

June 17-23, 2019

Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19

“It Is Finished”

Summary: *Jesus is accused and condemned before Pilate—Barabbas is released—Jesus is mocked, crucified, and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.*

Pilate decrees the death of Jesus—Jesus is mocked and crucified between two thieves—He dies and is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Jesus is taken before Pilate, then to Herod, and then to Pilate again—Barabbas is released—Jesus is crucified between two thieves—He is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Jesus is scourged and crucified—He places His mother in John’s care—He dies and His side is pierced with a spear—He is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights **How did the Atonement suffering continue from Gethsemane?** Late that night, Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and taken to Caiaphas the High Priest by his soldiers. The incarceration and interrogation were not part of an official trial. Both were illegal under the circumstances. That evening was the beginning of the Preparation Day, a holiday by itself; it was night time and there was no formal charge against Jesus. These and other items precluded any trial to be performed legally. “And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. . . . In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.” **(Matthew 26:47-58)**

How did Caiaphas become the High Priest?

Caiaphas was appointed in year 18 A.D. by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus who preceded Pontius Pilate, he was the son-in-law of Annas who was the High Priest, previously. The rule changed so that the appointed High Priest tenure was one-year at a time. “. . . Named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year . . .” **(John 11:49)** His relationship with the Roman Prefect resulted in Caiaphas apparently leading the Sanhedrin eighteen one-year terms. **(Encyclopedia Britannica)** Caiaphas was the High Priest over three councils that made up the grand Sanhedrin assembly. However, Caiaphas apparently was only meeting with one of the three councils and not the entire Sanhedrin (seventy men). The Sanhedrin would have to judge in such a case (if it were a legal trial).

How and where did this mock trial take place?

Caiaphas's house is now a church built over dungeon rooms, two thousand years old, where prisoners were held. Holes in the rock walls were used to tie and spread out their hands and feet for scourging. Visiting this basement prison reminds us that Caiaphas and some powerful elders conspired to trap Jesus by his own words. "But Jesus held his peace . . ." **(Matthew 26:63)** They wanted to charge Jesus with blasphemy, punishable by death. The priestly wordsmiths, who would not even utter the name of God, had the practice of substituting words representing God's name. They used phrases such as, "He that comes in the clouds of Heaven." They referred to a Messiah as "He that sits on the right hand of Power," or "Blessed is His name." In anger, the High Priest challenged Him, in the name of God, ". . . tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God." **(Matthew 26:63)** Jesus simply replied, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see [this] Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." **(Matthew 26:64)** The High Priest, perhaps stung by the realization that he himself had invoked God's name, cried out, "He hath spoken blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." **(Matthew 26:65)**

How did Peter's words intersperse the bitter accusations?

"Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." **(Matthew 26:74-75)** The cock had just crowed. In fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, Peter had just denied the Savior the third time. Then, one can imagine, turning and looking into Jesus' face, Peter turned again, their eyes met, ". . . Peter went out and wept bitterly." **(Luke 22:6-62)**

How did this Jewish council plan to have Jesus executed?

Under the Roman political system, the Jewish priests were not to carry out executions except for temple violations. (Their executions would have been by stoning--throwing the victim over a high cliff and then covering the dead body stones, thereby creating an unmarked grave.) The priests bound him and led him away to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Today, that site is maintained by a Catholic Order, The Sisters of Zion. The archaeological ruins recently discovered may have been well preserved from Byzantine times. Floor stones and cisterns reveal ancient Roman markings and usage as a fortress. At the Antonia Fortress, Pontius Pilate at first did not want to be troubled with the case. He may have been bothered by his wife's dream that he should have nothing to do with Jesus. However, he soon realized a potential political gain. Repeatedly, he had Jesus brought forth, beaten, intimidated, and crowned with thorns. He taunted the priests with Jesus' release. He said, "I find in him no fault at all." **(John 18:38)** Maddened by Pilate's reluctance to favor them with an execution, they cried out, "Away with him, crucify him." **(John 19:15)** Pilate, probably egging them on and hoping to accomplish something for himself, said, "Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar." **(John 19:15)** Ah, the political gain was achieved (since the priests publicly acclaimed Caesar to be their king). "Then delivered he him . . . to be crucified." **(John 19:16)** This may have been the achievement that endeared Pilate to Herod, the Roman (probable non-Caesar) appointee motivated the Jewish priests to acclaim Caesar as king! "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves." **(Luke 23:12)**

Where was the “hill?”

Jesus, bearing His cross (probably just the cross beam, as the upright post was most likely already at the crucifixion place), “. . . went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.” (John 19:17) No hill is mentioned.

Who was this man?

On the way, a man named Simon from Cyrene was made to carry the cross beam to the place of execution. (One can imagine that Jesus may have stumbled, although it is not mentioned.) The name Simon is Jewish; the place, Cyrene, is in Africa close to the Ethiopian border. The man could have been one of the hundreds of thousands of Jews of various ethnicities gathering in Jerusalem for Passover. How long before he realized that he carried the wood for the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb of Go?

Where did He give His life?

A site, north of the Temple, outside the city wall still looks like the described place. It was the Roman practice to crucify along the roadways. A roadway still passes through this ancient, abandoned quarry, known by Jews as a place of execution. Daylight had progressed about six hours. It was close to noon, but, “. . . there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” (Mark 15:33)

What did Jesus do with His last breaths?

Crucifixion was a slow, strangling death. Breathing required very painful movements, and speaking was virtually impossible. Yet, during His agonizing physical, mental, and spiritual anguish, He spoke several times. Mostly it was in concern of others. The Bible records seven things that Jesus said while on the cross. **To those who nailed him:** “. . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do . . .” (Luke 23:34) **To those crucified with him:** “. . . Today shalt thou be with me in paradise [world of spirits].” (Luke 23:41-43) **To His Mother:** “Woman, behold thy son!” (John 19:26) **To John the Beloved:** “Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” (John 19:27) **To the Guards:** “I thirst.” (John 19:28) **To His Father:** “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit . . .” (Luke 23:46) **To the World:** “. . . “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (John 19:30)

How was death hastened?

The Jewish priests did not want the crucified bodies hanging on the cross on Sabbath days (for that evening was the beginning of an extra Sabbath day, a High Day). So, they besought Pilate that the prisoners’ legs might be broken. This would hasten their deaths because they could not push up with their legs and feet to gasp for breath. Once dead, their bodies might be taken away. However, when the soldiers saw that Jesus was dead already “. . . they brake not his legs.” (John 19:33)

Who will bury Him?

After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Sanhedrin, “. . . a disciple of Jesus . . . besought Pilate that he might take the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave.” (John 19:38) and with the help of Nicodemus, “. . . took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices . . . Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid

they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand." (John 19:40-42)

Where are the "three nights and three days?"

The scurrilous events of that day preceded the Passover which was due to begin at any moment. The Passover (a special Sabbath or High Day) that week preceded the regular Saturday Sabbath. "The Jews [Priests] therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,)" (John 19:31) There were two Sabbaths in a row that year (the Passover Sabbath and the regular seventh day of the week Sabbath). In that sense, Jesus was crucified on what we call a Thursday. This fits in the time reckoning of Palm Sunday being five days before the Passover (John 12:12). Then in fulfillment of prophecy, He really was in the tomb three nights; and on the third day He arose: ". . . and be raised again the third day." (Matthew 16:21; 17:23, Mark 9:31)

What "sign" did this fulfill?

This is also the only "sign" Jesus gave the Pharisees. "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:38-40) In speaking to the Pharisees, He specifically connected himself with Jonah, who was in a great fish, ". . . three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17)

Which witness do you accept?

The scriptures bear witness, the spirit bears witness of an empty tomb: "He is not here." They teach us that color, calendar, clock, people, places and experiences were used to foreshadow the atonement. With open hearts we may have experiences, meet worthy people, visit holy places, understand God's timing of calendar events, and see eternal purposes of Him – who died and came alive again, so all mankind could come alive again, as well.