

The Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus



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The Denial of Peter - Rembrandt (1660)
Oil on canvas, 154 x 169 cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Preface

The Passion narratives in the Gospels begin with the 'agony' of Jesus in the Garden and conclude with his death on the cross. The term *passion* is derived from the Greek word for suffering (Gk. *pascho*) which is most often used in the Gospels and Acts to refer to the suffering of Jesus during the events associated with his death by crucifixion.

Jesus had repeatedly prepared his disciples by foretelling of his coming suffering, rejection, and death: Mk 8:31, 9:12, 30-32, 10:32-34. The predictions were so precise that some modern scholars think it impossible that Jesus could have made them, thus suggesting that they must be the creation of the early church (e.g. Bovan, *Last Days*, p.6). But death by crucifixion in the first century Roman world was so detested and humiliating it is inconceivable that the early church would have purposefully focused upon Jesus' crucifixion. It is more believable that they would have done everything possible to erase the crucifixion of Jesus from the public memory.

At first it may be thought that Jesus' attempts to prepare the disciples for his death were unsuccessful. After all, the disciples were so confused and disheartened by Jesus' arrest that they deserted him. So did Jesus fail in his teaching? Not at all! Jesus knew that ultimately they could, with confidence, look back at those predictions as evidence that his suffering and death were not a defeat, but God's victorious way of securing forgiveness to all who would come to believe in him.

As with all portions of the Gospels, each Gospel narrative of the Passion reflects the concerns and aims of the Gospel writer and thus the Gospels are not mere copies of each other. Studying the Passion narratives in a 'vertical' fashion (that is, each narrative individually) is perhaps the best way to discover those concerns and aims. However, the time limitations of this study and the length of the Passion narratives require a 'horizontal' study (that is, all four narratives simultaneously). While this type of study may not make it easier to determine the purposes of each Gospel writer, it will help in seeing a more complete picture of the events that took place at the death of Jesus.

The ESV will be the text used as the basis of this study, but it is always wise to use other translations for comparison.

May God bless our study.

Course Outline

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Lesson 11	Crucifixion of Jesus (III) Death of Jesus	27:39-44 27:45-50	15:29-32 15:33-37	23:44-46	19:28-30
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Lesson 12	Events at Death Piercing of Jesus' Side	27:51-56	15:38-41	23:47-49	19:31-37

Lesson 1

Jesus at Gethsemane

Following the Last Supper, the events of Jesus' final night and day happen in quick succession. The Synoptic Gospel writers begin their Passion narrative with Jesus' preparation in Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:30-46

³⁰And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."³³Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."³⁴Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."³⁵Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

³⁷And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Mark 14:26-42

²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁷And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'²⁸But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."²⁹Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."³⁰And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."³¹But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

³²And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

³³And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.³⁴And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."

³⁵And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.³⁶And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Luke 22:39-46

³⁹And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.

[³¹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,³²but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."³³Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."³⁴Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."]

[John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.]

⁴⁰And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

⁴¹And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Matthew 26

Mark 14

Luke 22

⁴⁰And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour?"

³⁷And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?"

⁴³And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

⁴¹Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

³⁸Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

⁴⁵And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

⁴³And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁰And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

⁴⁴So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

⁴⁵Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on."

⁴¹And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?"

See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴⁶Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

⁴²Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

Background

Mount of Olives: A mile-long hill to the east of Jerusalem (the top of which was about 230 feet above the Temple Mount) and separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron Valley. It was a comparatively good area to grow olives. Its strategic location and nearness to Jerusalem ("a Sabbath's day journey" (Acts 1:12) = 2,000 cubits) enable it to serve as Jerusalem's watchtower. The Rabbis thought this was the place where Noah's dove retrieved the olive branch (Gen. 8:11) and Christians understand from Acts 1 that this was the place from which Jesus ascended to heaven. [ref. *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*]

Gethsemane: A “garden” (according to John 18:1) presumably located on the western slope (i.e. facing Jerusalem) of the Mount of Olives. The name literally means “olive press” which suggests (and many agree) that this garden, or grove, contained an olive press, but word etymologies are not always reliable. The location of Gethsemane is uncertain; 3 to 4 sites lay claim to being the location.

“Abba, Father”: Mark often transliterates Aramaic expressions in his Gospel (which is compatible with the belief that Jesus and his disciples spoke in Aramaic), but he always translates the expression for his readers (which says what about his readers?). *Abba* is simply the Aramaic word for Father; perhaps suggesting the same sort of closeness as the phrase “My Father” used by Matthew.

Luke 22:43, 44 are omitted in some early manuscripts and thus are enclosed in brackets in some translations (NRSV, HCSB). The manuscript evidence is divided, but it is generally agreed that it at least tilts toward the verses being omitted (and, in the mind of some, there is no question that they are not original, e.g. Kurt and Barbara Aland, Stein). Nonetheless, there are many able defenders of these verses being original (e.g. Johnson, Garland, Marshall).

Comments / Questions

1. Matthew and Mark connect their narrative of Jesus at the Mount of Olives with their previous narrative of the Last Supper by recording the ‘singing’ of a hymn (26:30). This may refer to the custom of concluding the Passover observance with a chanting of the latter part of the Hallel (Heb. *praise*, =Ps. 113-118; Ps. 113 and possibly 114 were chanted over the second of the four cups of the Passover [France, *Matthew*, p. 996]).
2. Luke tells us that it was customary for Jesus (and his disciples?) to go to the Mount of Olives. Whether this was a custom during all of Jesus’ visits to Jerusalem or just during his last week (cf. Lk 21:37) is uncertain.
 - a. Matthew and Mark are more specific in saying that Jesus went to a place called Gethsemane. Even though Luke does not mention Gethsemane, is it probable that Luke is referring to Gethsemane as the particular place where Jesus customarily went?
 - b. In any case, is there any significance in Luke telling us that this location was a common destination of Jesus? (cf. Jn 18:2)
3. Jesus adopts Zechariah 13:7 (which, given the context of Zechariah 11-14, appears to be messianic) to foretell the desertion of his disciples. Jesus had already during the Last Supper foretold of Judas’ betrayal (Mt 26:21//Mk 14:18//Lk 22:21). Peter is the first to protest and to voice his loyalty to Jesus. Furthering making his point, Jesus gets more specific and tells the timing of Peter’s denial. Still Peter, and the other disciples, affirm their loyalty. Any thoughts as to why only Matthew tells of this event?
4. Jesus separates Peter, James, and John from the other disciples (why?) and takes them with him as he prepares for the coming trials. In this section, the Gospel writers (especially Matthew and Mark) focus both on Jesus and his disciples.
 - a. How is Jesus described?

The ESV follows the KJV and ASV in Luke 22:44 and translates that Jesus was “in an agony”; other translations simply say he was “in agony” (NASB, Phillips) or use the word “anguish” instead (NRSV, NJB, HCSB). All these expressions suggest to us that Jesus was in mental distress as he anticipated the coming suffering. Our English word “agony” is a transliteration of the Greek word *agōnia* which only occurs this once in the New Testament. While this word is used in Greek literature to refer to mental anguish or anxiety that meaning is by no means certain in this passage. The New Testament does contain other words within the same family (*agōn*, *agōnizomai*, and their compounds) that are always translated as “competes”, “fights”, “struggles”, or “strive”. Thus, it is not uncommon to find modern scholars (Johnson, Garland) who think that the idea of mental anguish is not intended in this passage, but rather the intent is that Jesus was preparing himself for the contest with Satan. Could that be?

- b. What instructions does Jesus give the disciples? (What is the expression “Pray that you may not enter into temptation” reminiscent of?)

- c. How are the disciples presented or described?

How would you describe Jesus’ reactions to the disciples ‘sleepiness’? Disappointment? Anger? Sympathy?

Notice the varying ways translators render the first part of Jesus’ expression in Mark 14:41 (the first part is the same in Matthew 26:45):

“Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough: ...” ASV

“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough!” NRSV (NIV, NKJV, NASB, HCSB)

“Still asleep? Still resting? Enough! ” REB

“You can sleep on now and have your rest. It is all over.” NJB

Which do you think best gives the sense?

- 5. Consider Jesus’ prayer. Matthew and Mark record Jesus asking for the ‘cup’ of suffering to be ‘passed’ or ‘removed’ with the words “if it be possible” whereas Luke records the same request with “if you are willing”. Any difference between those expressions?

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Luke 22:44 KJV, ASV "being in an agony"

"in agony" NASB, Phillips

Barclay "in an agony of mind"

REB "anguish of spirit"

HCSB "in anguish"

NRSV, NJB "in his anguish"

Mt.26:45 "and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?'" NRSV (NKJV Sim. NASB sim., NIV sim. HCSB Sim

And said to them, "Still asleep? Still resting?" REB

"Sleep on now, and take your rest:..." ASV

You can sleep on now and have your rest. NJB

Mark 14:41 "Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough:..." ASV

Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough!" NRSV (NKJV sim., NASB sim., NIV sim. HCSB sim.

"Still asleep? Still resting? Enough! " REB

You can sleep on now and have your rest. It is all over. NJB

Lesson 2

Betrayal / Arrest of Jesus

Judas finds the opportunity he was seeking to betray Jesus (Lk 22: 6). Each of the Gospel writers tells of this occasion where the betrayal of one disciple leads to desertion by the others.

Matthew 26:47-56

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him."

⁴⁹And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do."

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

Mark 14:43-52

⁴³And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

⁴⁴Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him.

⁴⁶And they laid hands on him and seized him.

Luke 22:47-53

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them.

He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

John 18:1-12

¹When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

³So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

⁵They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he."

Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

⁸Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

Matthew 26

⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

⁵⁵At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,

"Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

⁵⁶But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Mark 14

⁴⁷But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸And Jesus said to them,

"Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

But let the Scriptures be fulfilled."

⁵⁰And they all left him and fled.

⁵¹And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, ⁵²but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Luke 22

⁴⁹And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

John 18

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

¹²So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

Background

“Band of Soldiers” Whereas the Synoptic authors simply say that a “crowd (with swords and clubs”, Mt and Mk) accompanied Judas, John uses the term ‘cohort’ (Gk. *speira* = Latin *cohors*) which is the precise term used for a Roman cohort having soldiers numbering between 600 men (one-tenth of a Roman legion) to 1000 men. In v.12, John also uses the term **“Captain”** (lit. ‘leader of a thousand’) which was used of Roman commanders. However, not everyone is convinced that it is conceivable that Romans would have assisted the Jews on this occasion. Rather, they believe that the Jewish temple guard is meant and there is some evidence that Roman military terms were used to refer to this temple guard.

Kiss In the OT, a kiss (whether on the lips or face is uncertain) is usually used as a greeting between family members or friends. A notable exception is the deceitful kiss of Joab (2 Sam 20:9-10). Throughout the Biblical world, kissing the feet was a sign of obeisance (referred to a “licking the dust” (Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; Mic 7:17). In the NT, it seems kissing was still a sign of greeting (Lk 7:45) or departure (Acts 20:47). In fact the irony of Judas, a disciple of Jesus, betraying his master is reflected in the use of a kiss, normally an expression of closeness, as the means of the betrayal. [See C.S.Keener, “Kissing,” *Dictionary of NT Background*, p. 628-29]

Rabbi Originally the designation was simply one of respect (from the Heb. *rab*, “great” or “big”). By the 1st century AD, it was a loose designation for ‘teacher’ which is the way it is used of Jesus by Mark and John in their Gospels. Luke never uses Rabbi since his Gentile audience would probably not have understood its meaning. Interestingly, Matthew only uses it once in reference to Jesus – on this occasion by Judas. [Eerdmans *Dictionary of the Bible*].

Comments / Questions

1. All four of the Gospels, in one way or another in this account, refer to Judas as a ‘betrayed’. The word translated “betray” (Gk. *paradidōmi*) more generally means “to hand over”.
 - a. Judas is never mentioned in the Gospels without it also being mentioned that he was the one ‘to hand over’ Jesus (Mt 10:4//Mk 3:19//Lk 6:16; Jn 6:70; 12:4; Mt 26:14//Mk 14:10//Lk 22:3; Mt 26:21//Mk 14:18//Lk 22:21//Jn 13:21; Mt 27:3).
 - b. Judas is only mentioned by name once outside the Gospels – in Acts 1:16 where he is said to have been “a guide to those who arrested Jesus.”
 - c. This word is the same word used to refer to a tradition that has been ‘handed over’; see especially 1 Corinthians 11:23 where both the tradition Paul received had been ‘handed over’ to the Corinthians and Jesus was ‘handed over’ for us.
 - d. The same word is used in Galatians 2:20 where Jesus is said to have ‘handed over’ himself and also in Romans 8:32 where God is said to have ‘handed over’ Jesus. So who ‘handed over’ Jesus: Judas, Jesus himself, or God?
2. What knowledge did Judas betray? That is, what did Judas tell or provide the Jewish leaders that they did not know or could find out themselves?
3. Even if Roman soldiers were involved (see “Band of Soldiers” above), who do the Gospels clearly represent as being behind the arrest of Jesus?

4. Peter, in his zeal to protect Jesus, cuts off the ear ("right ear" – Lk and Jn) of the high priest's servant (named Malchus – Jn) with his sword.
 - a. What are the two reasons that Jesus gives to restrain Peter?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - b. It has always been a curiosity why some people in the Gospel narratives are named and others are not. Bauckham (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*) argues that the named characters are known because they were the eyewitness responsible for telling of the event. Further, he suggests that these eyewitnesses joined the Christian movement. Is it conceivable that Malchus became a Christian?
 - c. The mention of Peter's sword brings to mind the brief conversation Jesus had with his disciples immediately before leaving the room of the Last Supper in Luke 22:35-38. Why would Jesus disciples need to buy a sword? And why would Jesus say two swords on that occasion was sufficient?
5. Matthew and Mark inform their readers that the arrest of Jesus conformed to Scripture. Two OT statements have been proposed as the basis of their remark: (1) Isaiah 53:12 referring to the sacrifice of Jesus, or (2) Zechariah 13:7 (alluded to earlier by Jesus) referring to the desertion of his disciples. Which fits the context better?
6. Mark alone notes that after Jesus' disciples fled, there was a young man remaining who was seized by the arresting group. It may be interesting to speculate why this young man only had a linen cloak for clothes, but who this young man was has been a bigger topic of speculation (Stein, *Mark*, gives an extended list of proposals). A commonly heard contention (but not one listed by Stein) is that he was Mark himself. Any reason that might support contention? [Of course, remember this is all conjecture.]

[Two other features of Mark's account of the young man has prompted comment. (1) Since Mark describes the angel attending Jesus' resurrection as "a young man" (16:5), it is suggested that the young man in this account also is angel. (2) The linen cloth worn by the young man is the exact same description given to Jesus' burial cloth (15:46), thus some see Mark's inclusion of the young man is in some sense symbolic of Jesus' resurrection. I am not certain how that connection can be successfully made.]

Lesson 3

Annas / Caiaphas

After Jesus' arrest there is a sequence of interrogations and trials, but it is interesting that not every Gospel writer tells of every trial. The Gospel record can be summarized as follows: (the relative length of each account, as reflected in the number of verses used, suggests the emphasis given by each author)

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Interrogation by Annas	-	-	-	8 verses
Before Caiaphas	11 verses	13 verses	1 verse	1 verse
Before the Council	2 verses	1 verse	10 verses	-
Trial before Pilate	8 verses	8 verses	16 verses	26 verses
* <i>Barabbas</i>	6 verses	6 verses	3 verses	2 verses
Interrogation by Herod	-	-	5 verses	-
* <i>The incident regarding Barabbas is intermingled with the trial before Pilate so it is separated to help see each author's emphasis.</i>				

Annas

John 18:13-14, 19-23

¹³First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

[v. 15-18: *Peter's Denial, see Lesson 4*]

¹⁹The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." ²²When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" ²⁴Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Background

High Priest Originally, the high priests were the descendents of Aaron through his son Eleazar. David appointed (or possibly confirmed) Zadok, a descendent of Eleazar (1 Chr 6:12), as high priest; his descendents continued to serve in that capacity until Antiochus IV began to appoint men more sympathetic to his interests. Following the Maccabean revolt, the high priesthood remained in the Hasmonean family until Herod was given control of Palestine and began to make appointments at his pleasure. Following Herod's death, the rule of Judea was assigned to Roman governors who assumed the right to appoint the high priests. Consequently, the high priesthood constantly changed during the time of Jesus (probably at least 9 high priests served during his relatively short life). Further, they were from wealthy families who had the ability to buy the

privilege (think 'bribe') of the high priesthood. [For a good discussion of the history of the high priesthood, see Bruce, *NT History*, p. 56-68.]

Annas Appointed by Quirinius in AD 6, Annas served as high priest until he was deposed by Gratus in AD 15. At various times, five of Annas' sons, one son-in-law (Caiaphas), and one grandson served as high priests. Due to his continuing influence, Luke still calls Annas the high priest well after his term (Lk 3:2; Acts 4:6)

Caiaphas The son-in-law of Annas who served the longest term as high priest during the NT era (AD 18-36; his term ended within months of Pilate losing the governorship). Josephus refers to him as Joseph, "who is called (or surnamed) Caiaphas".

Comments / Questions

1. John is very careful to identify the characters in his narrative, especially if they have already appeared previously. In this section he brings to their memory that Caiaphas was the same high priest who had earlier spoken of the expediency of Jesus death (cf. Jn 11:49-50). He does something similar with these characters: the woman at the well (4:29, 39), Nicodemus (3:1; 19:39), Philip (1:44; 12:21), Thomas (11:16; 20:24; 21:2), Judas (6:71; 12:24; 13:2, 26; note also 14:22), and Lazarus (11:43; 12:1); as well as with places: Cana (2:1, 5:46) and Bethany (11:1; 12:1). Is it necessary for 'readers' to be reminded? (Think carefully.)

2. In verse 19, the "high priest" questions Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.
 - a. Is this referring to Annas or Caiaphas?

 - b. It would seem natural for the high priest to ask Jesus about his teaching, but why about "his disciples"? What would be of interest to Annas about Jesus' disciples?

 - c. How does Jesus take the attention away from his disciples? (cf Jn 18:8)

 - d. In Jewish trial law, a defendant is not required to testify against himself, thus was Annas' question of Jesus illegal? However, can this questioning properly be called a "trial"?

3. Why does Jesus refuse to directly answer Annas' question and instead refer him to his previous public teaching?

4. What was it about Jesus' reply that incensed a Jewish officer enough that he struck Jesus?

Caiaphas

Matthew 26:57-68

⁵⁷Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.

⁵⁸And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

⁵⁹Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"

⁶²And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." ⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, ⁶⁸saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

Mark 14:53-65

⁵³And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.

⁵⁴And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.

⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.

⁶⁰And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶¹But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶²And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

⁶³And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

Luke 22:54a

⁵⁴Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house,

Luke 22:63-65

⁶³Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him as they beat him. ⁶⁴They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

Background

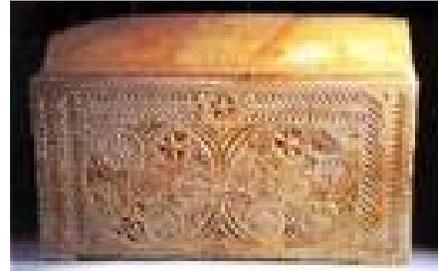
Chief Priests Though they have a prominent role throughout the Gospels and Acts, the identity of the chief priests is uncertain. Since the high priesthood often changed hands in the NT era, it has been suggested that the chief priests were those of the family of the former high priests, including perhaps some former high priests themselves. Others suggest they were those priests who had charge of the Temple. In any case, the broadness of the term on occasion would seem to include the high priest.

Comments / Questions

1. Mark and Luke do not mention Caiaphas by name, which may not be surprising in the case of Luke since he only mentions this trial in passing. Why might Mark leave Caiaphas unnamed? [Bond, *Caiaphas*, p. 100-103 lists several suggestions]
2. Even though it is late in the night, the chief priests and the Council gather at the house of Caiaphas. They had anticipated this evening, having gathered at this same house a few nights earlier to plan Jesus' death (Mt 26:3-5//Mk 14:1-2//Lk 22:1-2). Would these proceedings constitute a trial?
3. Jesus' earlier interrogation by Annas seems to set the stage for his interrogation at Caiaphas' house. Annas seemed to want Jesus to testify against himself, but Jesus refused. So, now they seek to find witnesses to testify against Jesus.
 - a. Matthew says that the Jewish leaders were seeking "false testimony" about Jesus, but even though many false witnesses came forward and testified they "found none". Explain. (cf. Dt 19:15)
 - b. Does the expression "seeking false testimony" suggest they were looking for witnesses who would intentionally lie? If so, why would they not have arranged for their testimony to agree?
 - c. At last, they found two "false" witnesses who testified that Jesus said he would (or was able to) destroy the temple and would rebuild it (or another) in three days. Did Jesus say that? If so, then why is this called "false witness"? If not, what was false about their testimony? (cf. Jn 2:18-22)
4. Caiaphas directly asks Jesus: (according to Mark) "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed (God – Mt)?" From the NT and other ancient Jewish writings, we have some, but limited, knowledge of the Jewish beliefs concerning the Messiah. The Jews at Qumran did interpret 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7 to mean that the Messiah would be the Son of God (France, *Matthew*, p.1025), but we do not know how widespread this belief was held.
 - a. Consider Mt 22:41-46: how could this passage be understood as linking the Messiah and the Son of God?
 - b. Having remained silent previously, why is Jesus willing to plainly answer this question?

Caiaphas Ossuary

The **Caiaphas ossuary** is one of twelve ossuaries (or bone boxes) discovered in a burial cave with four niches in south Jerusalem in November 1990; two of the six ossuaries that were still intact featured the name "Caiaphas". The especially beautiful ossuary with ornate etching is twice inscribed (in Aramaic) "Joseph, son of Caiaphas" and held the bones of a 60-year-old male, an adult woman, two infants, and two children (all the ossuaries contain multiple sets of bones). The limestone ossuary measures c. 37 cm high by 75 cm long and is housed in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. The bones in all the ossuaries were eventually reburied on the Mount of Olives.



The burial chamber was discovered by construction workers in November 1990 in the Peace Forest near the North Talpiot neighborhood (about 2 km south of the Dome of the Rock). Their superintendent reported it to the Antiquities Authority after the tomb's roof was opened by a bulldozer, to reveal the rock-hewn loculi burial cave. It was typical of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem, and one of many in the Jerusalem necropolis which may be encountered as far south as the Arab village of Sur Baher.

Both the ossuary and the Aramaic inscription on its side appear authentic. The pottery found within the cave has been dated from the first century BC to the first century AD. One coin within one of the ossuaries was from the sixth year of King Agrippa I (AD 42/43) thus indicating that at least one of the occupants of that ossuary was buried after that date.

It is generally agreed, but not certain, that the inscription reads "Caiaphas". If so, it is suspected to have belonged to Joseph, son of Caiaphas, who was known as the *High Priest Caiaphas* in the New Testament. "All the archaeologists and other epigraphical experts who worked on the tomb stated without hesitation that this was indeed the tomb of Joseph Caiaphas; and a great many scholars have accepted this identification." (Bond, p.7).

Of course, the identification with Caiaphas has been challenged by some scholars on various grounds, including the spelling of the inscription, the lack of any mention of Caiaphas's status as High Priest, the plainness of the tomb (although the ossuary itself is as ornate as might be expected from someone of his rank and family), and other reasons.

Though the objections are not conclusive, they nonetheless highlight the uncertainty involved with the identification of this tomb with Caiaphas. In any case, the discovery of the burial cave and its contents has increased our knowledge of ossuary inscriptions and burial customs of the Second Temple period.

Miriam Ossuary

In June 2011, archaeologists from Bar-Ilan and Tel Aviv Universities announced the recovery of a stolen ossuary, plundered from a tomb in the Valley of Elah. The Israel Antiquities Authority declared it authentic, and expressed regret that it couldn't be studied *in situ*. It is inscribed with the text: "Miriam, daughter of Yeshua, son of Caiaphas, Priest of Ma'aziah from Beth 'Imri". Based on it, Caiaphas can be assigned to the priestly course of Ma'aziah, instituted by king David.

(Much of the above is from Wikipedia with additional information from Helen K. Bond, Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.)

Lesson 4

Peter's Denial

Each Gospel inserts an episode involving Peter while Jesus is being questioned by the Jewish leaders. The denials of Peter complete the progression of Jesus being betrayed by Judas, being deserted by his disciples, and being denied by Peter three times.

Matthew 26:69-75

[⁵⁸And Peter was following him at a distance,

as far as the courtyard of the high priest,

and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.]

[v.59-68 Questioning by Caiaphas]

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard.

And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." ⁷⁰But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean."

Mark 14:66-72

[⁵⁴And Peter had followed him at a distance,

right into the courtyard of the high priest.

And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.]

[v.55-65 Questioning by Caiaphas]

⁶⁶And as Peter was below in the courtyard,

one of the servant girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." ⁶⁸But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean."

Luke 22:54b-62

^{54b}and Peter was following at a distance.

⁵⁵And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together,

Peter sat down among them.

⁵⁶Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."

John 18:15-18

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, ¹⁶but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

¹⁷The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

¹⁸Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

[v.19-24 Questioning by Annas and the sending to Caiaphas]

Matthew 26

⁷¹And when he went out to the entrance,

another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."
⁷²And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you."
⁷⁴Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man."

And immediately the rooster crowed.

⁷⁵And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

And he went out and wept bitterly.

Mark 14

And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.

⁶⁹And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them."
⁷⁰But again he denied it.

And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."
⁷¹But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak."

⁷²And immediately the rooster crowed a second time.

And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."

And he broke down and wept.

Luke 22

⁵⁸And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."

⁵⁹And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean."
⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about."

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."

⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

John 18:25-27

²⁵Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."
²⁶One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?"
²⁷Peter again denied it,

and at once a rooster crowed.

Comments / Questions

1. All four Gospels report that Peter followed Jesus ("at a distance", Synoptics) as far as the courtyard of Caiaphas (Jesus was taken into the house of the high priest, Lk 22:54a). John's account infers that Peter would not have gained entrance to the courtyard without the assistance of an unnamed "another disciple" who "was known to the high priest".
 - a. Did Peter, like the other disciples, flee upon Jesus' arrest? So, why do you think Peter was following Jesus now?

- b. Who is the unnamed disciple? Is he the same as the "other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved" (Jn 20:2)? If so, then this is presumably the same disciple mentioned in Jn 13:23, 21:7, and 21:20. Consequently, he is the disciple who wrote the Gospel of John (Jn 21:21-24). It is this line of reasoning that have led many to think the unnamed disciple is the apostle John. What do you think?

If so, could this explain why John knew Malchus' name?

Arguments against this disciple being John include:

- 1) How reasonable is it that John, a Galilean fisherman, would be acquainted with the high priest?
- 2) Would not John also be known as a follower of Jesus? So why is he not questioned like Peter?

These arguments have led others to propose some other disciple as being the unnamed disciple. Any candidates come to mind? (Does the text say that the high priest knew this man to be a disciple of Jesus?)

2. How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Consider the following:

- 1) The Synoptics all have Jesus predicting that Peter would deny him three times (Mt 26:34//Mk 14:30//Lk 22:34). And all the Synoptics record three denials.
- 2) John also has Peter denying Jesus three times.
- 3) But in comparing the Synoptics with John it is somewhat difficult to correlate the three denials. Notice the sequence in each Gospel. So how do you harmonize?

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
John's 1 st Denial	-	-	-	v.17 Servant Girl Doorkeeper
Peter Sits with Guards at the Fire	v.58	v.54	v.55	v.18
Synoptics 1 st Denial	v.69 Servant Girl	v.66 Servant Girl	v.56 Servant Girl	
John's 2 nd Denial				v.25 "they"
Synoptics 2 nd Denial	v.71 "Another Servant Girl"	v.69 "the Servant Girl"	v.58 "someone else...Man..."	
John's 3 rd Denial				v.26 "high priest's servant"
Synoptics 3 rd Denial	v.73 Bystanders	v.70 Bystanders	v. 59 "Another" ..."Man,..."	
Rooster crowed	v.74 "immediately"	v.72"immediately" a second time"	v.60 "immediately"	v.27 "at once" ...

3. Similarly, how many times did the rooster crow? Any explanation why Mark records two crowings? Or, perhaps better, why do Matthew and Luke only record one crowing?

The Cockcrow Some have speculated that the reference to the rooster crowing does not refer to the sound of a real rooster, but rather has reference to the *cockcrow* which was the Roman designation for the third watch of the night from 12:00 am to 3:00 am [the Romans divided the night into 4 three-hour watches: 'the late hour', 'midnight', 'cockcrow', and 'early']. Thus, Jesus was saying that Peter would deny him before the sound of the trumpet that signaled the end of that watch. Possible? Perhaps [the second cock crowing of Mark is taken to mean the trumpet signal at the start of the watch], but not likely. The technical term used by the Romans to designate this watch is not used by the Gospel authors. Also, they refer to "a" cock crowing instead of "the" cockcrow which would be expected if the watch was intended. Modern observations of nocturnal cock crowing (see Brown, *John*, p.828) suggest that it is normal for roosters to crow multiple times during the night before dawn, especially during the Cockcrow watch; undoubtedly why it was given that name.

4. Where did Peter's denial take place? Three Greek terms are used in the Gospel accounts. The primary term used, *aulē*, "can refer to the whole of the palatial building (a court), to a room (hall) within it, or to a courtyard outside" (Brown, *Death*, I, p.593). The ESV, like most modern versions, uses "courtyard" to translate this term used by all the Gospel writers as the place where Peter was sitting, warming himself by the fire. Thus, the ESV translates the term *proaulion* in Mk 14:68 as "gateway" ("forecourt", NRSV) and the term *pylōn* (Mt 26:71) as "entrance" ("porch", NRSV). The KJV instead suggested that Peter entered the house by translating *aulē* by "palace" or "hall" and both *proaulion* and *pylōn* by "porch". The ASV consistently uses "court" and "porch". So, did these events take place inside the house, or outside in the courtyard? [The same term *aulē* is used of the place where Caiaphas, the chief priests, and elders plotted the death of Jesus (Mt 26:3) – there the ESV translates as "palace".]
5. It is interesting that it is Luke, not Matthew or John (other apostles) nor Mark (an associate of Peter), that tells us of the Lord 'turning' and looking at Peter – a look that Peter probably never forgot. [Since Jesus was taken into the "high priest's house" (Lk 22:54), would Peter have been within sight if he had been in the courtyard?]
6. Take note of the various denials given by Peter. Any observations of interest?
7. One common apologetic regarding the authenticity of the New Testament documents is to note that they do not try to embellish the character of the leaders of the early church. Instead, the faults of the early leaders, such as the apostles, are clearly put on display for all to see. The denials of Peter are one such instance. Do you think this argument has weight?

ROMAN EMPERORS		PALESTINE			JEWISH HIGH PRIEST	
		JUDEA - SAMARIA - IDUMEA	ITUREA - TRACHONITIS - ETC.	GALILEE - PEREA		
37 BC						
27 B.C.			HEROD THE GREAT (King) Matthew 2, Luke 1:5			<u>App. Herod the Great</u> Hamanel 37-36 Aristobulus III 36 Hamanel* 36-30 Jesus 30-23 Simon 23-5 Matthias 5-4 Joazar 4 <u>App. Archelaus</u> Eleazar 4-3 Jesus 3B.C.-A.D.6 Joazar* 6 <u>App. Quirinius</u> Annas 6-15 <u>App. Valerius Gratus</u> Ishmael 15-16 Eleazar** 16-17 Simon 17-18 Joseph Caiaphas 18-36 (Annas' son-in-law) <u>App. Vitellius</u> Jonathan** 36-37 Theophilus** 37-41 <u>App. Herod Agrippa I</u> Simon 41-42 Matthias** 42-43 Elioenai 43-44 <u>App. Herod of Chaleis</u> Joseph 44-47 Ananias 47-58 <u>App. Herod Agrippa II</u> Ishmael 58-60 Joseph 60-61 Ananias II** 61-62 Jesus 62-63 Jesus 63-65 Matthias*** 65-68 <u>App. by the People</u> Phinebas 68-70
AUGUSTUS (Octavian) Luke 2:1		ARCHELAUS (ethnarch) Matt. 2:22 A.D. 6	4 B.C.			
A.D. 14		<u>Roman Prefects</u> Copomus 6-9 Marcus Ambivius 9-12 Annus Rufus 12-15 Valerius Gratus 15-26	PHILIP (tetrarch) Luke 3 A.D. 34	HEROD ANTIPAS (tetrarch) Luke 3, etc. A.D. 39		
TIBERIUS Luke 3:1		Pontius Pilate Crucifixion of Jesus Mark 15:1-15 Luke 13:1 John 18:29-19:38 Acts 4:27				
A.D. 37		Marcellus 37 Marullus 37-41	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44			
GAULS (Caligula) A.D. 41						
CLAUDIUS Acts 11:28 18:2		<u>Procurators</u> Cuspius Fadus 44-45 Tiberius Julius Alexander 45-48 Ventidius Cumanus 48-52 Antonius Felix 52-59 Acts 23:24 - 24:27 Porcius Festus 59-62 Acts 24:27-26:32 Luceceius Albinus 62-65 Gressius Florus 65-66 A.D. 66				
A.D. 54						
NERO Acts 25:11; 21 26:32; 27:24 II Tim. 4:16,17						
A.D. 68						
GALBA, OTHO, VITELLIUS A.D. 69						
VESPASIAN 69-79 TITUS 79-81 DOMITIAN 81-96 NERVA 96-98 TRAJAN 98-117						
A.D. 70						
						* Second Term ** Son of Annas *** Son of Theophilus

Lesson 5

Jesus Before the Council / Judas

Jesus is brought before another gathering of the Council at dawn. The conclusion drawn matches that of the night before (see Lesson 3), so Jesus is sent to Pilate.

Jesus Before the Council

Matthew 27:1-2

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

Mark 15:1

¹And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council.

Luke 22:66-23:1

⁶⁶When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷"If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

²And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

^{23:1}Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate.

Background

Council The Greek term translated 'Council' in the passages related to Jesus (Jn 11:47; Mt 26:59//Mk 14:55; Mk 15:1//Lk 22:66) is *synedrion* which, in Hebrew, is *Sanhedrin*. It is also referred to in Acts as the body before which the apostles (4:15; 5:27, 34, 41), Stephen (6:12,15) and Paul (22:30; 23:1, 6, 15, 20, 28; 24:20) appeared. According to the NT and Josephus, the Jerusalem council consisted of the chief priests, elders, and scribes. The chief priests and elders would have been Sadducees of the wealthier aristocracy, whereas the scribes were legal experts probably from (at least in part) the Pharisees (Jn 11:47; Acts 5:34; 23:6). Both the NT and Josephus present this body having as much political function as religious. The Mishnah (composed about AD 200) presents the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem as a formal, religious body consisting of 71 legal experts. This understanding probably should not be assumed as reflecting the situation in the first century. [Brown, *Death*, I, p.339ff; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, p.310ff]

Comments / Questions

1. The Gospel writers are going to give attention to the time of the day that the various events occur on the day Jesus was crucified. Here we are told it was at the beginning of day (roughly 6:00 in the morning) when the Council assembled to condemn Jesus.

2. The Gospels mention Jesus being bound (1) upon his arrest, (2) when sent from Annas to Caiaphas, and (3) when sent from the Council to Pilate. Does it seem Jesus was kept bound during the interrogations/trials?

Apparently, the binding of a prisoner was normal procedure at that time (compare John the Baptist (Mt 14:3//Mk 6:17), Peter (Acts 12:6) and Paul, both as the arresting agent (Acts 9:2, 21) and as the one arrested (Acts 21:33)).

3. During the night appearance before the Council, Matthew and Mark make it plain that ultimately Jesus was charged with blasphemy. Is that the same charge levied against Jesus during the morning appearance before the Council?
4. Unlike the night appearance, Jesus seems to avoid a direct answer to their question if he is the Messiah (of course, Luke's account could be abbreviated). But Luke does record Jesus partially giving the same statement he gave earlier: "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Why is this considered blasphemy?
5. Although nothing is said previously about the Jewish leaders planning on sending Jesus to Pilate, does it seem like that was the plan the entire time?

Judas

Matthew 27:3-10

³Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. ⁶But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money."

⁷So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

⁸Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

⁹Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Acts 1:16-19

"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Background

30 Pieces of Silver This is the same price as that of a slave (Ex.21:32). There were at least two silver coins in first century Jerusalem. A “piece of silver” could be the Roman denarius [so France, *Matthew*, p.979]. But there was also the Tyrian silver shekel that was used for payment of the temple tax which was worth 4 denarii [so Turner, p.621].

Field of Blood “‘Blood Field’ (Akeldama, Acts 1:19) has been traditionally located near the foot of the valley of Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem on the south.” The allusion in Mt 5:22 attests to “the unsavory reputation of this valley as a place of blood, death, and destruction. This, too, will feed into Matthew’s creative scriptural mosaic in vv.9-10, particularly as a place already scripturally associated with potters, and lying just outside the Potsherd Gate (Jer.19:1-2). The valley was apparently a source of potters’ clay, hence perhaps the previous name ‘potter’s field.’ Jews would not want to live in such a site, so that the land would be readily available to buy for the burial of strangers, even if it might not have been acceptable for a Jewish cemetery. Unclean money is thus used for what would become, by its use as a cemetery, an unclean site.” [France, *Matthew*, p.1042]

Temple Treasury There are no explicit references to a treasury in association with the tabernacle, but David did include ‘treasuries’ in his plan for the temple (1 Chron.26:20; 28:11-12). Mentioned only three times in the NT (Mt 27:6; Mk 12:41-44; Jn 8:20), the “treasury” has primary reference to the 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles placed within the Court of the Women (according to the Mishnah); seven for the required offerings and six for freewill offerings. [*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*]

Comments / Questions

1. During the Last Supper, Jesus quoted Psalm 41:9 as foretelling of Judas’ betrayal (Jn 13:18). Jesus probably alludes to the same passage in reference to Judas during his prayer later that evening (Jn 17:12). Is this probably the same passage Peter has in mind in Acts 1:16?
2. Matthew now sees the use of the betrayal money to buy a potter’s field as a fulfillment of a prophecy of Jeremiah. But the reference seems to more naturally refer to Zechariah 11:12-13 [although Jeremiah also mentions a potter in a couple of places (18:1-11; 19:1-13)]. So why does Matthew refer to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah?

But what is the point of the Zechariah 11:13 passage and how does it relate to Judas?

[Actually, Zechariah is favored source for Matthew. Note the following references: 21:4-5 (Zech. 9:9-10); 24:30 (Zech. 12:10-14); and 26:31 (Zech. 13:7).]

3. Matthew says that Judas “changed his mind” when he “saw that Jesus was condemned.” Why? Does this suggest that Judas did not expect Jesus to be condemned?
4. So who bought the potter’s field? The Jewish leaders (Matthew) or Judas (Acts)?

And how did Judas die? By hanging (Matthew) or by falling (Acts)?

Are these reconcilable?

Jewish Trial Procedures

Did the Jewish leaders violate their judicial procedures during their trial of Jesus? This question has often been answered in the affirmative. But the question presumes things which may not be true.

First, did the Jews have "rules" to guide their trials? The Old Testament law does contain some judicial guidelines such as the requirements for multiple witnesses in capital cases and for judges to refuse bribes. But, it is principally suggested that the Jews had developed their own set of rules for cases brought before the Sanhedrin and it is this set of rules that were violated in the case of Jesus.

But here is the problem: the only rules regulating the Sanhedrin *that we know about* are those included in the Mishnah that was composed around AD 200 – about 170 years after the death of Jesus! In that document there are several well-defined rules which may have been violated with respect to Jesus. Those often cited include: [Brown, *Death*, I, p.358f]

1. Trials were not to be conducted on the eve of the Sabbath or a feast day.
2. Trials were not to be conducted by a single judge.
3. Capital cases must be tried in the daytime.
4. Witnesses must be admonished to speak the truth and witnesses for the defense must be heard.
5. False witnesses must suffer the penalty given to the accused if he was found guilty on the basis of their testimony (cf. Deut. 19:16-21).
6. One cannot be charged with blasphemy unless one explicitly pronounced the divine name.
7. In capital cases, judges with less seniority must pronounce their judgment before judges with greater seniority pronounced theirs.

Our dilemma is that we do not know if these rules were in place at the time of Jesus. At the time the Mishnah was compiled, the Pharisees, not the Sadducees, were the ruling class in such matters and allowance must be made for the impact of the Temple being destroyed along with all the traditions associated with Temple worship and governance.

The second presumption of our original question is that the proceedings we read about in the Gospels were formal *trials*. Perhaps, the appearance of Jesus before the Council after daybreak could be classified a trial, but most of the violations noted above would have occurred during the night appearances of Jesus before Annas and Caiaphas. Could those appearances be appropriately called preliminary interrogations? If so, then the Mishnaic rules, even if they were in force during the time of Jesus, may not apply.

In any case, the Gospel writers do make it clear that the Jewish leaders had already determined to put Jesus to death and their proceedings were for the sole purpose of giving that prior decision some form of legitimacy. Such blatant dishonesty is clearly contrary to every standard God has given for his people.

Lesson 6

Pilate

All four Gospels report that the Jews, having condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy, request Pilate to carry out the death sentence.

Pilate

Matthew 27:11-14

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor,

Mark 15:2-5

Luke 23:2-5

John 18:28-38

²⁸Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

²⁹So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

³⁰They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."

³¹Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." ³²This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

²And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

and the governor asked him,

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

²And Pilate asked him,

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

³And Pilate asked him,

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

³³So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Matthew 27

Mark 15

Luke 23

John 18

Jesus said, "You have said so."

And he answered him, "You have said so."

And he answered him, "You have said so."

³⁴Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"

³⁶Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

³⁷Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

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

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

¹²But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer.

¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?"

¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

³And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you."

⁵But Jesus made no further answer,

so that Pilate was amazed.

⁵But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

Background

Governor All four Gospels use the term governor (Gk. *hēgemōn*) to describe Pilate's position, which is the same term Luke uses to describe successors of Pilate (Felix, Acts 23:22ff; Festus Acts 26:30). It is used in the NT as a general term for one in authority. After AD 44, the appointed Roman rulers (such as Felix and Festus) were called *procurators*. This is the term that the ancient Roman historian Tacitus and the Jewish historians Josephus and Philo also used to refer to Pilate. Actually, Roman rulers from AD 6-41 were called *prefects*. This has been confirmed by an inscription found in Caesarea in 1961 on which Pilate is specifically called a *prefect*.

Governor's Headquarters The Roman rulers generally lived in Caesarea, but would have travelled to Jerusalem to conduct business or to provide direct oversight at critical times, such as during Passover. Their Jerusalem headquarters (Gk. *praetorium*) was either "the Antonia fortress north of the temple area which went back to Maccabean times ... and which Herod had converted into a palace, or Herod's more elaborate palace on the western height of the city near the present Jaffa gate..." (Michaels, *John*, p.915).

Pilate Pilate was appointed prefect of Judea by Tiberius in AD 26 and held that position until AD 37. His direct supervisor would have been the legate of the imperial province of Syria. Philo described Pilate as "a man of very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate" (Bock, *In Context*, p.195). Josephus tells of one event that demonstrates both the difficulty of ruling Judea and Pilate's potential ruthlessness. Pilate had his soldiers enter Jerusalem at night bearing ensigns with the image of Caesar. An envoy of Jews went to Caesarea to complain directly to Pilate. After repeated appeals, Pilate finally surrounded the Jews with armed soldiers and threatened their death if they continued their complaint. Instead of disbanding, the Jews immediately fell to the ground and said they would rather be killed than have their law broken. Pilate, surprised and impressed, granted their request. Luke tells of Pilate killing Galileans (13:1).

Comments / Questions

1. John tells us that the Jewish leaders would not enter Pilate's praetorium so as not to disqualify themselves from eating the Passover. This is one of a group of passages (Jn 13:1-2; 19:14-16, 31, 42) which perhaps suggest that the day of Jesus' crucifixion was the day the Passover lambs were slain. The Synoptics tell us that that day was the previous day and that Jesus ate the Passover meal the previous night with his disciples. Several solutions to this difference have been suggested, but is outside the scope of this study.
2. The exchange between Pilate and the Jewish leaders as to who had jurisdiction over Jesus raises several questions.
 - a. Had Pilate yet heard the charges (related by Luke) when he told the Jewish leaders to try Jesus according to their own laws? Or had he only heard the general charge given in Jn 18:30 (as suggested by the synopsis above)?
 - b. What did the Jews mean when they said "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death"?

First, which "law" do they refer to: Jewish or Roman? Probably Roman, unless there was some provision of Jewish law (of which I have no knowledge) that prevented capital punishment during the feast days.

But, was it true that the Romans took away the right for the Jews to execute criminals? Scholarship is divided on this point.

(1) Bruce (*John*, p.351) thinks it was typical Roman practice within the provinces to retain the sole right to execute criminals, and specifically finds a reference within Josephus (*Jewish War*, 2.117) that might support that proposition within Judea. The only exception, according to Josephus (*Jewish War*, 6:124-126), was that Jews could execute Gentiles, even Romans, who violated the Temple limits on Gentiles.

(2) On the other hand, Barrett (*John*, p.445-446) finds evidence within Jewish writings that the Jews had the right of capital punishment. After all, they twice tried to stone Jesus (Jn 8:59; 10:31), they stoned Stephen (Acts 7), and would have killed Paul (Acts 21:31). Of course, they could have been acting illegally with regard to Jesus and Stephen, and the case of Paul falls within the exception about desecration of the temple.

Assuming that the Jews had the right to kill Jesus, why might they have preferred for Jesus to be killed by the Romans?

So, how should we understand their statement?

- c. How does this exchange fulfill the words of Jesus as to the manner of his death? (cf. Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32)
-
3. According to Luke, what are the three charges that the Jews levy against Jesus before Pilate?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - a. Are any of these the same charge for which they found him guilty?

 - b. Is the first charge the same as that later reported by Luke that Jesus 'stirred' up the people with his teaching (23:5)? Why would this charge be taken serious by Pilate?

 4. According to John, Pilate takes Jesus inside the praetorium for a private conversation.
 - a. Why, do you think?

 - b. Which charge seems to interest Pilate the most?

 5. Why does Pilate conclude that Jesus is not guilty of the charges?

Lesson 7

Herod / Pilate Again / Barabbas

Luke alone tells us of Herod's involvement in the trial of Jesus, but in so doing he clearly emphasizes that the Roman rulers did not see a threat in Jesus. Some use this along with other evidence from Luke-Acts that Luke's purpose in writing was to provide a 'legal brief' on behalf of Paul as he stood before Caesar.

Herod

Luke 23:6-12

⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.

¹¹And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹²And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Background

Herod Upon the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC (who, according to Paul Johnson, was the richest man in the Roman Empire in his time, [*Jesus*, p.13]), Rome divided Herod's kingdom into three parts and gave each part to one of Herod's sons to rule (see the NT Political Chart in Lesson 4). Herod Antipas was made tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Lk 3:1). It was Herod Antipas who beheaded John for challenging his marriage to his niece Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip. Herod's political skills (recall that Jesus called him "that fox", Lk 13:32) enabled him to maintain his rule until AD 39.

Comments / Questions

1. Does Pilate send Jesus to Herod hoping to escape the role of judge, or simply to get Herod's opinion before he pronounced judgment?
2. Why might Herod visit Jerusalem during the feast? (Compare the visit of Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12.)
3. Had Herod desired to see Jesus? (Lk 9:7-9) For what purpose?
4. Herod's refusal to free Jesus allows Peter to include him with Pilate and the "peoples of Israel" as the one who killed Jesus (Acts 4:27).
5. The NT tells of two connections between the followers of Jesus and Herod: Joanna (Lk 8:3) and Manaen (Acts 13:1).
6. How many times has Jesus been mocked/struck up to this point of this trial?
7. How was this episode helpful in securing the friendship of Pilate and Herod Antipas?

Pilate Again

Luke 23:13-16

¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶I will therefore punish and release him."

Comments / Questions

1. Earlier in Luke's account the "crowds" are mentioned (23:6), here "the people" are included in the trial of Jesus. Are these the members of the Sanhedrin, or a broader group of Jews?
2. Pilate only mentions one of the three charges that the Jewish leaders made against Jesus. Why is this one singled out?
3. If in his view Jesus was not guilty of the charges brought against him, why "punish" him at all?

Barabbas

Matthew 27:15-21

¹⁵Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.

¹⁶And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

¹⁷So when they had gathered,

Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

¹⁸For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.

Mark 15:6-11

⁶Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.

⁷And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

⁸And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.

⁹And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

¹⁰For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

Luke 23:17-19

[¹⁷Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the festival.]

[²⁴So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, ...]

John 18:39-40

³⁹But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover.

So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"

Matthew 27

¹⁹Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."

²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

Mark 16

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

Luke 23

¹⁸But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"-- ¹⁹a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.

John 18

⁴⁰They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Background

Custom of Releasing a Prisoner Outside the Gospels we do not know of any regular release of a prisoner during the Passover, thus some scholars doubt the reliability of the Gospels. However see the excursus at the end of this lesson. [Also, France, *Matthew*, p.1052]

Judgment Seat Throughout the Roman world, the 'judgment seat' (Gk. bema) was the traditional place where a Roman ruler pronounced judgments. It is frequently referred to in Acts (12:21; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; translated at 'throne' or 'tribunal' by ESV) and twice Paul uses that image to refer to Christ's final judgment (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Pilate's Wife According to some apocryphal Christian writings, Pilate's wife was named Claudia Procla who was later converted to Christianity and, in some Orthodox churches, she was named a saint. [Brown, *Death*, p.803-807]

Comments / Questions

1. Luke 23:17 is omitted from the ESV and several other modern translations (ASV, NIV, NRSV, REB, NJB, NLT) and enclosed in brackets by others (NASU, HCSB) because it is omitted in many early manuscripts and shows up in differing locations in others, thus suggesting it was added at a later date (Garland, p.908).
 - a. Although this verse says much the same as the other Gospel accounts, what is different about Luke's?
 - b. What might John's "You have a custom" (18:39) suggest?
2. What was Barabbas' crime? [Take note of each Gospel's assessment.] What is the irony about this? (see Acts 3:13-15)
3. When Pilate first questioned Jesus he asked him if he was the "King of the Jews." Now, Pilate refers to him as "the King of the Jews." Is Pilate acknowledging Jesus' kingship?

The Offer of a Passover Pardon¹

All four New Testament Gospels know of Pilate's so-called Passover pardon (Mark 15:6-15; Matt. 27:15-23; Luke 23:18-25; John 19:10-12). Although some critical scholars have cast doubts on the historicity of this tradition, it is improbable that inauthentic tradition, whose falsity could so readily be exposed, would be utilized by all four evangelists. Besides, there are other accounts of Roman and other officials releasing prisoners on occasion of special days that are not questioned. For example, the Roman historian Livy (c. 25 BC) speaks of special cases where prisoners were released ("Books from the Foundation of the City," 5.13.8). Herod's son Archelaus, as the newly appointed ethnarch of Judea and Samaria (4 BC), acquiesced to popular demands to release many prisoners (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.204). Josephus also says that Albinus, procurator of the whole of Herod's former kingdom (AD 62-64), released many prisoners as he prepared to leave office, something akin to a last-minute presidential pardon. One official document, dating from the year AD 85, reads, "You were worthy of scourging . . . but I give you to the crowds" (*P.Florence* 61). Here a Roman official forgoes scourging, which was often a prelude to crucifixion, and releases the criminal. In a slightly different scenario, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia (in Asia Minor) in the days of Emperor Trajan (c. AD 110), refers to pardons for criminals, whereby "these people were released upon their petition to the proconsuls, or their lieutenants" (*Epistles* 10.31). Finally, according to the Mishna (c. AD 200), the edited and published collection of Jewish oral law, it is said that "they may slaughter (the Passover lamb) for one ... whom they have promised to bring out of prison" on the Passover (*m. Pesahim* 8:6).

The evidence as a whole suggests that Roman rulers, as well as at least one Herodian prince, on occasion released prisoners (so apparently did other rulers in the eastern Mediterranean). This was done for purely political reasons, to satisfy the demands of the crowds and to curry their favor. The Passover pardon, therefore, reflected Pilate's shrewd political instincts, not political weakness or human kindness. The Passover pardon was intended to show Roman respect for the great Jewish holiday, in effect to say, "In keeping with your celebration of freedom from bondage we shall set free anyone of your choosing." The tradition of the Passover pardon gave Pilate the opportunity to pass responsibility for the fate of Jesus unto the shoulders of his accusers. If they so badly want him dead, then let them take responsibility for passing judgment. Pilate is neither cowardly nor principled. He is clever.

¹ From Craig A. Evans, "The Shout of Death," *Jesus, The Final Days: What Really Happened*, Troy A. Miller, ed. Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, p.20-22.

Lesson 8

Pilate Hands Jesus Over

Pilate understands the motivation of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus, but nonetheless feels compelled to comply with their request.

Matt. 27:22-26

²²Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

They all said, "Let him be crucified!"

²³And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

²⁴So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

²⁵And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Mark 15:12-15

¹²And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"

¹³And they cried out again, "Crucify him."

¹⁴And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him."

Luke 23:20-25

²⁰Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus,

²¹but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"

²²A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him."

²³But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified.

John 19:1-16a

¹Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

⁴Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him."

⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

⁶When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

Matthew 27

Mark 15

Luke 23

John 19

⁷The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." ⁸When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

⁹He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

¹²From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."

¹³So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. ¹⁴Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

¹⁵They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

And their voices prevailed.

²⁶Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

²⁴So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

¹⁶So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

Background

Stone Pavement It is uncertain what is referred to as the Stone Pavement. It may have been a stone platform on which sat the judgment seat, or it could refer to an area adjacent to Pilate's headquarters. Equally uncertain is the meaning of the Aramaic term 'Gabbatha' (which is not a translation of 'Stone Pavement').

Comments / Questions

1. Pilate continues to refer to Jesus as the "King of the Jews". Only two of the Gospels record that description up to this point in the narrative. Which two?

By comparison, Matthew alternately records Pilate referring to "Jesus, who is called Christ" (Mt 27:17, 22). Any significance?

2. What are the two charges made by the Jews that are recorded by John? Which is a new charge and what is Pilate's response?

3. Including previous lessons, what are the basic questions of interrogation that Pilate asks Jesus?

4. In what ways has Pilate tried to release Jesus as recorded by the Gospels?

According to John's account, what ultimately convinced Pilate to forgo any more resistance to crucifying Jesus?

Pilate was despised by the Jews for his cruelty and Roman rulers were not appointed for their good manners. So is this believable that Pilate is concerned about justice? [Many modern students of Scripture do not think the Gospels are accurate and use this as evidence of their anti-Judaism; see excursus at the end of this lesson.]

5. John supplies the timing and the context: Pilate pronounces his judgment at the 6th hour (noon) on the "day of Preparation of the Passover".
6. The final statement in this section of John's text reads "So he (*Pilate*) delivered him (*Jesus*) over to them (*chief priests*) to be crucified" (Jn 19:16). Is this to suggest that the chief priests were to conduct/oversee the crucifixion? What else could be intended? (compare Luke's account)

In Acts, Luke repeatedly records of the apostles telling of Pilate's role along with the Jews in putting Jesus to death; see Acts 3:13; 4:27; and 13:28; see also 1 Tim 6:13.

Anti-Judaism and the New Testament

The Gospels clearly record that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem plotted the arrest and trial of Jesus to the end that he would be crucified by the Romans. By the end of Jesus' trial, some, perhaps a majority, of the Jewish people in Jerusalem to participate in the Passover joined in the call for Jesus' crucifixion. The Romans under the rule of Pilate reluctantly cooperated with the Jews and executed Jesus by crucifixion.

Other portions of the NT documents confirm the Gospel records. In the very first gospel sermon only 40 days after Jesus' crucifixion, Peter told his Jewish audience that

"this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ...Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:23, 36).

This charge against the Jews (along with the Romans) is a common feature of the early sermons recorded in Acts (3:13-15; 4:10-11, 25-29; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28). Paul equally understood the role of the Jews in the death of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15).

But are these records reliable? Were the Jews of that day guilty of bringing about the death of Jesus? Until the modern era, Christians have been convinced of the truthfulness of the New Testament record. Unfortunately, some Christians continued to blame the Jews of their day for the act their ancestors did (perhaps citing Mt 27:25). Anti-Semitism¹ has been a shameful legacy within a certain segment of Christianity. Atrocities unbecoming the name of Christ carried out against Jews have somehow been justified on the basis of what the first century Jews did to Jesus. All such acts of prejudice must be alien to the people God has called in Christ.

However, some modern scholars have convinced themselves the NT record of the Jewish role in the death of Christ is inaccurate. Rather, they contend that the NT documents themselves are the result of anti-Judaism that existed within the first century church. In their view, as the church expanded and became more predominantly Gentile the church leaders sought to separate Christianity from Judaism. This was especially important following the Jewish war that resulted in the destruction of the temple in AD 70. The Jews were not seen favorably by the Romans and Christians took efforts to distinguish themselves from the Jewish rebels and to show that they were loyal subjects to Rome. Thus, the Gospels do not reflect the actual historical events leading up to and including the death of Jesus, but rather reflects early Christian propaganda. These scholars contend that although the Jewish leaders would have resisted Jesus' "attacks" on the temple, the Romans were the primary agents in bringing about the death of Jesus.

In part, these scholars maintain the truthfulness of their reconstruction because the New Testament writings have been the basis of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries. But does such a conclusion necessarily follow? First, NT statements concerning the Jews are only anti-Jew if they are false. Simply recording the facts of an unfavorable act does not require that the recorder is biased against those who did the act. Second, any document can be misinterpreted. That is, even if some readers of the NT developed anti-Semitic views, the NT cannot be automatically charged with promoting those views.

It must be remembered that the New Testament equally makes it clear that the death of Jesus was an essential part of God's plan. Ultimately, God purposed the death of Jesus, but instead of blaming God we are instead to thank God for his abundant love.

¹ The term "anti-Semitism" is widely defined, but generally it is considered a racial concept, i.e. 'against the Jewish race', whereas the term 'anti-Judaism' is considered a religious concept, i.e. 'against the Jewish religion'.

Lesson 9

Soldiers Mocking / Crucifixion of Jesus (I)

With Pilate rendering his final judgment, the process of crucifixion has begun. As the primary means of execution of the lower class and slaves in the Roman Empire, this process was much too common in the first century.

Soldiers Mocking

Matthew 27:27-31

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

²⁸And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand.

And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

³⁰And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.

³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

Mark 15:16-20

¹⁶And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion.

¹⁷And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

¹⁸And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

¹⁹And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

²⁰And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

John 19:2-3

²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.

³They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.]

Background

Battalion This word (Gk. *speira*) used by Matthew and Mark is the same word used by John (18:3, 12) to describe the "band of soldiers" who were sent to arrest Jesus (see Lesson 2). This word is the technical term used to describe a Roman *cohort*, 600 to 1000 men.

Comments / Questions

1. John's sequence throughout the trial is difficult to correlate with the sequence given by the Synoptics. In John's account, the flogging/scourging of Jesus and the soldiers placing the crown of thorns and the purple robe on Jesus take place *before* Pilate renders his final judgment. In the Synoptics these acts take place *after* Pilate's final judgment. How do you reconcile?
2. The clothing of Jesus gets a great deal of attention. Herod placed "splendid" clothing on him (Lk 23:11). Usually the clothes of the one being scourged would be removed prior to the scourging. After the scourging, Pilate's soldiers placed a "purple robe" on him. In both cases, what was the point of the fine clothing?

But before they led him away to be crucified, Jesus is "stripped" of the purple robe [victims were typically unclothed when crucified] and they placed on him his "own clothes". Why?

3. The common imperial greeting "Hail, Caesar!" provides the model for the soldiers mock greeting of Jesus, "Hail, King of the Jews".

Crucifixion of Jesus (I)

Matthew 27:32-34

³²As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.

³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),

³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.

Mark 15:21-23

²¹And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

²²And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull).

²³And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Luke 23:26-33a

²⁶And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

²⁷And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³²Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

³³And when they came to the place that is called The Skull,

John 19:16b-27

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷and he went out, bearing his own cross,

to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

Background

Simon, Alexander, Rufus Simon and Alexander are Greek names; Rufus is a common Roman slave name. Thus it is uncertain whether Simon was a Jew. There was a Cyrenian synagogue in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 6:9). Tradition has Simon later becoming a Christian and many have speculated that Simon's son Rufus is the same Rufus, a Christian in Rome, mentioned in Romans 16:13. The only possible support for this identification is that Mark (who is the only Gospel writer to mention Alexander and Rufus) is traditionally associated with church at Rome. In any case, it is reasonable to assume that Alexander and Rufus were known to Mark's readers and could serve as witnesses of his account.

Golgotha "Golgotha (Aramaic), *Kranion* (Greek) and *Calvariae* (Latin) all mean 'skull'. 'Calvary' became popular in the English-speaking world through Wycliffe's translation of the Bible into English in 1382" (Stein, *Mark*, p.710, n.6). It is generally conceded that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built by Constantine is built at the site of Golgotha. If so, it laid just outside the west wall of Jerusalem (cf. Jn 19:20, but within a few short years after Jesus' death Herod Agrippa constructed a new perimeter wall that encompassed Golgotha). Originally this area was a quarry, but by the first century it had been filled to provide a garden and a burial place. The knoll was raised about 30 feet above the surrounding area. It has been suggested (Stein) that the Romans would have preferred an elevated place for crucifixions so that all could see.

Comments / Questions

1. John says that Jesus bore his own cross (which was the common practice), whereas the Synoptics record that the Romans drafted Simon to carry Jesus' cross (which they had the authority to do, cf. Mt 5:41). So, which?
2. Luke notes that a "great multitude of people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him" were following Jesus.
 - a. Are these disciples of Jesus?
 - b. At the very least, the women are sympathetic toward Jesus. Does this also characterize the 'great multitude of people'?
3. In language reminiscent of that which he spoke concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus redirects their mourning from him to them (see Mt 24:19; Mk 13:17; Lk 17:22; 21:23).
 - a. The beatitude of Lk 23:29 ("Blessed are the barren...") seems to allude to Isaiah 54:1, but in what way is the focus of Isaiah 54 different that of Luke in this passage?
 - b. Jesus' quotation of Hosea 10:8 ties the Jerusalem of his day with apostate Israel of the past. This was a recurring theme in his preaching: Lk 13:33-34; 18:31; 19:41-44.
4. The brief mention by Luke of the two criminals who accompanied Jesus witnesses to the commonplaceness of crucifixion. In contrast to the other Gospel writers, these two criminals will take an active role in Luke's account of the crucifixion.
5. Matthew and Mark record the first of what appears to be three times that a drink of wine is offered to Jesus. In this instance, Mark says a sweet wine (*oinos*) mixed with myrrh was offered; Matthew says a bitter wine (*oxos*) mixed with gall (bile) was offered. Whereas Mark's wine could be seen as a blessing, Matthew's cannot. Thus, Matthew seems to echo Psalm 69:21 (the Hebrew word translated *poison* in the ESV is translated with the Greek word for *vinegar* in the LXX). Why was the drink offered? And why was it refused by Jesus?

Lesson 10

Crucifixion of Jesus (II)

The Gospel record is brief: "They crucified him." Much more is told about what was happening around Jesus as compared to the details of his crucifixion.

Mt 27:35-38

³⁵And when they had crucified him,

they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Mk 15:24-28

²⁴And they crucified him

and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵And it was the third hour when they crucified him.

²⁶And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews."

Luke 23:33b-43

there they crucified him,

and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

³⁴And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And they cast lots to divide his garments.

³⁵And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

John 19:18-27

¹⁸There they crucified him,

and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

[cf. v.23-24 below]

¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Matt. 27

[cf. v. 35-36
above]

³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

Mark 15

[cf. v. 24
above]

²⁷And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸[And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "He was numbered with the transgressors."]

Luke 23

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

John 19

²³When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things,

²⁵but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Background

Casting Lots It is uncertain exactly how lots were cast. Possibly it involved the throwing of dice, or perhaps the guessing of the number of hidden outstretched fingers.

Paradise Paradise (Gk. *paradasos*) was originally a garden or park. Thus, it was used in the LXX to translate the "garden" (Heb. *gan*) of Eden. In some strands of Jewish (and early Christian) thought, God moved the garden of Eden to some place in the heavens (in particular, the "third heaven") and thus came to represent the place where souls abode awaiting the resurrection. The word occurs three times in the NT: Lk 23:43, 2 Cor 12:3 (which Paul connects with the 'third heaven'), and Rev 2:7 (where it is said to contain the 'tree of life'). [H. Bietenhard and Co. Brown, "Paradise", *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2. Zondervan, 1976, p.760-764]

Mary of Clopas Presumably known to John's readers, his mentioning of her raises many questions. First, does John intend to say that she is the sister of Jesus' mother (which is grammatically possible) and thus there are three people standing by the cross, or is John listing two pairs: the first pair unnamed and the second pair named (which is also grammatically possible)? And if she is the "sister" of Jesus' mother, exactly what relation was she since the term 'sister' can simply mean 'relative'? Second, is Clopas her father, husband, or son? All three uses were current at that time. Third, who is Clopas? From the early church history of Palestine, we know that Symeon the son of Clopas succeeded James, the brother of Jesus, as an elder in the Jerusalem church. Further, this Clopas was the brother of Joseph, Jesus' supposed father. Bauckham concludes from all this that Mary of Clopas was a sister-in-law of Jesus' mother being the wife of Joseph' brother Clopas. [Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, p.203-223]

Comments / Questions

1. Three of the "Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross" are included in this section. In some traditions great emphasis is placed upon these seven sayings and significance is especially given to the fact that there are "seven" (the "complete" number) such sayings. What do you think?
2. Luke clearly intends to give a picture of those around Jesus and their reaction to him: the people stand watching, the rulers of the Jews scoff, and the soldiers mock. From Luke's description, is it clear how the people viewed Jesus?
3. Much is made of the title "King of the Jews", a title also ascribed to Herod the Great (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.409). Why would the Jews resist Jesus being given this title? Why would Pilate insist on giving him this title? More importantly, is it a title Jesus claimed? Think carefully.
4. Two things are said to "fulfill" Scripture:
 - 1) In John: the dividing of Jesus' garments by lot; read Psalm 22:18. David describes his distress from his enemies.
 - 2) In Mark: being crucified with robbers (although this verse, Mk 15:28, is only included in later manuscripts and thus not in the currently accepted Greek NT text] ; read Isaiah 53:12. Earlier Jesus himself noted the necessity of this passage being fulfilled, Lk 22:37.
 - a. What does it mean to "fulfill" Scripture?
 - b. Why was it appropriate for Jesus to be crucified with robbers?
5. Jesus tells one of the robbers that "Today you will be with me in Paradise". Why did this robber receive this blessing? And what is the blessing?

Crucifixion¹

Crucifixion as a form of execution goes back at least to the seventh century BC (Hengel 1977:22-25; G. G. O'Collins, *ABD* 1:1207). According to Herodotus (*Histories* 3.132,159) it was associated primarily with the Medes and Persians. It became common in the western part of the Mediterranean world through Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. In the expansion of the Roman Empire eastward, it was soon adopted as their dominant form of capital punishment for slaves and the lower classes (Hengel 1977: 51-63; O'Collins, *ABD* 1:1208). Roman citizens were exempt from this method of execution (Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.5.63, 66 §§163, 170). Thus Peter, who was not a Roman citizen, was martyred by crucifixion, according to the tradition (Acts of Peter 36—40), whereas Paul, who was a Roman citizen, was martyred by being beheaded (Acts of Paul 11). Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment used even by Jews, for early in the second century BC Alexander Jannaeus crucified eight hundred Pharisees who had revolted against him (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.14.2 §380; *J.W.* 1.4.6 §97). In 4 BC the Roman governor of Syria crucified two thousand Jews who had been involved in a revolt (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.10.10 §295). Also according to Josephus (*J.W.* 5.11.1 §§446—51), Titus crucified five hundred Jews a day during the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, so that there was no longer room for crosses to be erected, nor were crosses available for all the victims. Crucifixion remained the primary form of capital punishment in the Roman Empire until AD 337, when the emperor Constantine banned it.

Although the term "crucifixion" was sometimes used to describe impalement, which would have usually caused instant death, it usually refers to affixing a person to a cross by either tying (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 28.11.46; Livy, *History* 1.26.6) or nailing (Philo, *Posterity* 17 §61; Lucan, *Civil War* 6.547; Plautus, *Mostellaria* 2.1 [360]; Seneca, *De vita beata* 19.3; *m. Sabb.* 6.10). The method of affixing the victim to the cross, even when it involved nailing, was not the cause of their death, since no vital organs of the body were injured. After being tied or nailed to the *patibulum* (or crossbeam), the *patibulum* and its victim were then raised by forked poles and inserted in the prepared notch in the vertical pole standing in the ground and made secure. From John 20:25 and 27 it is clear that Jesus's hands were nailed to the cross (cf. Col. 2:14), and Luke 24:39 suggests that his feet were also nailed. To prevent the premature death of the victim (crucifixion was intended not simply to execute but also to torture the victim to death), a *sedile*, or seat, to support the buttocks (cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 101.12, who refers to the "seat on the piercing cross"; cf. Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 1.12) and/or *suppedaneum*, or footrest, were often placed on the vertical beam. This enabled the victim to relieve the lung muscles and keep him from asphyxiating. If the victim's feet were nailed to the cross, he would relieve his lung muscles by pressing against the nails.

Death by crucifixion was slow. At times the victim would live for days. Birds and animals would often begin to feast on the victims even before they were dead. Horace (*Ep.* 1.16.46-48) describes the victims as "feeding crows on the cross." Cicero refers to crucifixion as "that cruel and disgusting penalty" and "worst extreme of the tortures inflicted upon slaves" (*Against Verres* 2.5.64, 66 §§165,169) and says that "the very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears" (*Pro Rabirio* 5.16). Seneca (*Ep.* 101.14) refers to the cross as "the accursed tree," and Josephus (*J.W.* 7.6.4 §203) states that it provided "the most pitiable of deaths."

¹ From Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic, 2008, p.711-712.

Lesson 11

Crucifixion of Jesus (III) / Death of Jesus

Each Gospel writer carefully crafts his narrative to tell of Jesus death. In many ways, the emphasis of the Synoptic writers is as much on those around Jesus as on Jesus himself.

Crucifixion of Jesus (III)

Matthew 27:39-44

³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Mark 15:29-32

²⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

³¹So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe."

Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

Comments / Questions

1. Matthew and Mark give a brief picture of the crowds, the rulers, and the robbers and their reaction to Jesus. Compare with Luke's similar summary of the people, the rulers, and the soldiers (Luke 23:35-37).
2. Those who "passed by" were apparently Jews who were aware of the charges brought against Jesus the previous night before Caiaphas. Agree?
 - a. In both Matthew and Mark, they allude to the charge that Jesus said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (which was false).
 - b. In Matthew, there is also the allusion to Jesus claiming to be the Son of God (which was true).
3. The rulers continue their taunting (see Luke 23:35). What is different about their challenge in Matthew and Mark?
4. How do you reconcile the description of both robbers here as compared to Luke's account (23:39-43)

Death of Jesus

Matthew 27:45-50

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

Mark 15:33-37

³³And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Luke 23:44-46

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed.

John 19:28-30

Matthew 27

⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

⁴⁷And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah."

⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

⁴⁹But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice

and yielded up his spirit.

Mark 15

³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

³⁵And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."

³⁶And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink,

saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

³⁷And Jesus uttered a loud cry

and breathed his last.

Luke 23

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

John 19

²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."

²⁹A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Background

Elijah Malachi's foretelling that Elijah must come "before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes" (4:5) led to all kind of speculation among the Jews concerning Elijah. This is especially the case since he did not die, but was taken by God (2 Kings 2:1-15). Besides being associated with the events of the end time, Elijah was seen as one who could miraculously assist in times of need.

Hyssop Branch Whereas Matthew and Mark tell of a reed being used to lift the sponge to Jesus, John specifies a hyssop branch. The hyssop is "a small bush with blue flowers used in the purification of sacrifices by sprinkling, but with no stalk capable of bearing the weight of a wet

sponge" (Michaels, p.962, n.65). Michaels' opinion is shared by many scholars, but we can't be certain exactly what kind of plant is called hyssop in the Bible. It is interesting that a hyssop plant was used by the Israelites to spread the blood of the lamb on their doorposts on the first Passover (Ex 12:22) – some think this is the symbolism that John was trying to invoke.

Comments / Questions

1. All three Synoptic Gospels report a darkness over the land from the 6th hour to the 9th hour (noon to 3:00 pm). The extent of the darkness is uncertain since the expression "land" is used in a variety of ways.
 - a. Many hold that the writers are simply using the image of darkness to indicate the significance of the event (which is not uncommon in literature telling of the death of great men). Any reason to think that this view is not probable?
 - b. Those who think the darkness actually occurred try to determine the physical reason for the darkness. There is no consensus, except it is acknowledge that it cannot be a solar eclipse since the time of Passover occurred at the time of the full moon. Do miracles need physical reasons? Can they have physical reasons?
 - c. What does seem clear is that there is an allusion to the darkness that occurred as the ninth plague in Egypt (Ex 10:21-22; Matthew's wording in v.22 is closely akin to the Greek of Exodus (LXX)). In what ways do they compare?
2. Luke tells of the temple's curtain being torn in two prior to Jesus' death, while Matthew and Mark will tell of it after his death. Read all the accounts carefully. Can we be sure when the curtain was torn?
3. Matthew and Mark record the "fourth saying" of Jesus while on the cross (but the last saying of Jesus that they record) which is a quotation of Psalm 22:1 (Mark uses an Aramaic expression for 'God', while Matthew uses one closer to traditional Hebrew).
 - a. Is this an expression of despair? In what way was Jesus "forsaken"?
 - b. On the other hand, Psalm 22 is a lament psalm which ends with an expression of faith (read Psalm 22 at the end of this lesson). Thus, some think Jesus' quoting of the first verse should imply Jesus' understanding and adoption of the entire psalm and consequently should be taken as an expression of his faith rather than his despair (so Stein, p.716 and Bruce, *Hard Sayings*, p. 249, but not France, *Mark*, p.652-3). Cf. Heb 5:7-9
 - c. So, which is it, an expression of despair or faith?
4. The offering of the sour wine (Gk. *oxos*) fits more naturally in John's context following Jesus' statement of thirst. (How does it fit in Mt and Mk?) Similar to the second time that an offer of sour wine was made (Lk 23:36), no indication is given of it being mixed with anything.
 - a. Sour wine was known for its ability to quench thirst and would have been a common drink for soldiers.
 1. Thus, it may be that the wine was offered out of mercy.
 2. Or, it has been suggested that it was offered to sustain his life only so that his torment might continue.Which do you think?
 - b. The text says that Jesus made his statement of thirst "to fulfill the Scripture". Some point to Ps 69:21 thinking in terms of physical thirst; others point to Ps 42:2 and 63:1 thinking in terms of symbolic thirst for God. Any thoughts?
5. Jesus' death comes unexpectedly. His last two sayings are expressions of faith.

Psalm 22

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. ⁴In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. ⁵To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm and not a man, **scorned by mankind and despised by the people.**
⁷All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

⁸"He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"
⁹Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.
¹⁰On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

¹²Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶For dogs encompass me; **a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet--** ¹⁷I can count all my bones-- **they stare and gloat over me;** ¹⁸**they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.**

¹⁹But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

²²I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. ²⁶The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

²⁹All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. ³⁰Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Lesson 12

Events at Death / Piercing of Jesus' Side

Following the death of Jesus, the Gospel writers tell of the events that happen and the reactions of those who witness his death.

Events at Death

Matthew 27:51-56

⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, ⁵⁸among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Mark 15:38-41

³⁸And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

³⁹And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

⁴⁰There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Luke 23:47-49

[⁴⁵while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.]

⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"

⁴⁸And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

⁴⁹And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

Background

Centurion The Roman military was organized in legions of 6,000 men each (there were 25 legions during the reign of Tiberius), which were subdivided into 10 cohorts (hence 600 men per cohort) and then into six centuries of a 100 men each. A century was under the control of a centurion, the true professionals within the army who were commonly promoted from the ranks. Upon retirement they entered the equestrian rank [Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, p.46-48]. The NT (as with the centurion on duty during the crucifixion) always presents centurions as men of honor: the

centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant (Lk 7), Cornelius (Acts 10), the centurion(s?) at Jerusalem protecting Paul (Acts 22, 24), and the centurion taking Paul to Rome (Acts 27).

Salome Salome is only mentioned by Mark (here at the cross and later, again with the two Marys, as taking spices to the tomb of Jesus, 16:1). Presumably she was known to Mark's readers. By comparing Mark's and Matthew's account some conclude she was the mother of the sons of Zebedee. That's possible, but uncertain especially since "many women" accompanied Jesus. In some early Christian literature she is said to be the sister of Jesus (cf. Mk 6:3), but in others she is simply noted as a disciple of Jesus. [Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, p.225-256]

Comments / Questions

1. Two marvels take place upon the death of Jesus.
 - a. What is the significance of the tearing of the temple's curtain?
 - b. Who would the "saints" be that were bodily raised?
2. The response of the centurion is significant enough to be recorded by all three Synoptic authors.
 - a. In Matthew and Mark he is recorded as saying "Truly this (man) was the Son of God!" But what brings the centurion to that conclusion in each Gospel?
 - b. Luke records the centurion as saying "Certainly this man was innocent!" The word translated "innocent" is *dikaïos* and is more commonly translated "righteous" as many translations also render it in this verse (KJV, ASV, NKJV, NIV, NJB ('upright man'), HCSB). Translating the word as 'innocent' (so NRSV, NASB, NLT, REB) connects the judgment of the centurion with Herod, Pilate, and the one thief who all said that Jesus was not guilty, but may obscure the connection that Luke's makes later of Jesus being the 'Righteous One' (Acts 3:14-15; 7:52; 22:14). What do you think?

And what is it in Luke's account that brings the centurion to that conclusion?
 - c. How significant is it that the first human to call Jesus the "Son of God" is a Roman soldier?
3. Are we to understand the "crowds ... beating their breasts" as a sign of repentance?
4. Luke mentions both men and women who followed Jesus from Galilee, but Matthew and Luke focus upon the "many women" who followed Jesus and ministered to him.
 - a. All three Synoptic writers say that at this time they were watching from "a distance". Does this denote fear on their part, or simply that they do not have closer access to Jesus? (cf. Jn 19:25; Is Psalm 38:11 relevant?)
 - b. Since John mentions Mary, the mother of Jesus, being at the cross, some see the reference to 'Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (Joses)' as referring to Jesus' mother. Jesus did have brothers named James and Joseph (Mk 6:3), so do you think this Mary is the mother of Jesus?

Piercing of Jesus' Side

John 19:31-37

³¹Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness--his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth--that you also may believe. ³⁶For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." ³⁷And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

Comments / Questions

1. Jewish law forbade a corpse remaining on a "tree" overnight (Dt 21:22-23). Why would Pilate grant the Jew's request to expedite the death of Jesus and the two robbers?

2. John claims to be a witness.
 - a. What specifically has he witnessed that he wants his readers to understand?

 - b. What is the purpose of John giving witness.

3. John quotes two OT passages that foretold of these happenings.
 - a. "Not one of his bones shall be broken."
 - 1) This could, by highlighting God's protection of his Righteous One, refer to Psalms 34:19-20:

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."
 - 2) Or, perhaps John intends to make the parallel to the paschal lamb whose bones were not be broken as stated in Exodus 12:46 "It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones."

Which?
 - b. "They will look on him whom they have pierced" seems clearly to refer to Zechariah 12:10:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn."

The point seems to be that the soldier piercing the side of Jesus identifies Jesus with the pierced one of Zechariah who will, as Revelation 1:7 tells, be "coming with the clouds".

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