

Planned to have Jesus put to death.

They had already decided that Jesus must die.

But under Roman rule, they did not have the power to carry out a death sentence themselves.

So they needed the Roman governor.

Cross References

Mark 15:1

> Very early in the morning, the leading priests, the elders, the teachers of the law, and the whole Sanhedrin made their plans. They tied Jesus up, led Him away, and handed Him over to Pilate.

Psalm 2:2

> The kings of the earth get ready to fight, and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against His Anointed One.

Luke 22:66

> At daybreak the council of the elders of the people met together. This included both the leading priests and the teachers of the law. Jesus was brought before them.

Spiritual Principle

Human plans against Jesus could not stop God's plan of salvation.

II. HANDED OVER TO PILATE

Matthew 27:2 — The Governor

“They tied Him up, led Him away, and handed Him over to the governor, Pontius Pilate.”

They tied Him up.

The One who set people free was tied up like a criminal.

Led Him away.

And handed Him over to the governor, Pontius Pilate.

Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from about A.D. 26 to 36.

He usually lived in Caesarea by the sea.

But during the Passover festival, he came to Jerusalem to keep order.

Jewish and Roman writers of that time describe him as a harsh ruler.

Now the Jewish leaders and the Roman ruler would work together to condemn Jesus.

Both Jews and Gentiles — all of humanity — had a part in rejecting Him.

Cross References

Acts 3:13

> The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has given glory to His servant Jesus. You handed Him over to be killed, and you rejected Him in front of Pilate, even though Pilate had decided to let Him go.

John 18:28

> Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. It was early in the morning.

Luke 23:1

> Then the whole group got up and led Him off to Pilate.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus was bound so that we could be set free.

III. JUDAS WAS FILLED WITH REGRET

Matthew 27:3 — Returning the Silver

“When Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was filled with regret. He returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders,”

When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned.

Perhaps Judas did not expect this.

Perhaps he thought Jesus would escape, as He had before.

Or perhaps he simply saw, at last, what he had done.

He was filled with regret.

Judas felt terrible.

But regret is not the same as repentance.

Paul wrote that there is a sorrow that leads to repentance and salvation, and there is a worldly sorrow that leads to death.

Judas felt worldly sorrow.

He was sorry for what he had done.

But he did not turn back to Jesus.

He returned the thirty silver coins.

The money he wanted so badly now meant nothing to him.

Sin promises much but leaves us empty.

Cross References

Zechariah 11:13

> Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter” — that handsome price they valued Me at! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

Acts 1:18

> With the payment he received for his evil act, Judas bought a field. There he fell headfirst, his body burst open, and all his insides spilled out.

2 Corinthians 7:10

> Sorrow that comes from God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. But the sorrow of the world brings death.

Spiritual Principle

Regret looks back at sin; repentance looks to God for mercy.

IV. "I HAVE SINNED"

Matthew 27:4 — Innocent Blood

“saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ They replied, ‘What is that to us? That's your problem.’”

I have sinned.

Judas confessed his sin.

But he confessed it to the wrong people.

He went to the priests, not to God.

By betraying innocent blood.

Judas admitted that Jesus was innocent.

The very man who betrayed Jesus testified that He had done nothing wrong.

They replied, ‘What is that to us?’

The priests did not care.

They had used Judas.

Now they threw him away.

That's your problem.

These were the spiritual leaders of the nation.

A man came to them broken by guilt.

And they offered him no help, no mercy, no hope.

Sin's partners always abandon you in the end.

Cross References

Matthew 26:15

> And asked, “What will you give me if I deliver Him to you?” So they counted out thirty pieces of silver.

Deuteronomy 27:25

> “Cursed is anyone who accepts money to kill an innocent person.” Then all the people will say, “Amen!”

Proverbs 6:17

> Proud eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill innocent people.

Spiritual Principle

Even the betrayer testified that Jesus was innocent.

Spiritual Warning

Those who lead you into sin will not help you when the guilt comes.

V. THE DEATH OF JUDAS

Matthew 27:5 — He Threw the Coins into the Temple

“Judas threw the coins into the temple and went away and hanged himself.”

Judas threw the coins into the temple.

He could not stand to hold them any longer.

This fulfilled the picture in Zechariah 11, where the thirty pieces of silver were thrown into the house of the LORD.

And went away and hanged himself.

This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible.

Judas was overwhelmed by guilt and despair.

He did not believe there was any hope for him.

Acts 1:18 adds that he fell and his body burst open.

Many Bible students believe both accounts are true — that Judas hanged himself, and that his body later fell.

Like Ahithophel, who betrayed King David and then hanged himself, Judas ended his own life.

Here is the tragedy:

The same Jesus that Judas betrayed would soon die for the sins of the world.

If Judas had turned to Him, there was mercy even for him.

Peter also failed Jesus that night.

But Peter wept, turned back, and was restored.

Judas turned away from the only One who could help him.

Cross References

2 Samuel 17:23

> When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and went home to his own town. He put his house in order and then hanged himself.

Acts 1:18

> With the payment he received for his evil act, Judas bought a field. There he fell headfirst, his body burst open, and all his insides spilled out.

1 Kings 16:18

> When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the strong tower of the king's palace and set the palace on fire around himself. So he died.

Spiritual Principle

No sin is too great for God's mercy, but we must turn to Him to receive it.

Key Truth

Despair says, “There is no hope for me.” The cross says, “There is mercy for you.”

VI. BLOOD MONEY

Matthew 27:6 — Not Lawful for the Treasury

“The chief priests picked up the coins and said, ‘It's not lawful to put this money into the temple treasury; it's blood money.’”

The chief priests picked up the coins.

They had no problem paying the money.

Now they were careful about receiving it back.

It's not lawful to put this money into the temple treasury.

They were very careful about the rules.

It's blood money.

They admitted it was money paid for a man's death.

They paid the price of innocent blood.

But they would not put that money in the temple.

This is the same hypocrisy Jesus exposed in Matthew 23.

They strained out a gnat but swallowed a camel.

They worried about a rule for money but did not worry about condemning an innocent man.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 23:18

> You must not bring the pay of a prostitute or the price of a dog into the house of the LORD your God to pay any promise you made. The LORD your God hates them both.

Zechariah 11:13

> Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter” — that handsome price they valued Me at! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

Micah 3:11

> Her leaders judge for a bribe. Her priests teach for a price. Her prophets tell the future for money. Yet they lean on the LORD and say, “Isn't the LORD with us? No trouble will come to us.”

Spiritual Principle

Religious rules without a righteous heart are empty.

VII. THE POTTER'S FIELD

Matthew 27:7 — A Cemetery for Strangers

“So they decided to buy the potter's field as a cemetery for strangers.”

So they decided to buy the potter's field.

A potter's field was probably a place where potters dug clay.

The ground would have been useless for farming.

As a cemetery for strangers.

Foreigners who died in Jerusalem, far from their families, needed a place to be buried.

To this day, a cemetery for the poor or unknown is sometimes called **a potter's field.**

The money paid to betray Jesus was used to bury strangers.

In a way, it became a picture of grace.

Jesus' death would provide a resting place for those who are strangers and outsiders.

Cross References

Jeremiah 19:11

> And say to them, “This is what the LORD who commands armies says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room.”

Jeremiah 32:9

> So I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and I weighed out seventeen pieces of silver for him.

Jeremiah 18:2

> “Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you My message.”

Spiritual Principle

God can turn even the price of sin into a picture of His grace.

VIII. FIELD OF BLOOD

Matthew 27:8 — To This Day

“That's why it has been called ‘Field of Blood’ to this day.”

That's why it has been called ‘Field of Blood.’

The name reminded everyone of how the field was bought.

With the price of innocent blood.

Acts 1:19 tells us the people of Jerusalem called it **Akeldama**, which means **Field of Blood.**

To this day.

When Matthew wrote his Gospel, the name was still being used.

The field was a lasting reminder of Judas' betrayal.

Just as Abel's blood cried out from the ground, the blood of Jesus was remembered.

But Hebrews tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Abel's blood cried for justice.

Jesus' blood cries for mercy.

Cross References

Acts 1:19

> Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this. So they called that field Akeldama in their language, which means Field of Blood.

Jeremiah 19:6

> So watch out! The days are coming, says the LORD, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom. They will call it the Valley of Slaughter.

Genesis 4:10

> The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the ground.”

Spiritual Principle

The blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel — a word of mercy.

IX. THE PRICE SET ON HIM

Matthew 27:9 — What the Prophet Spoke

“This fulfilled what the prophet spoke: that the thirty silver coins, the price set on Him by the people of Israel,”

This fulfilled what the prophet spoke.

Matthew sees this as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

A Note on This Prophecy

Most Greek manuscripts of Matthew name **Jeremiah** here.

The words about thirty pieces of silver and throwing them to the potter come mainly from **Zechariah 11:12–13.**

But Jeremiah also visited a potter's house, bought a field, and spoke about a potter's jar in the Valley of Ben Hinnom.

Many Bible students believe Matthew combined the words of both prophets and named Jeremiah, the more well-known prophet, as the main source.

This was a common way of quoting Scripture in Jewish teaching.

The thirty silver coins, the price set on Him.

In Zechariah, the shepherd sent by God was valued at thirty pieces of silver — an insulting price.

By the people of Israel.

The leaders of God's own people placed this low value on God's own Shepherd.

Cross References

Zechariah 11:12

> I told them, “If you think it is right, give me my pay. But if not, keep it.” So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.

Jeremiah 32:6

Jeremiah said, “The LORD's message came to me.”

Jeremiah 18:3

So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the potter's wheel.

Spiritual Principle

People may place a low value on Jesus, but God values Him above everything.

X. AS THE LORD DIRECTED

Matthew 27:10 — To Buy the Potter's Field

“would be used to buy the potter's field, just as the Lord directed.”

Would be used to buy the potter's field.

Every detail came true.

The thirty pieces.

Thrown into the temple.

Used to buy the potter's field.

Just as the Lord directed.

The priests thought they were making their own decision.

But God was directing history.

Even in this dark moment, God's Word was being fulfilled.

Cross References

Zechariah 11:13

Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter” — that handsome price they valued Me at! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

Jeremiah 32:9

So I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and I weighed out seventeen pieces of silver for him.

Jeremiah 19:2

Go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There announce the words I tell you.

Spiritual Principle

God's Word is fulfilled in even the smallest details.

XI. "ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?"

Matthew 27:11 — Jesus Before the Governor

“Jesus stood before the governor, and Pilate asked, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say so.’”

Jesus stood before the governor.

The King of kings stood before a Roman governor.

Are You the King of the Jews?

Before the Jewish council, the question was, **“Are You the Son of God?”**

Before Pilate, the question was about being a king.

To Rome, anyone who claimed to be a king was a threat to Caesar.

The leaders changed the charge to make Jesus look like a political rebel.

You say so.

This means **yes.**

But Jesus was not the kind of king Pilate feared.

John tells us Jesus said, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”**

Cross References

Mark 15:2

> “Are You the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate. “You have said so,” Jesus replied.

John 18:33

> Pilate then went back inside the palace, called for Jesus, and asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Luke 23:3

> So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?” “You have said so,” Jesus replied.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is truly the King, but His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world.

XII. HE GAVE NO ANSWER

Matthew 27:12 — Accused by the Leaders

“While the chief priests and elders accused Him, He gave no answer.”

While the chief priests and elders accused Him.

Luke tells us they accused Him of stirring up the nation, forbidding taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be a king.

These charges were false.

Jesus had told them to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

He gave no answer.

Jesus did not defend Himself.

Isaiah had said that the Servant would be like a lamb led to the slaughter, silent before its shearers.

Peter later wrote that when Jesus was insulted, He did not insult back.

He trusted Himself to God, who judges fairly.

Cross References

Isaiah 53:7

> He was treated badly and made to suffer, but He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to be killed. Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, He did not open His mouth.

Mark 15:3

> The leading priests accused Him of many things.

1 Peter 2:23

> When people insulted Him, He did not insult them back. When He suffered, He did not threaten. Instead, He trusted Himself to God, who judges fairly.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus trusted His Father to defend Him.

XIII. "DON'T YOU HEAR?"

Matthew 27:13 — Pilate's Question

“Pilate said, ‘Don't You hear the charges they bring against You?’”

Don't You hear the charges?

Pilate was surprised.

Most prisoners would argue and plead for their lives.

They bring against You.

The charges were serious.

They could lead to death.

Pilate seemed to want Jesus to defend Himself.

Pilate had power over Jesus' life — or so he thought.

John tells us Jesus said to him, **“You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above.”**

Cross References

Mark 15:4

> So again Pilate asked Him, “Aren't You going to answer? See how many things they are accusing You of.”

John 19:10

> “Do You refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don't You realize I have power either to free You or to crucify You?”

John 18:37

> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to tell the truth. Everyone who loves the truth listens to Me.”

Spiritual Principle

Earthly rulers have only the power God allows them.

XIV. PILATE WAS AMAZED

Matthew 27:14 — Not a Single Word

“But Jesus did not reply—not even to a single charge—so Pilate was amazed.”

But Jesus did not reply.

Not even to a single charge.

Jesus' silence was complete.

So Pilate was amazed.

Pilate had seen many prisoners.

He had never seen anyone like this.

Calm.

Silent.

Without fear.

Jesus' silence was not weakness.

It was strength.

He was not trying to save Himself.

He had come to save us.

Cross References

Mark 15:5

> But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Psalm 38:14

> I have become like a man who does not hear, whose mouth has no reply.

Isaiah 53:7

> He was treated badly and made to suffer, but He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to be killed. Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, He did not open His mouth.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' silence before His accusers showed His willing surrender.

XV. THE FESTIVAL CUSTOM

Matthew 27:15 — Release One Prisoner

“It was the governor's custom at the festival to release one prisoner chosen by the crowd.”

It was the governor's custom at the festival.

At Passover, the governor would release one Jewish prisoner.

This was a way to win the goodwill of the people.

To release one prisoner chosen by the crowd.

Passover celebrated Israel's release from slavery in Egypt.

So releasing a prisoner fit the festival.

Pilate seems to have hoped this custom would give him a way to release Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 15:6

> Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested.

John 18:39

> But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release “the King of the Jews”?

Luke 23:17

> Now he was required to release one prisoner to them at the festival.

A Note on Luke 23:17

Luke 23:17 is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts of Luke. The custom it describes is clearly taught here in Matthew 27:15 and in Mark 15:6.

Spiritual Principle

At the festival of freedom, the guilty would go free and the innocent would be condemned.

XVI. BARABBAS

Matthew 27:16 — A Well-Known Prisoner

“At that time they had a well-known prisoner named Barabbas.”

At that time they had a well-known prisoner.

He was famous — or rather, notorious.

Named Barabbas.

Mark and Luke tell us he had taken part in a violent uprising and had committed murder.

John calls him a rebel or robber.

His name may mean **“son of the father.”**

Some early manuscripts say his full name was **Jesus Barabbas.**

If so, the crowd had to choose between two men named Jesus.

One was a son of an earthly father who took life.

The other was the Son of the heavenly Father who came to give life.

Cross References

Mark 15:7

> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the uprising.

Luke 23:19

> Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an uprising in the city and for murder.

John 18:40

> They shouted back, “No, not Him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Spiritual Principle

Every person must choose between the world's way and God's Son.

XVII. BARABBAS OR JESUS?

Matthew 27:17 — Pilate's Question

“Pilate asked the crowd, ‘Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Christ?’”

Which one do you want me to release to you?

Pilate put the choice before the crowd.

Barabbas.

A violent rebel and murderer.

Or Jesus who is called the Christ?

A man who healed the sick, fed the hungry, and taught the way of God.

Pilate probably thought the choice was easy.

Surely they would choose Jesus.

This is still the choice every person must make.

Peter later preached that the people **disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released.**

Cross References

Mark 15:9

> “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

John 18:38

> “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against Him.”

Acts 3:14

> You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released to you.

Spiritual Principle

What we do with Jesus is the most important choice we will ever make.

XVIII. OUT OF ENVY

Matthew 27:18 — Pilate Knew

“He knew they had handed Jesus over out of envy.”

He knew.

Pilate was not fooled.

They had handed Jesus over out of envy.

The leaders were jealous of Jesus.

The crowds followed Him.

People loved His teaching.

He had more authority than they did.

So they wanted Him gone.

Envy is a powerful and deadly sin.

It led Cain to kill Abel.

It led Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery.

And it led the leaders to hand over Jesus to be crucified.

Cross References

Mark 15:10

> He knew it was out of envy that the leading priests had handed Jesus over to him.

Genesis 37:11

> His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Proverbs 27:4

> Anger is cruel and fury overwhelms, but who can stand before jealousy?

Spiritual Principle

Envy can lead people to terrible sin.

Spiritual Warning

Watch your heart when you feel jealous of someone God is using.

XIX. PILATE'S WIFE

Matthew 27:19 — That Righteous Man

“While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him a message: ‘Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I suffered much today in a dream because of Him.’”

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat.

He was about to make his decision.

His wife sent him a message.

Only Matthew records this.

Have nothing to do with that righteous man.

She called Jesus **righteous** — innocent and good.

A Gentile woman saw what the religious leaders refused to see.

For I suffered much today in a dream because of Him.

In the Bible, God sometimes warned people through dreams.

God warned Abimelech in a dream.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar dreams.

Now God gave Pilate a warning through his wife.

Pilate had every reason to release Jesus.

But he did not.

Cross References

Genesis 20:3

> But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken. She is a married woman.”

Job 33:15

> In a dream, in a vision at night, when deep sleep falls on people as they sleep in their beds.

Daniel 2:19

> During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

Spiritual Principle

God gives warnings, but each person must choose whether to listen.

XX. THE CROWD WAS PERSUADED

Matthew 27:20 — Ask for Barabbas

“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.”

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd.

The leaders moved through the crowd.

They stirred them up.

They told them what to say.

To ask for Barabbas.

And to have Jesus killed.

A crowd can be easily led.

Many in this crowd may not have been the same people who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday.

But even so, crowds can change quickly.

People can be pushed to do what they would never do alone.

This is a warning about the power of influence.

Cross References

Mark 15:11

> But the leading priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

Luke 23:18

> But the whole crowd shouted, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!”

Acts 13:28

> Though they found no proper reason for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Him put to death.

Spiritual Principle

Be careful who you allow to shape your opinion of Jesus.

XXI. "BARABBAS"

Matthew 27:21 — The Crowd's Choice

“‘Which of the two do you want me to release to you?’ asked the governor. They answered, ‘Barabbas.’”

Which of the two?

Pilate asked again.

They answered, ‘Barabbas.’

They chose the guilty man.

They rejected the innocent One.

But here is the amazing truth of the gospel:

Barabbas went free because Jesus took his place.

Barabbas deserved to die.

Jesus did not.

Yet Jesus died, and Barabbas lived.

In a real sense, every believer is Barabbas.

We were guilty.

Jesus was innocent.

He took our place so we could go free.

Cross References

Mark 15:11

> But the leading priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

Acts 3:14

> You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released to you.

John 18:40

> They shouted back, “No, not Him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Spiritual Principle

The guilty went free because the Innocent One took his place.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We are all Barabbas — guilty, condemned, and set free because Jesus died in our place.

XXII. "CRUCIFY HIM!"

Matthew 27:22 — What Shall I Do with Jesus?

“‘Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?’ They all said, ‘Crucify Him!’”

Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

This is the most important question in the world.

Every person must answer it.

You cannot stay neutral about Jesus.

They all said, ‘Crucify Him!’

Crucifixion was the most painful and shameful way the Romans put people to death.

It was used for slaves, rebels, and the worst criminals.

Roman citizens were usually not crucified.

The crowd wanted Jesus to die in the most humiliating way possible.

Cross References

Mark 15:13

> “Crucify Him!” they shouted.

Luke 23:21

> But they kept shouting, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

John 19:15

> But they shouted, “Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the leading priests answered.

Spiritual Principle

Every person must answer the question, “What will I do with Jesus?”

XXIII. "WHAT CRIME HAS HE COMMITTED?"

Matthew 27:23 — They Shouted All the Louder

“‘Why? What crime has He committed?’ asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify Him!’”

Why? What crime has He committed?

Pilate asked a fair question.

No one could name a crime.

Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Isaiah said the Servant **had done no violence, and no lie was in His mouth.**

But they shouted all the louder.

They had no answer.

So they just shouted louder.

When people cannot answer the truth, they often try to drown it out.

Crucify Him!

Noise took the place of justice.

Cross References

Mark 15:14

> “Why? What crime has He committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!”

Luke 23:23

> But they kept shouting loudly, demanding that He be crucified. And their shouts won out.

Isaiah 53:9

> He was given a grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, even though He had done nothing violent and never spoke a lie.

Spiritual Principle

No one could name a single sin Jesus had committed.

XXIV. PILATE WASHED HIS HANDS

Matthew 27:24 — I Am Innocent of This Man's Blood

“Seeing that it was going nowhere and that a riot was starting, Pilate took water and washed his hands before the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man's blood,’ he said. ‘See to it yourselves.’”

Seeing that it was going nowhere.

Pilate could not change the crowd's mind.

And that a riot was starting.

Pilate feared a riot.

A riot during Passover could cost him his position.

Pilate took water and washed his hands before the crowd.

In the law of Moses, the elders of a town washed their hands to declare that they were innocent of an unsolved murder.

Pilate used this public act to say, **“This is not my fault.”**

I am innocent of this man's blood.

But he was not innocent.

He had the power to release Jesus.

He knew Jesus was innocent.

And he chose to condemn Him anyway.

Water could not wash away his guilt.

To this day, people say **“I wash my hands of it”** when they try to avoid responsibility.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 21:6

> Then all the elders of the town nearest the body must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck was broken in the valley.

Psalm 26:6

> I wash my hands to show I am innocent, and I go around Your altar, LORD.

Matthew 27:4

> Saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They replied, “What is that to us? That's your problem.”

Spiritual Principle

We cannot wash our hands of responsibility for what we do with Jesus.

Spiritual Warning

Knowing what is right and failing to do it out of fear is still sin.

XXV. "HIS BLOOD BE ON US"

Matthew 27:25 — The Crowd's Answer

“All the people answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”

All the people answered.

All the people means the crowd gathered before Pilate that morning.

It does not mean every Jewish person in Jerusalem, in Israel, or in the world.

His blood be on us and on our children.

This was a way of saying, **“We take responsibility for His death.”**

The crowd spoke in anger, without understanding what they were saying.

How Should We Understand This Verse?

This verse must be read with great care.

Sadly, over many centuries, some people misused it to blame and persecute Jewish people.

That was a terrible sin, and it goes completely against the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Here is what the Bible teaches:

First, a crowd cannot place guilt on future generations.

Ezekiel 18 teaches that each person is responsible for his own sin, and children are not punished for the sins of their parents.

Second, Jesus prayed for forgiveness.

On the cross, Jesus prayed, **“Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing.”**

Third, the Bible teaches that all people share responsibility for Jesus' death.

Jewish leaders and Gentile rulers worked together.

And in the deepest sense, Jesus died because of the sins of every person — including ours.

Fourth, God offered forgiveness to the very people who were there.

Just weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the people of Jerusalem.

Thousands repented and believed.

The blood they called down in anger became the blood that washed away their sins.

That is the wonder of the gospel.

The blood of Jesus is not a curse.

It is the only cure for sin.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 19:10

> Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of shedding blood.

Jeremiah 26:15

> But know this for sure: if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on all who live in it. The LORD truly sent me to you to speak all these words for you to hear.

Joshua 2:19

> If anyone goes out of your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head, and we will not be responsible. But if anyone in the house with you is harmed, his blood will be on our heads.

Spiritual Principle

The blood of Jesus is not a curse; it is the only cure for sin.

Key Truth

Every person needs the blood of Jesus to be upon them — not for judgment, but for forgiveness.

XXVI. FLOGGED AND HANDED OVER

Matthew 27:26 — Barabbas Released

“Then he released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed Him over to be crucified.”

Then he released Barabbas to them.

The guilty man walked free.

And after having Jesus flogged.

Roman flogging was brutal.

The whip had several leather straps with pieces of bone or metal tied to the ends.

It tore the skin and flesh.

Some prisoners died from flogging alone.

Isaiah wrote, **“By His wounds we are healed.”**

He handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate gave the final order.

The Son of God was sentenced to die.

Cross References

Mark 15:15

> Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd, so he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, and then handed Him over to be crucified.

Isaiah 53:5

> But He was pierced for our sins. He was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment that brought us peace was put on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

John 19:1

> Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him whipped.

Spiritual Principle

By His wounds we are healed.

XXVII. THE WHOLE COMPANY

Matthew 27:27 — Inside the Headquarters

“The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the headquarters and gathered the whole company around Him.”

The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the headquarters.

This was the governor's palace or military headquarters in Jerusalem.

It is called the **Praetorium.**

And gathered the whole company around Him.

A Roman company, or cohort, could have several hundred soldiers.

They surrounded Jesus.

Psalm 22 describes the Messiah surrounded by enemies like a pack of dogs.

Cross References

Mark 15:16

> The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace, that is, the governor's headquarters, and called together the whole company of soldiers.

John 19:2

> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They put a purple robe on Him.

Psalm 22:16

Dogs surround me. A gang of evil men circles around me. They have pierced my hands and my feet.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus faced the hatred of the world alone so that we would not have to.

XXVIII. A SCARLET ROBE

Matthew 27:28 — They Stripped Him

“They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.”

They stripped Him.

They took away His clothes.

This was part of the shame.

And put a scarlet robe on Him.

This was probably a soldier's red cloak.

Mark and John call it **purple** — the color of royalty.

They dressed Jesus up as a pretend king.

They thought it was a joke.

But Jesus truly is the King.

Isaiah said He would be **hated and rejected by people.**

Cross References

Mark 15:17

> They put a purple robe on Him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on Him.

John 19:5

> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

Isaiah 53:3

> He was hated and rejected by people. He was a man of suffering and familiar with pain. People turned their faces away from Him. He was hated, and we did not value Him.

Spiritual Principle

The world mocked Jesus as a false king, but He is the true King.

XXIX. A CROWN OF THORNS

Matthew 27:29 — "Hail, King of the Jews!"

“They twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on His head. They put a reed in His right hand, knelt before Him, and mocked, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’”

They twisted together a crown of thorns.

Kings wear crowns of gold.

Jesus was given a crown of thorns.

And set it on His head.

The thorns would have pierced His head and caused great pain.

Thorns first appeared in the Bible as part of the curse after Adam's sin.

Now Jesus wore the curse on His head.

He was taking the curse of sin upon Himself.

They put a reed in His right hand.

A king holds a scepter.

They gave Him a stick.

Knelt before Him.

They pretended to worship Him.

And mocked, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’

This was the greeting given to Caesar.

They meant it as a joke.

But one day every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Cross References

Genesis 3:18

> It will grow thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

John 19:3

> They went up to Him again and again, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they slapped Him in the face.

Isaiah 52:14

> Many were shocked when they saw Him. His appearance was so damaged that He no longer looked like a man. His form was so ruined that He hardly looked human.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus wore the crown of thorns so that we could receive the crown of life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The soldiers mocked Him as King, but heaven crowns Him as King of kings.

XXX. THEY SPIT ON HIM

Matthew 27:30 — Struck on the Head

“They spit on Him, took the reed, and struck Him on the head.”

They spit on Him.

For the second time in a few hours, Jesus was spit on.

First by the council.

Now by the soldiers.

Took the reed, and struck Him on the head.

They hit Him again and again with the stick, driving the thorns deeper.

Isaiah foretold it:

He did not turn His face away from those who mocked and spit on Him.

Jesus could have stopped it with a word.

But He let it happen.

For us.

Cross References

Isaiah 50:6

> I let them beat My back. I let them pull out the hair of My beard. I did not turn My face away when they mocked Me and spit on Me.

Micah 5:1

> They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod.

Mark 15:19

> Again and again they struck Him on the head with a stick and spit on Him. Falling on their knees, they pretended to worship Him.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus endured shame so that we could be welcomed with honor.

XXXI. LED AWAY TO BE CRUCIFIED

Matthew 27:31 — His Own Clothes

“After they had mocked Him, they took off the robe, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.”

After they had mocked Him.

They finally grew tired of their cruel game.

They took off the robe.

Put His own clothes on Him.

Taking the robe off would have reopened the wounds from the flogging.

And led Him away to crucify Him.

Like a lamb led to the slaughter.

He did not resist.

He did not run.

He walked toward the cross.

Cross References

Isaiah 53:7

> He was treated badly and made to suffer, but He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to be killed. Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, He did not open His mouth.

Mark 15:20

> When they had mocked Him, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

John 19:16

> Finally Pilate handed Him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus walked willingly to the cross like a lamb led to the slaughter.

XXXII. SIMON OF CYRENE

Matthew 27:32 — Forced to Carry the Cross

“As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and forced him to carry Jesus' cross.”

As they were going out.

Crucifixions took place outside the city.

They met a man from Cyrene named Simon.

Cyrene was a city in North Africa, in what is now Libya.

Many Jewish people lived there.

Simon may have come to Jerusalem for the Passover.

And forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

Usually, the condemned man carried the crossbeam himself.

Jesus was so weak from the beating that He apparently could not carry it all the way.

Roman soldiers had the right to force people to carry loads for them.

Mark tells us Simon was **the father of Alexander and Rufus.**

This suggests that Simon's sons became well known in the early church.

A man who was forced to carry the cross may have come to believe in the One who died on it.

Jesus had said, **“Whoever wants to be My disciple must take up his cross and follow Me.”**

Simon literally did.

Cross References

Mark 15:21

> A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country. They forced him to carry the cross.

Luke 23:26

> As the soldiers led Him away, they grabbed Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country. They put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Matthew 16:24

> Then Jesus said to His followers, “Whoever wants to be My follower must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me.”

Spiritual Principle

An unexpected burden can become a doorway to knowing Jesus.

XXXIII. GOLGOTHA

Matthew 27:33 — The Place of the Skull

“They came to a place called Golgotha (which means ‘Place of the Skull’).”

They came to a place called Golgotha.

Golgotha is an Aramaic word.

In Latin it is **Calvaria**, which gives us the word **Calvary.**

Which means ‘Place of the Skull.’

It may have been called this because the hill looked like a skull, or because it was a place of death.

It was outside the city walls, near a road where many people would pass by.

The Romans wanted crucifixions to be seen as a warning.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus suffered **outside the city gate** to make His people holy through His own blood.

Cross References

Mark 15:22

> They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means “the place of the skull.”

John 19:17

> Carrying His own cross, He went out to the place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

Hebrews 13:12

> And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus went outside the city to the place of death so that we could have life.

XXXIV. WINE MIXED WITH GALL

Matthew 27:34 — He Would Not Drink It

“They offered Jesus wine mixed with gall; but after tasting it, He would not drink it.”

They offered Jesus wine mixed with gall.

Gall was a bitter substance.

Mark says the wine was mixed with **myrrh.**

This drink may have been offered to dull the pain.

Psalm 69 says, **“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”**

But after tasting it, He would not drink it.

Jesus refused.

He chose to face the full suffering of the cross with a clear mind.

He would not take anything to lessen what He had come to endure.

Cross References

Psalm 69:21

> They put poison in my food and gave me sour wine when I was thirsty.

Mark 15:23

> Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it.

Proverbs 31:6

> Give beer to those who are dying and wine to those who are in deep trouble.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus chose to bear the full weight of our suffering.

XXXV. THEY CRUCIFIED HIM

Matthew 27:35 — Dividing His Clothes

“When they had crucified Him, they divided His clothes by casting lots—fulfilling the Scripture.”

When they had crucified Him.

Matthew says it simply.

He does not describe every detail.

His first readers knew how horrible crucifixion was.

Nails were driven through the hands or wrists and feet.

The victim hung for hours, struggling to breathe.

It was a slow, agonizing death.

They divided His clothes by casting lots.

The soldiers who crucified a man often kept his clothing.

They threw lots — something like rolling dice — to decide who would get what.

Fulfilling the Scripture.

Psalm 22 was written about a thousand years before.

It says, **“They split up my clothes and throw dice for my robe.”**

While Jesus was dying for the world, the soldiers were gambling for His clothes.

Cross References

Psalm 22:18

> They divide my clothes among them and throw dice for my robe.

John 19:24

> “Let's not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let's decide by lot who will get it.” This happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

Mark 15:24

> And they crucified Him. Dividing up His clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

Spiritual Principle

Even the smallest details of the cross fulfilled God's Word.

XXXVI. KEEPING WATCH

Matthew 27:36 — They Sat Down

“Then they sat down and kept watch over Him there.”

Then they sat down.

For the soldiers, this was just a job.

And kept watch over Him there.

They guarded the cross to make sure no one rescued Him.

Psalm 22 says, **“People stare and gloat over me.”**

These same soldiers would soon see the earthquake and darkness.

And their commander would say, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”**

Sometimes people who watch the cross out of duty end up seeing its glory.

Cross References

Psalm 22:17

> I can count all my bones. People stare and look at me.

Mark 15:25

> It was nine in the morning when they crucified Him.

Matthew 27:54

> When the centurion and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that happened, they were terrified and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Spiritual Principle

Those who look long at the cross may come to see who Jesus truly is.

XXXVII. THE KING OF THE JEWS

Matthew 27:37 — The Written Charge

“Above His head they placed the written charge against Him: ‘THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”

Above His head they placed the written charge against Him.

The Romans often posted a sign showing the crime of the person being crucified.

THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John tells us it was written in three languages — Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

Everyone could read it.

The leaders wanted Pilate to change it to say **“He said He was the King of the Jews.”**

Pilate refused.

Pilate meant it as an insult to the Jewish leaders.

But it was the truth.

The charge against Jesus was His true identity.

Cross References

John 19:19

> Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mark 15:26

> The written notice of the charge against Him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Luke 23:38

> There was a written notice above Him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Spiritual Principle

The sign meant as mockery declared the truth: Jesus is King.

XXXVIII. BETWEEN TWO CRIMINALS

Matthew 27:38 — On His Right and Left

“Two criminals were crucified with Him, one on His right and one on His left.”

Two criminals were crucified with Him.

The word may mean robbers or rebels, like Barabbas.

One on His right and one on His left.

Jesus was placed in the middle, as if He were the worst of the three.

Just days before, James and John had asked to sit at Jesus' right and left in His kingdom.

Now the places at His right and left were crosses.

Isaiah said the Servant would be **counted among the lawbreakers.**

Jesus was numbered with sinners so that sinners could be numbered with the saints.

Cross References

Isaiah 53:12

> He gave up His life and died, and He was counted among the sinners. He carried the sin of many and prayed for those who did wrong.

Mark 15:27

> They crucified two rebels with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

Luke 23:33

> When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals — one on His right, the other on His left.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus was counted among sinners so that sinners could be counted among God's people.

XXXIX. SHAKING THEIR HEADS

Matthew 27:39 — Those Who Passed By

“Those who passed by insulted Him, shaking their heads,”

Those who passed by.

The cross stood near a road.

People walking in and out of the city saw Him.

Insulted Him.

They mocked Him.

Shaking their heads.

This was a sign of scorn.

Psalm 22 says, **“Everyone who sees me makes fun of me and shakes their head.”**

Lamentations describes people shaking their heads at the ruin of Jerusalem.

The passers-by did not stop to think.

They mocked what they did not understand.

Cross References

Psalm 22:7

> Everyone who sees me makes fun of me. They insult me and shake their heads.

Psalm 109:25

> I am a joke to my accusers. When they see me, they shake their heads.

Lamentations 2:15

> All who pass by clap their hands at you. They hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem.

Spiritual Principle

People still pass by the cross without understanding what it means.

XL. "COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS!"

Matthew 27:40 — Save Yourself!

“saying, ‘You who said you would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days—save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!’”

You who said you would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days.

They repeated the twisted charge from the trial.

Save Yourself!

This was the very thing Jesus would not do.

If He saved Himself, He could not save us.

If You are the Son of God.

These words sound like the devil's temptation in the wilderness.

“If You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.”

“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.”

Now, at the end, the same temptation comes again.

Come down from the cross!

Jesus could have come down.

But He stayed.

It was not the nails that held Him there.

It was His love.

Cross References

John 2:19

> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

Psalm 22:8

> “He trusts in the LORD,” they say. “Let the LORD rescue him. Let Him save him, since He is pleased with him.”

Matthew 26:61

> And declared, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus would not save Himself, because He came to save us.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

It was not the nails that held Jesus to the cross; it was His love.

XLI. THE LEADERS MOCKED HIM

Matthew 27:41 — The Chief Priests, Teachers, and Elders

“In the same way the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders mocked Him:”

In the same way.

Not only the passers-by.

The chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders.

The most respected religious leaders came out to watch.

Mocked Him.

They had gotten what they wanted.

Now they gloated.

These were men who knew the Scriptures.

They knew Psalm 22.

Yet they did not see that they were fulfilling it as they spoke.

Cross References

Psalm 22:6

> But I am a worm and not a man. People make fun of me and look down on me.

Job 12:4

> I have become a joke to my friends, though I called on God and He answered. I am righteous and without blame, yet I am laughed at.

Mark 15:31

> In the same way the leading priests and the teachers of the law mocked Him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but He can't save Himself!”

Spiritual Principle

Knowing the Scriptures does not help us if we reject the One they point to.

XLII. "HE SAVED OTHERS"

Matthew 27:42 — He Can't Save Himself

“‘He saved others, but He can't save Himself. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him.’”

He saved others.

They admitted that He had saved others.

He had healed the sick.

He had raised the dead.

But He can't save Himself.

They meant this as an insult.

But they spoke a deep truth.

He could not save others **and** save Himself.

To save us, He had to give Himself.

If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him.

But they would not have believed.

Later, He did something even greater than coming down from the cross.

He came out of the grave.

And they still did not believe.

Cross References

Psalm 22:8

> “He trusts in the LORD,” they say. “Let the LORD rescue him. Let Him save him, since He is pleased with him.”

Luke 23:35

> The people stood watching, and the rulers even made fun of Him. They said, “He saved others. Let Him save Himself if He is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.”

Mark 15:32

> “Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with Him also insulted Him.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus could not save Himself and save us at the same time — so He chose us.

Key Truth

The mockers spoke the truth without knowing it: to save others, He would not save Himself.

XLIII. "HE TRUSTS IN GOD"

Matthew 27:43 — Let God Rescue Him

“He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

He trusts in God.

This was true.

Jesus trusted His Father completely.

Let God rescue Him now if He wants Him.

The leaders were almost quoting Psalm 22:8 word for word.

They were mocking Jesus with the very words of the psalm that described His suffering.

For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’

They thought God's silence proved Jesus was a liar.

But God would answer — on the third day.

Cross References

Psalm 22:8

> “He trusts in the LORD,” they say. “Let the LORD rescue him. Let Him save him, since He is pleased with him.”

Psalm 71:11

> They say, “God has left him. Go after him and grab him, because no one will rescue him.”

Psalm 3:2

> Many people are saying about me, “God will not save him.”

Spiritual Principle

God's silence is not God's absence; He answers in His own time.

XLIV. THE CRIMINALS INSULTED HIM

Matthew 27:44 — Also Insulted Him

“The criminals who were crucified with Him also insulted Him.”

The criminals who were crucified with Him.

Even men dying beside Him joined in.

Also insulted Him.

Everyone turned against Jesus.

But Luke tells us more.

One of the criminals changed his mind.

He said, **“Jesus, don't forget me when You come as King.”**

And Jesus answered, **“Today you will be with Me in paradise.”**

Even at the last hour of his life, a man who had mocked Jesus found mercy.

It is never too late to turn to Jesus while there is breath.

Cross References

Luke 23:39

> One of the criminals who hung there threw insults at Him: “Aren't You the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!”

Luke 23:40

> But the other criminal scolded him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?”

Romans 5:8

> But God shows His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Spiritual Principle

Christ died for sinners — even those who mocked Him.

XLV. DARKNESS OVER THE LAND

Matthew 27:45 — From Noon Until Three

“From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land.”

From noon until three in the afternoon.

The middle of the day.

When the sun should be at its brightest.

Darkness came over all the land.

This was not a normal eclipse.

Passover was celebrated at the time of the full moon, and a solar eclipse cannot happen during a full moon.

This darkness was a sign from God.

In Egypt, before the first Passover, God sent darkness over the land.

Amos had prophesied, **“I will make the sun set at noon and make the earth dark in the middle of the day.”**

The darkness pictured God's judgment.

Jesus was bearing the judgment for the sins of the world.

Cross References

Amos 8:9

> “On that day,” says the Lord GOD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in the middle of the day.”

Exodus 10:22

> So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all of Egypt for three days.

Luke 23:44

> It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

Spiritual Principle

At the cross, the light of the world entered the darkness of judgment for us.

XLVI. "MY GOD, MY GOD"

Matthew 27:46 — Why Have You Forsaken Me?

“About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’—that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”

About three o'clock.

The time of the afternoon sacrifice at the temple.

Jesus cried out in a loud voice.

This was not a whisper.

It was a cry of deep anguish.

Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

These words are mostly Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.

Matthew keeps the very sounds of Jesus' voice.

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

These are the first words of Psalm 22.

To **forsake** means to abandon or leave alone.

What Did Jesus Mean?

This is one of the deepest mysteries in the Bible.

Jesus is God the Son.

The Father and the Son are always one.

So how could Jesus be forsaken?

Christians have understood this cry in several ways that fit together.

First, Jesus was bearing our sin.

Paul wrote that God made Him who had no sin **to be sin for us.**

In some way we cannot fully understand, Jesus experienced the separation from God that sin brings — so that we would never have to.

Second, Jesus was praying Psalm 22.

Jewish people often referred to a whole psalm by quoting its first line.

Psalm 22 begins in deep suffering, but it ends in victory and praise.

By quoting it, Jesus pointed to the whole psalm — including its triumph.

Third, Jesus truly felt abandoned.

He was fully human.

His cry was real.

Even in His pain, He still called Him **"My God."**

He did not stop trusting.

All of this shows us how great the cost of our salvation was.

Jesus was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken.

Cross References

Psalm 22:1

> My God, my God, why have You left me alone? Why are You so far from saving me, so far from my cries of pain?

Mark 15:34

> And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, My God, why have You left Me?"

Psalm 88:14

> Why, LORD, do You reject me and hide Your face from me?

Spiritual Principle

Jesus was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The cry of the forsaken Son is the reason we can say, “My Father, You will never leave me.”

XLVII. "HE'S CALLING ELIJAH"

Matthew 27:47 — Some Misunderstood

“Some who were standing there said, ‘He's calling Elijah.’”

Some who were standing there.

Bystanders near the cross.

He's calling Elijah.

Eli sounds like **Elijah.**

Some misunderstood His words.

Others may have been mocking Him.

Many Jewish people believed Elijah would come in times of great need.

Malachi had prophesied that Elijah would come before the great day of the LORD.

Jesus had already taught that John the Baptist fulfilled that role.

They were waiting for Elijah.

But the One greater than Elijah was dying in front of them.

Cross References

Malachi 4:5

> Look! I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

Mark 15:35

> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, He's calling Elijah.”

Matthew 17:11

> Jesus replied, “It is true that Elijah comes and will make all things right again.”

Spiritual Principle

People often misunderstand the words of Jesus when they do not know Him.

XLVIII. SOUR WINE

Matthew 27:48 — A Sponge on a Reed

“Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Jesus to drink.”

Immediately one of them ran.

Someone moved quickly.

Took a sponge, filled it with sour wine.

This was cheap, vinegar-like wine that soldiers and workers drank.

Put it on a reed, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

John tells us Jesus said, **“I am thirsty.”**

Psalm 69 says, **“They gave me vinegar for my thirst.”**

This may have been a small act of kindness.

Or it may have been meant to keep Him alive longer to see if Elijah would come.

Either way, it fulfilled Scripture.

Cross References

Psalm 69:20

> Insults have broken my heart and left me helpless. I looked for pity, but there was none. I looked for comforters, but I found no one.

John 19:29

> A jar of sour wine was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

Mark 15:36

> Someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave Him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take Him down,” he said.

Spiritual Principle

The One who gives living water was thirsty for us.

XLIX. "LET'S SEE IF ELIJAH COMES"

Matthew 27:49 — Wait

“Others said, ‘Wait, let's see if Elijah comes to save Him.’”

Others said, ‘Wait.’

They wanted to watch.

Let's see if Elijah comes to save Him.

They were curious, but not caring.

They treated His suffering like a show.

Elijah had once called down fire from heaven.

Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind.

But Elijah would not come to save Jesus.

Because Jesus had not come to be saved.

He had come to save.

Cross References

Luke 23:36

> The soldiers also came up and mocked Him. They offered Him sour wine.

1 Kings 18:37

> Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that You, LORD, are God, and that You are turning their hearts back again.

2 Kings 2:11

> As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them. And Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus did not come to be rescued; He came to rescue.

L. HE GAVE UP HIS SPIRIT

Matthew 27:50 — A Loud Voice

“Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit.”

Jesus cried out again with a loud voice.

A dying man on a cross usually had little strength left.

But Jesus cried out loudly.

John tells us what He said: **“It is finished!”**

Luke tells us He also said: **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”**

It is finished was a cry of victory.

The work of salvation was complete.

The debt was paid.

And gave up His spirit.

Jesus did not simply die.

He **gave up** His spirit.

His life was not taken from Him.

He laid it down.

Jesus had said, **“No one takes My life from Me. I give it up because I choose to.”**

Cross References

Luke 23:46

> Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” When He had said this, He breathed His last.

John 19:30

> When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Psalm 31:5

> Into Your hands I commit my spirit. Rescue me, LORD, my faithful God.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus laid down His life; no one took it from Him.

Key Truth

“It is finished” means there is nothing left for us to pay.

LI. THE CURTAIN WAS TORN

Matthew 27:51 — From Top to Bottom

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.”

At that moment.

The very moment Jesus died.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two.

In the temple, a thick curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

The Most Holy Place was where God's presence dwelt.

Only the high priest could go behind that curtain.

And only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, with the blood of a sacrifice.

The curtain said, **“Keep out. Sinful people cannot come near a holy God.”**

From top to bottom.

Not from bottom to top.

No human hand tore it.

God tore it, from heaven down.

Now the way into God's presence was open.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus opened **a new and living way** for us **through the curtain — that is, His body.**

The earth shook and the rocks split.

All of creation responded to the death of its Creator.

Cross References

Hebrews 10:20

> He opened a new and living way for us through the curtain, that is, through His body.

Exodus 26:33

> Hang the curtain from the clasps and put the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

Nahum 1:6

> Who can stand up to His anger? Who can live through His burning anger? His fury pours out like fire. The rocks break apart before Him.

Spiritual Principle

Through the death of Jesus, the way to God is open to all who come through Him.

Key Truth

The curtain that said “Keep out” was torn by God to say “Come in.”

LII. TOMBS WERE OPENED

Matthew 27:52 — Holy People Raised

“Tombs were opened, and many holy people who had died were raised to life.”

Tombs were opened.

The earthquake broke open graves.

And many holy people who had died were raised to life.

Holy people means godly believers who had died.

Only Matthew records this event.

Jesus' death was already breaking the power of death.

Ezekiel had prophesied that God would open the graves of His people and bring them up.

Daniel had spoken of those who sleep in the dust waking up.

How Do Christians Understand This?

Bible students have understood this event in different ways.

Many believe these were real people who were truly raised to life, as a sign that Jesus' death and resurrection defeat death.

Some believe they were raised to a new, lasting life and later went to heaven with Christ.

Others believe they were raised like Lazarus and later died again.

Some Bible students believe Matthew is describing a real event in language that also points to the great resurrection at the end of the age.

All agree on the main point:

The death of Jesus is the death of death.

Cross References

Ezekiel 37:12

> So prophesy and say to them: This is what the Lord GOD says: My people, I will open your graves and bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

Daniel 12:2

> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will wake up. Some will wake to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting disgrace.

Isaiah 26:19

> But Your dead will live, LORD. Their bodies will rise. Let those who live in the dust wake up and shout for joy!

Spiritual Principle

The death of Jesus broke the power of death.

LIII. INTO THE HOLY CITY

Matthew 27:53 — After His Resurrection

“After Jesus' resurrection they came out of the tombs, went into the holy city, and appeared to many people.”

After Jesus' resurrection.

Matthew is careful about the timing.

The tombs opened when Jesus died.

But the raised saints came out after Jesus rose.

Jesus is **the firstfruits** — the first to rise to never-ending life.

Everything else follows Him.

They came out of the tombs.

Went into the holy city.

The holy city is Jerusalem.

And appeared to many people.

They were witnesses.

Their appearance was a sign that Jesus had truly conquered the grave.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 15:20

> But Christ has truly been raised from the dead. He is the first of all those who will rise.

Colossians 1:18

> And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might be first.

Matthew 28:6

> He is not here. He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay.

Spiritual Principle

Because Jesus rose, His people will rise too.

LIV. "TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD!"

Matthew 27:54 — The Centurion's Confession

“When the centurion and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that happened, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”

When the centurion and those guarding Jesus.

A **centurion** was a Roman officer in charge of about one hundred soldiers.

He was probably in charge of the crucifixion.

Saw the earthquake and all that happened.

The darkness.

The cry.

The way Jesus died.

The earthquake.

They were terrified.

And said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’

This is amazing.

The religious leaders mocked Jesus as a false Son of God.

But a Gentile soldier declared Him to be the true Son of God.

At His birth, Gentile wise men came to worship Him.

At His death, Gentile soldiers confessed Him.

The gospel was already reaching beyond Israel to the nations.

Cross References

Mark 15:39

> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how He died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

Luke 23:47

> The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.”

Psalm 2:7

> I will announce what the LORD has decided. He said to Me, “You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father.”

Spiritual Principle

The cross reveals who Jesus truly is to those who are willing to see.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A Roman soldier saw at the cross what the religious leaders refused to see.

LV. THE WOMEN WATCHED

Matthew 27:55 — From a Distance

“Many women were there watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for Him—”

Many women were there.

The male disciples had fled.

John was there, according to his Gospel.

But Matthew tells us that **many women** stayed.

Watching from a distance.

They could not get close.

But they would not leave.

They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for Him.

Luke tells us these women supported Jesus and His disciples with their own money.

They had served Him in life.

Now they stayed with Him in death.

Their faithful presence is a beautiful testimony.

Cross References

Luke 8:3

> Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support Jesus and His followers out of their own money.

Mark 15:40

> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

Psalm 38:11

> My friends and companions stay away because of my sickness. My neighbors stand far away.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful love stays near Jesus even when others run away.

LVI. THEIR NAMES

Matthew 27:56 — Mary Magdalene and the Others

“among them Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.”

Mary Magdalene.

She was from Magdala, a town on the Sea of Galilee.

Luke tells us Jesus had freed her from seven demons.

She would be the first to see the risen Lord.

Mary the mother of James and Joses.

Another faithful follower.

And the mother of Zebedee's sons.

This was the mother of James and John.

Earlier, she had asked Jesus to let her sons sit at His right and left in His kingdom.

Now she saw who was at His right and left — two criminals.

She was learning what Jesus' kingdom was really like.

These women are named because they were witnesses.

They saw Jesus die.

They would see where He was buried.

And they would be the first to find the empty tomb.

Cross References

Luke 24:10

> It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

John 19:25

> Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Matthew 20:20

> Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt down and asked a favor of Him.

Spiritual Principle

God honors faithful followers by making them witnesses of His greatest works.

LVII. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Matthew 27:57 — A Rich Man

“As evening approached, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who had become a disciple of Jesus,”

As evening approached.

The Sabbath began at sunset.

Bodies could not be left hanging on a cross on the Sabbath, especially during the festival.

There was little time.

A rich man from Arimathea.

Arimathea was a town in Judea.

Isaiah had prophesied that the Servant would be **with the rich in His death.**

Named Joseph.

Mark and Luke tell us he was a respected member of the council.

Luke says he had not agreed with their decision.

Who had become a disciple of Jesus.

John tells us he had been a secret disciple, because he feared the Jewish leaders.

But now, at the darkest moment, he stepped forward.

When the bold disciples ran away, the secret disciple became bold.

Cross References

Mark 15:43

> Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Luke 23:50

> Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council. He was a good and upright man.

Isaiah 53:9

> He was given a grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, even though He had done nothing violent and never spoke a lie.

Spiritual Principle

The darkest moments can bring out courage in hidden followers of Jesus.

LVIII. ASKING FOR THE BODY

Matthew 27:58 — Pilate Gave It

“went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate ordered that it be given to him.”

Went to Pilate.

This took courage.

Going to the Roman governor to ask for the body of a man executed as **King of the Jews** could be dangerous.

It would also anger the council.

And asked for Jesus' body.

Often the bodies of crucified criminals were left on the cross or thrown into a common grave.

Joseph wanted to give Jesus an honorable burial.

The law of Moses said that a body hanging on a tree must not be left overnight.

Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

Mark tells us Pilate was surprised Jesus had died so quickly.

He checked with the centurion first.

Jesus' death was confirmed by Roman officials.

Cross References

Mark 15:45

> When he learned from the centurion that it was true, he gave the body to Joseph.

John 19:38

> Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a follower of Jesus, but secretly, because he was afraid of the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

Deuteronomy 21:23

> You must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse.

Spiritual Principle

True love for Jesus is willing to take risks for Him.

LIX. CLEAN LINEN

Matthew 27:59 — Wrapped the Body

“Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean linen,”

Joseph took the body.

He took Jesus down from the cross.

Wrapped it in clean linen.

John tells us Nicodemus helped him.

Nicodemus brought about seventy-five pounds of spices.

They wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in strips of linen, following Jewish burial customs.

These two respected leaders, who had once followed Jesus in secret, now cared for His body with love.

Cross References

John 19:40

> Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was the Jewish way of burying a body.

Mark 15:46

> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Luke 23:53

> Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, where no one had yet been laid.

Spiritual Principle

Love for Jesus serves Him with tenderness and care.

LX. A NEW TOMB

Matthew 27:60 — The Large Stone

“and placed it in his own new tomb that had been cut in the rock. He rolled a large stone in front of the entrance and went away.”

And placed it in his own new tomb.

Joseph gave Jesus his own tomb.

It was **new** — no one had ever been buried there.

John tells us the tomb was in a garden near the place of crucifixion.

That had been cut in the rock.

Wealthy families had tombs carved into the rock.

This fulfilled Isaiah's words that the Servant would be **with the rich in His death.**

He rolled a large stone in front of the entrance.

Many tombs were closed with a large, round stone that rolled in a groove.

It would take several men to move it.

And went away.

The work was done.

Jesus was buried.

It seemed like the end.

But it was a borrowed tomb.

And He would only need it for three days.

Cross References

John 19:41

> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. In the garden was a new tomb, where no one had ever been laid.

Isaiah 53:9

> He was given a grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, even though He had done nothing violent and never spoke a lie.

Matthew 28:2

> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. He went to the tomb, rolled back the stone, and sat on it.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus was truly buried, so that His resurrection would be truly seen.

Key Truth

Jesus only borrowed the tomb — He gave it back in three days.

LXI. SITTING OPPOSITE THE TOMB

Matthew 27:61 — Mary Magdalene and the Other Mary

“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.”

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.

The faithful women stayed to the very end.

Were sitting there opposite the tomb.

They watched where Jesus was laid.

This detail is important.

On Sunday morning, these same women would return to the same tomb.

They did not go to the wrong place.

They knew exactly where Jesus had been buried.

And they would find it empty.

Cross References

Mark 15:47

> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where He was laid.

Luke 23:55

> The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it.

Matthew 28:1

> After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful love waits near Jesus, even when all seems lost.

LXII. THE DAY AFTER PREPARATION DAY

Matthew 27:62 — Back to Pilate

“The next day, the day after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.”

The next day.

This was the Sabbath.

The day after Preparation Day.

Preparation Day was Friday, the day people prepared for the Sabbath.

The chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.

The leaders who were so strict about the Sabbath went to a Gentile ruler on the Sabbath to make sure Jesus stayed in the grave.

They were more worried about Jesus' words than He seemed to be in the tomb.

Jesus had said that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man would be in the heart of the earth.

Cross References

John 19:31

> Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

Mark 15:42

> It was Preparation Day, the day before the Sabbath. So as evening approached.

Matthew 12:40

> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' enemies remembered His promise to rise better than His friends did.

LXIII. "THAT DECEIVER SAID"

Matthew 27:63 — After Three Days I Will Rise

“They said, ‘Sir, we remember that while He was alive that deceiver said, “After three days I will rise again.”’”

Sir, we remember.

The leaders remembered what Jesus said.

The disciples, it seems, had forgotten — or did not understand.

That deceiver.

They called Jesus a liar and a fraud.

After three days I will rise again.

Jesus had said this many times.

He had promised it plainly.

Hosea had written that **on the third day He will raise us up.**

They feared that this promise might come true — or that someone would claim it had.

Cross References

Jonah 1:17

> Now the LORD sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

Matthew 16:21

> From that time on, Jesus began to explain to His followers that He must go to Jerusalem. There He would suffer many things from the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of the law. He would be killed and then be raised to life on the third day.

Hosea 6:2

> After two days He will give us new life. On the third day He will raise us up, so that we may live in His presence.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' promise to rise was so clear that even His enemies remembered it.

LXIV. MAKE THE TOMB SECURE

Matthew 27:64 — The Last Deception

“So give orders to make the tomb secure until the third day. Otherwise His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people He has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

So give orders to make the tomb secure.

They wanted Roman help.

Until the third day.

They knew the timing Jesus had given.

Otherwise His disciples may come and steal the body.

This was their fear.

But the disciples were hiding, afraid.

They were not planning anything.

And tell the people He has been raised from the dead.

This last deception will be worse than the first.

The **first deception**, they thought, was Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

The **last deception** would be the claim that He rose.

In trying to prevent a lie, they actually provided evidence for the truth.

A guarded, sealed tomb would make the empty tomb impossible to explain away.

Cross References

Daniel 6:17

> A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation could not be changed.

Matthew 28:13

> Telling them, “You are to say, ‘His followers came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’”

2 Peter 2:20

> If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and then get tangled up in it again and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

Spiritual Principle

Every effort to stop God's truth ends up confirming it.

LXV. "YOU HAVE A GUARD"

Matthew 27:65 — As Secure as You Can

“‘You have a guard,’ Pilate answered. ‘Go, make the tomb as secure as you can.’”

You have a guard.

This could mean, **“Take a guard of soldiers,”** or **“You have your own temple guard.”**

Either way, the tomb would be guarded.

Go, make the tomb as secure as you can.

Pilate may have been tired of dealing with them.

As secure as you can.

Human beings would do their very best to keep Jesus in the tomb.

But no human power could hold Him.

Cross References

Matthew 28:4

> The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

Matthew 28:11

> While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the leading priests everything that had happened.

Nehemiah 4:9

> But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

Spiritual Principle

Human power cannot stop the plans of God.

LXVI. SEALED AND GUARDED

Matthew 27:66 — The Stone Sealed

“So they went and secured the tomb by sealing the stone and posting a guard.”

So they went and secured the tomb.

By sealing the stone.

A cord was probably stretched across the stone and fastened with clay or wax stamped with an official seal.

If anyone moved the stone, the seal would be broken.

It was like Daniel's den of lions, sealed by the king.

And posting a guard.

Soldiers stood watch.

Now the tomb was:

- Closed with a large stone.
- Sealed with an official seal.
- Guarded by armed men.

Everything humanly possible had been done to keep Jesus in the grave.

And on the third day, none of it would matter.

Cross References

Daniel 6:17

> A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation could not be changed.

Matthew 28:2

> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. He went to the tomb, rolled back the stone, and sat on it.

Job 38:14

> The earth takes shape like clay under a seal. Its features stand out like the folds of a robe.

Spiritual Principle

No stone, seal, or guard can keep the Son of God in the grave.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

They sealed the tomb to keep Jesus in; God would open it to let the world see He was gone.

LXVII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 27

1. Jesus Is Innocent yet Condemned

Human courts failed, but God's plan of salvation moved forward.

Judas, Pilate, and Pilate's wife all said that Jesus was innocent.

And still He was crucified.

Principle:

The Innocent One was condemned so that the guilty could be set free.

---

2. Regret Without Repentance Destroys

Judas felt remorse but did not turn to the mercy of God.

Peter failed too, but he turned back.

Principle:

Do not stop at regret — run to Jesus for mercy.

---

3. Mocked King, True King

The crown of thorns and the sign over the cross proclaim the real identity of Jesus.

What the soldiers meant as a joke was the truth.

Principle:

The One they mocked as King is the King of kings.

---

4. The Cross Fulfills Scripture

Even the dividing of His garments and the insults were foretold.

Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Zechariah 11 all came true.

Principle:

God's Word is fulfilled in every detail.

---

5. His Death Opens the Way to God

The torn temple curtain shows direct access to the Father through Christ.

No more separation for those who come through Him.

Principle:

Through Jesus, the way to God is open.

---

6. Witnesses Abound

A Roman centurion, many women, and the sealed tomb all confirm the truth of these events.

Jesus truly died.

Jesus was truly buried.

And the stage was set for the empty tomb.

Principle:

The death of Jesus is a fact witnessed by friends and enemies alike.

LXVIII. WHO SAID JESUS WAS INNOCENT?

In Matthew 27, many people testified — some without meaning to — that Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Judas (Verse 4)

“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”

Pilate (Verse 23)

“Why? What crime has He committed?”

Pilate's Wife (Verse 19)

“Have nothing to do with that righteous man.”

Pilate Again (Verse 24)

“I am innocent of this man's blood.”

The Centurion (Verse 54)

“Truly this was the Son of God!”

Isaiah, Long Before (Isaiah 53:9)

He had done nothing violent and never spoke a lie.

Key Truth

Only a sinless Savior could die for the sins of others.

LXIX. PSALM 22 AND THE CROSS

About a thousand years before Jesus, David wrote Psalm 22.

It reads like an eyewitness account of the crucifixion.

“My God, My God, why have You left me alone?” (Psalm 22:1)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:46.

“They insult me and shake their heads.” (Psalm 22:7)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:39.

“Let the LORD rescue him.” (Psalm 22:8)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:43.

“A gang of evil men circles around me.” (Psalm 22:16)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:27.

“They have pierced my hands and my feet.” (Psalm 22:16)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:35.

“People stare and look at me.” (Psalm 22:17)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:36.

“They divide my clothes among them and throw dice for my robe.” (Psalm 22:18)

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:35.

The Psalm Ends in Victory

Psalm 22 does not end in death.

It ends with praise, with the nations turning to the LORD, and with these words:

The LORD has done this.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The psalm that begins with “My God, why?” ends with “The LORD has done this.”

LXX. WHAT MATTHEW 27 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 27 reveals many truths about Jesus.

The Innocent One

No one could name a single crime He committed.

The Silent Lamb

He did not open His mouth before His accusers.

The Substitute

Barabbas went free because Jesus took his place.

The True King

He wore a crown of thorns, but He is the King of kings.

The Curse-Bearer

He wore thorns, the sign of the curse, and hung on a tree for us.

The Fulfiller of Scripture

Every detail of His death was foretold.

The Savior Who Would Not Save Himself

He stayed on the cross so that He could save us.

The Forsaken Son

He was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken.

The One Who Laid Down His Life

He gave up His spirit; no one took it from Him.

The Way to God

His death tore the curtain and opened the way to the Father.

The Conqueror of Death

At His death, tombs opened and the dead were raised.

The Son of God

Even a Roman soldier declared it.

The One Who Was Truly Buried

He was laid in a rich man's tomb, sealed and guarded.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

At the cross, the world saw its greatest crime and God's greatest love.

LXXI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to Pilate?

Under Roman rule, they did not have the power to carry out a death sentence themselves.

Question 2

What is the difference between Judas' regret and true repentance?

Judas was sorry for what he did, but he did not turn to God for mercy. True repentance turns to God and receives His forgiveness.

Question 3

What did the priests do with the thirty silver coins?

They used them to buy the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. It became known as the Field of Blood.

Question 4

What charge did the leaders bring before Pilate?

They presented Jesus as a political king — a threat to Caesar.

Question 5

Why was Pilate amazed?

Because Jesus did not answer a single charge against Him.

Question 6

Who was Barabbas, and why is his release important?

He was a well-known prisoner involved in a violent uprising and murder. He went free while Jesus died — a picture of Jesus taking the place of the guilty.

Question 7

What warning did Pilate's wife give him?

She told him to have nothing to do with that righteous man, because she had suffered in a dream about Him.

Question 8

Why did Pilate wash his hands?

To declare that he was not responsible for Jesus' death. But he was still responsible, because he had the power to release Jesus and did not.

Question 9

How should we understand the words “His blood be on us and on our children”?

They were spoken by an angry crowd that day. They do not place guilt on all Jewish people or future generations. All people share responsibility for Jesus' death, and His blood offers forgiveness to all who believe.

Question 10

What does the crown of thorns represent?

Thorns came from the curse after Adam's sin. Jesus wore the curse so that we could be set free from it.

Question 11

What Old Testament psalm is fulfilled again and again in this chapter?

Psalm 22.

Question 12

Why did Jesus not come down from the cross?

Because He came to save others. To save us, He would not save Himself.

Question 13

What did Jesus mean when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

He was bearing our sin and the separation from God that sin brings. He was also praying Psalm 22, which ends in victory.

Question 14

What did the tearing of the temple curtain mean?

It showed that the way into God's presence was now open through the death of Jesus.

Question 15

What did the centurion say?

“Truly this was the Son of God!”

Question 16

Why did the leaders seal and guard the tomb?

They remembered Jesus' promise to rise after three days and wanted to keep the disciples from stealing the body.

Question 17

What should Matthew 27 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 27 should cause believers to live:

- Running to God for mercy when they sin.
- Refusing to go along with the crowd against Jesus.
- Taking responsibility rather than washing their hands.
- Grateful that Jesus took their place.
- Honoring Jesus as the true King.
- Trusting God's Word, which is fulfilled in every detail.
- Coming boldly to God through the opened way.
- Standing near Jesus, like the faithful women.
- Showing courage, like Joseph of Arimathea.
- Rejecting every kind of hatred or blame against the Jewish people.
- Confident that no stone or seal can stop God's plan.

LXXII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 27 asks several important questions.

Have I Turned to Jesus for Mercy, or Am I Stuck in Regret?

Am I Trying to Wash My Hands of Responsibility for My Sin?

What Will I Do with Jesus?

Am I Being Influenced by the Crowd Instead of by the Truth?

Do I See Myself as Barabbas — Guilty, but Set Free?

Do I Honor Jesus as King in My Life?

Have I Come Through the Torn Curtain into God's Presence?

When Others Run Away, Will I Stay Near Jesus?

Am I a Secret Follower Who Needs to Become Bold?

Do I Believe That Jesus' Death Really Paid for My Sins?

Am I Living Like Someone Who Knows the Tomb Will Be Empty?

A Word of Care

The story of Judas is very sad.

If you ever feel the kind of guilt or despair that makes you feel there is no way forward, please do not carry it alone.

Talk to a pastor, a trusted friend, or a counselor.

In the United States, you can call or text **988** at any time to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The message of the cross is that there is always mercy and always hope in Jesus.

LXXIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Torn Curtain”

For hundreds of years, a curtain hung in the temple.

It was thick.

It was tall.

It separated sinful people from the presence of a holy God.

Only one man could go behind it.

Only one day a year.

Only with blood.

The message of the curtain was clear:

“You cannot come in.”

But at the moment Jesus died, God tore the curtain from top to bottom.

Not from bottom to top, as if man tore it.

But from top to bottom, because God did it.

And the message changed:

“Now you may come in.”

Through the body and blood of Jesus, the way is open.

Not just for priests.

Not just once a year.

But for anyone, at any time, who comes through Jesus.

You do not need to stand outside.

You do not need to be afraid.

You can come boldly to the throne of grace.

Principle:

God tore the curtain so that you could come home.

LXXIV. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 27 is the darkest chapter in the Gospel.

It begins with Jesus bound and handed over.

Judas, filled with regret, throws the silver into the temple and ends his life.

Pilate questions Jesus, but Jesus stands silent.

Pilate knows Jesus is innocent.

His wife warns him.

Still, he gives the crowd a choice — and they choose Barabbas.

Pilate washes his hands, but he cannot wash away his guilt.

The soldiers mock Jesus with a robe, a reed, and a crown of thorns.

They lead Him to Golgotha and nail Him to a cross.

Above His head, the sign reads: **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

The crowds mock.

The leaders mock.

The criminals mock.

“He saved others, but He can't save Himself.”

Darkness covers the land.

Jesus cries, **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**

Then He cries out again and gives up His spirit.

The curtain tears.

The earth shakes.

Tombs open.

A Roman soldier says, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”**

A rich man named Joseph lays the body in his own new tomb.

The faithful women watch.

And the tomb is sealed and guarded.

It looks like the end.

But it is not.

Because the One who died is the Son of God.

And the third day is coming.

So today:

Stand at the cross and see what your sin cost.

Stand at the cross and see how much you are loved.

Do not stop at regret — run to Jesus for mercy.

Do not wash your hands of Him — give Him your life.

Remember that you are Barabbas, set free because Jesus took your place.

Come boldly through the torn curtain into God's presence.

And until He returns:

Live as one who knows the tomb could not hold Him.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the cross.

Thank You for sending Your Son to die for us.

Lord Jesus, You were innocent, yet You were condemned.

You were silent before Your accusers.

You let the guilty go free and took their place.

We confess that we are Barabbas.

We deserved to die, but You died for us.

Thank You for wearing the crown of thorns.

Thank You for carrying the curse of our sin.

Thank You for not coming down from the cross, so that You could save us.

Thank You for being forsaken, so that we would never be forsaken.

Thank You for saying, “It is finished,” so that there is nothing left for us to pay.

Father, thank You for tearing the curtain.

Thank You that we can come into Your presence through Jesus.

Keep us from the kind of regret that turns away from You.

When we sin, help us run to You for mercy.

Keep us from washing our hands of responsibility.

Keep us from following the crowd against You.

Give us the faithful love of the women who stayed near the cross.

Give us the courage of Joseph, who stepped forward when others hid.

Remove from our hearts any hatred or blame toward others, and fill us with Your love for all people.

Thank You that no stone, no seal, and no guard could keep You in the grave.

We wait with hope for the third day.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.” — Matthew 27:51

Central Truth

Jesus, the innocent Son of God and true King, was rejected, mocked, and crucified in fulfillment of Scripture, and through His death He opened the way to God for all who believe.

Matthew 27 in One Sentence

Jesus is handed over to Pilate, rejected in favor of Barabbas, mocked as King, and crucified between two criminals; He cries out to God, gives up His spirit as the temple curtain is torn and a Roman soldier confesses Him as the Son of God, and is buried in a rich man's tomb that is sealed and guarded — but cannot hold Him.