

Matthew 27

Now that Jesus has been condemned to die by the Jewish court, the antagonists must present Him before the Roman court. Since the Roman court, in the person of Pontius Pilate, does not carry about religious accusations, the Jewish leaders will have to change their approach and accuse Jesus of sedition. In the meantime, Judas has a change of heart, but then punishes himself in suicide for the evil he did. It is significant that Pilate will pronounce Jesus innocent. Barabbas will be the first person “saved” (literally but not spiritually) by the death of Jesus on the cross.

TRANSLATION - 27:1-2:

1 And early morning it being, counsel they took all the chief priests and elders of the people against Jesus so that to put Him to death. **2** And after binding Him, they brought [Him] and handed [Him] over to Pilate, the governor.

GREEK WORDS:

“Counsel” (ver. 1) is used 8 times; in Matthew, at 12:14; 22:15; 27:1, 7; 28:12. On “chief priests,” see 2:4. Relative to “elders,” see 15:2. “To put to death” was used first at 10:21; 26:59. It is used in the NT 11 times. “To bind” (ver. 2) is used first at 12:29. “To lead” is used first at 7:13-14. “To hand over” or to “deliver up” or “to betray” is used first at 4:12. The verb is used 31 times in Matthew. In this chapter, it is used at 27:2, 3, 4, 18, 26. It was used extensively in chapter 26: 26:2, 15, 16, 21, 23,24, 25, 45, 46, 48. This is the first use of “Pilate.” He is mentioned 55 times in the NT; outside of the gospel accounts, he is found at Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; 1 Tim. 6:13. “Governor” or “ruler” was used first at 2:6. In Matthew, the term is found in 10:18 and extensively in this chapter: 27:2, 11, 14, 15, 21, 27 and at 28:14. The word is used 20 times in the NT, only in 1 Peter 2:14 after Acts.

PARALLELS:

Jesus’ appearance before Pilate is also recorded in Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1-2; John 18:28-32.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Pilate” (ver. 2) was a Roman prefect, an army officer whose responsibility it was to maintain order, particularly among the Jews. He served from A. D. 26-36. He once had the Roman army enter Jerusalem with the flags flying, displaying images of the emperor, which the Jews believed was idolatrous. That caused problems. He also took funds from their temple to finance an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem. That also caused problems. Some Jews were killed in protests over that. There was an uneasy relationship between Pilate and the Jewish people and leaders. The emperor finally had enough of Pilate’s behavior and banished him. A stone slab was found by archaeologists in Caesarea in 1961 which had the inscription: “Pontius Pilate.” Even though his residence was in Caesarea on the shore of the Mediterranean, Pilate would be in Jerusalem for the feast, to help keep peace.

COMMENTS:

It is early Friday morning of Jesus’ last week on earth. The prediction of Jesus in 20:18-19 is being fulfilled. The Sanhedrin now assemble together, as a whole group, lawfully, to make their formal accusation against Jesus in order to put Him to death. They could not accuse Jesus of blasphemy before the Romans for they could not care less about religious disagreements. The Sanhedrin would have to accuse Jesus of something that would carry weight before the Romans. Having made their decision, they send Him bound (as a common criminal) to the Roman ruler, the governor Pontius Pilate. At this point, the Romans would not allow the Jews to implement the death penalty (John 18:31).

APPLICATION:

While the relationship between Pilate and the Jews was tenuous at best, they “join hands” in this instance to get rid of a common problem. We should not be surprised when two enemies might join forces against Christians, their common enemy.

TRANSLATION - 27:3-10:

3 At that time, seeing Judas the one betraying Him that He was condemned, after regretting he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, **4** saying, “I sinned after handing over innocent blood.” But those said, “What [is it] to us? You, yourself, will see [to it].” **5** And after throwing the silver into the temple he withdrew, and after going away He hung himself. **6** And the chief priests after taking the silver said, “It is not authorized to put this into the temple treasury, since the price of blood it is.” **7** And after taking counsel they bought from them the Field of the Potter for a burial place for strangers. **8** Therefore that field was called The Field of Blood until today. **9** At that time, the statement was fulfilled through Jeremiah the prophet saying, “And after taking the thirty pieces of silver, the price of that having been estimated, what they estimated from the sons of Israel. **10** And they gave them into the field of the potter, just as the Lord instructed me.”

GREEK WORDS:

“To condemn” (ver. 3) was seen first at 12:41-42. “To regret” is used 6 times in the NT, first at 21:29, 32. It is used here; 2 Cor. 7:8; Heb. 7:21. It seems to have a meaning which overlaps with the word “repent.” “To return” is used only at 5:39. “To sin” (ver. 4) is used 43 times in the NT, first in Matthew at 8:15, 21. For “blood,” see 16:17. It is used 97 times. “Innocent” is used only in this context: 27:4, 24. “To see” is used often (113 times), beginning at 5:8. “To throw” (ver. 5) was first used at 9:36. The verb is used 7 times. This word for “temple” refers to the temple itself, not the whole temple complex. It was first used at 23:16-17, 21, 35. The word is used 45 times in the NT. “To withdraw” or “to depart” was used first at 2:12-14. “To hang” is used only here.

“It is authorized” (ver. 6) was used first at 12:2, 4, 10, 12. “Temple treasury” is used only here. It is related to “corban” used in Mark 7:11. “Price” or “value” is used here at 27:6, 9 out of 41 uses in the NT. “To buy” (ver. 7) was used first at 13:44, 46. For “field,” see 6:28, 30. “Potter” is used three times: 27:7, 10; Rom. 9:21. “Burial place” is used only here. “Stranger” or “foreigner” was seen at 25:35, 38, 43-44 and here, in Matthew.

“To fulfill” (ver. 9) was used first at 1:22. The verb and idea run throughout Matthew (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35, 48; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54, 56; 27:9). “Statement” is the noun associated with the verb “to speak.” “Jeremiah” is mentioned only in Matthew in the NT: 2:17; 16:14; 27:9. On “prophet,” see 1:22. “To value, estimate, set a price” is used first at 15:4, 6, 8. “To instruct” (ver. 10) carries the idea of “order, command;” it is only used in Matthew (21:6; 26:19; 27:10).

GREEK GRAMMAR:

“To set a price” in verse 9 is a verb in the perfect tense, denoting something that was done in the past but with repercussions in the present.

PARALLELS:

The death of Judas is only recorded elsewhere at Acts 1:18-19. In order to reconcile the two accounts of Judas’ death, we presume that his body hung from its gallows long enough for some swelling to occur and then the corpse fell and then his abdominal area burst open. Some type of explanation would explain the difference in the description.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Ahithophel hanged himself, in words parallel to this text in verse 5 (2 Sam. 17:23). There are other suicides in the OT: Saul and his armor bearer (1 Sam. 31:4-5), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and perhaps Samson, depending on how one would define "suicide:" Judges 16:28-31.

Scholars have long recognized that Matthew's quotation in verses 9-10, while attributed to Jeremiah, are more closely from Zechariah 11:12-13. Yet, Matthew incorporates phrases from Jeremiah (18:1-6; 19:1, 11) so that Matthew makes a composite quote but gives the credit to the more well-known prophet (as Mark does in 1:2-3 who combines quotes from Isaiah and Micah but attributes the quote only to Isaiah). Verse 9 has a play on words as the word "price" is the root word of the verb used twice in the same sentence. Both Jeremiah and Zechariah dealt with the apostasy of Israel and God's desire to take them back. Jesus is the culmination of that attitude of rejection and Jerusalem's destruction in A. D. 70 is the culmination of God's wrath against a rebellious people. Deuteronomy 23:18 would forbid such money from being used for the temple treasury.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The "potter's field" (ver. 7) has definite articles twice: "the field of the potter." This suggests either the potter, himself, was well-known or at least the field was well-known. It may have been the source of clay used by potters, or belonged to a potter, or maybe was used for discarded pottery shards.

COMMENTS:

Now the "betrayer" has a change of mind. When he saw that Jesus was condemned, he felt remorse. Is this not what he wanted? Is this not what he expected? We are left to ask questions which cannot be answered, which is typical when one commits suicide. Judas felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the Sanhedrin, confessing that he had sinned, betraying innocent blood. It is noteworthy that Judas, a friend turned enemy, confesses that Jesus was innocent of the charges against Him. But, the Sanhedrin would not have anything more to do with Judas. The remorseful betrayer threw the silver into the temple (where, we do not know), and he left and hanged himself, committing suicide.

While the Sanhedrin had not been too concerned about respecting what is holy up to now, they also seem to change their mind when it comes to the silver which was used to bribe Judas. Where the money came from originally, we do not know. But now, they decide not to put the money into (back into?) the temple treasury, because it was the "price of blood." So, they used the silver to buy a specific field, which came to be called the "Field of blood," which had been the field of the potter. There, the Jews buried strangers from outside Jerusalem who died while they were visiting the capital city. It was still known as the "Field of blood" in the day that Matthew wrote his gospel account.

This was done to fulfill a specific prophecy from Zechariah, with ideas mixed in from the better-known prophet, Jeremiah. With the value of thirty pieces of silver, the price which the servant had been valued among the sons of Israel, the field was purchased from a potter, according to what the Lord had prescribed. Matthew sees Jesus' betrayal as a fulfillment of that action prophesied by Zechariah.

APPLICATION:

Bible students will often set Judas' remorse in parallel with Peter's remorse. One wept but left the punishment in the hands of God (Peter). The other wept and punished himself (Judas). The latter approach is a form of self-righteousness, the idea that we can pay the penalty for our own sins. Unfortunately for Judas, the price of sin is higher than what a sinful person can pay and he will answer for his debt, unpaid, on the day of judgment.

One who was hanged was considered cursed by God (Deut. 21:22-23). This principle contributed to Saul of Tarsus and his animosity toward Jesus and Jesus' followers (Gal. 3:13-14) until he saw Jesus alive in Acts 9!

Certainly the Bible condemns the unauthorized taking of human life and that would extend, presumably, to the taking of one's own life. However, it is also true that where there is

no *ability*, there is no responsibility. If one has lost the mental *ability* to reason properly, perhaps one is no longer responsible for his or her actions. It is not safe to condemn one who has committed suicide. It would be better, due to our ignorance, to leave the judgment of such actions in the hands of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God.

TRANSLATION - 27:11-14:

11 And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked Him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews?" And Jesus was saying, "You, yourself, say." **12** And in bringing charges against Him by the chief priests and elders, nothing He answered. **13** At that time, Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear all testifying against You?" **14** And He did not answer to him for nothing, one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

GREEK WORDS:

"To ask questions" (ver. 11) was first seen at 12:10. "King" is used first at 1:6. See also 2:1-3. "Jews" is only used in Matthew at 2:2 and in this context (27:11, 29, 37) and 28:15. "To accuse" or "bring charges" (ver. 12) is used first at 12:10. "To answer" was seen first at 3:15. "To testify against" (ver. 13) is used in this context (26:62; 27:13; Mark 14:60). "To marvel" (ver. 14) is used first at 8:10. "Greatly" is used 12 times in the NT; first at Matthew 2:16.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

"Was saying" (ver. 11) is the imperfect tense of the verb which shows Jesus kept having to repeat Himself.

PARALLELS:

This further discussion of Jesus' trial before Pilate is found also in Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:3-5; John 18:33-38.

COMMENTS:

Once Jesus is in front of Pilate, the governor asks Him if He is the "king of the Jews," a term which has not been seen since 2:2, in the mouth of the wisemen. "You, yourself, say" is the same thing Jesus responded earlier in 26:25 (to Judas) and 26:64 (to the chief priest). Again, Jesus answers affirmatively, but with the implication that Pilate's understanding of "king of the Jews" is not the true understanding.

Before the Roman governor, the chief priests and elders were making accusations against Jesus. Again, He remained silent (see Isaiah 53:7), content to accept the will of the Father. Pilate marveled that Jesus was not answering anything that was being testified against Him.

APPLICATION:

In Proverbs 26:4, the wise man said that God's followers ought not to answer a fool according to his folly. Jesus has accepted the will of the Father and He knows that the Sanhedrin has been trying to find a reason to put Him to death. Therefore, He does not answer in His own defense. He is allowing the Father's will to run its course.

TRANSLATION - 27:15-26:

15 And according to the feast, the governor had been accustomed to release one to the crowd, a prisoner, whom they desired. **16** And they were having at that time a prisoner, well-known, being named [Jesus] Barabbas. **17** Therefore, having gathered them together Pilate said to them, "Who do you desire I will release to you, [Jesus the] Barabbas or Jesus the one being named Christ?" **18** For he had known that on account of envy they had handed Him over.

19 And his being seated on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Nothing to you and to this righteous One; for much I suffered today as a result of a dream because of

Him.” **20** And the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds in order that they may ask for Barabbas, and Jesus they may put to death.

21 And after answering, the governor said to them, “Whom do you desire from the two I will release to you?” And those said, “Barabbas.” **22** Pilate said to them, “What therefore will I do with Jesus the one being named Christ?” They all said, “Let Him be crucified.” **23** And he kept saying, “For what evil did He do?” But those exceedingly cried out saying, “Let Him be crucified!” **24** And Pilate, seeing that nothing he is accomplishing but rather an uproar was happening, after taking water he washed off the hands in front of the crowd saying, “Innocent I am from the blood of this one. You, yourselves, see [to it].” **25** And after answering, all the people said, “His blood [be] on us and on our children!” **26** At that time, he released to them Barabbas, but Jesus, after flogging, handed Him over in order to be crucified.

GREEK WORDS:

“Feast” (ver. 15) or “festival” was seen first at 26:5. This is its last use in Matthew. “To be accustomed” is used here; Mark 10:1; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2. On “to release,” see 1:19. “Prisoner” is used only here in Matthew (27:15-16). It is used 16 times in the NT, most often in Acts. On “to desire,” see 1:19. “Well-known” or “notorious” (ver. 16) is used only here and in Romans 16:7. “Barabbas” is mentioned 11 times in the gospel accounts, not afterward. Matthew mentions him the most, 5 times. “To gather together” (ver. 17) is used first at 2:4. “Envy” (ver. 18) is used 9 times in the NT; this is its only use in Matthew.

“Judgement seat” (ver. 19) is used 12 times, only here in Matthew. It is often used in Acts. “Righteous” is used 79 times, first in Matthew at 1:19. “To suffer” was used first at 16:21. “Dream” is used 6 times, all in Matthew: 1:20; 2:12-13, 19, 22; here. “To convince” or “to persuade” (ver. 20) is used here (27:20, 43; 28:14), out of 52 uses in the NT. “To ask” is used 70 times, first in Matthew at 5:42.

“To crucify” (ver. 22) is used 46 times in the NT; it was found at 20:19; 23:34; 26:2; 27:22-23, 26, 31, 35, 38; 28:5 in Matthew. “Exceedingly” (ver. 23) is used here; Mark 10:26; 15:14; Acts 26:11. “To cry out” is used first at 8:29. For “to accomplish” (ver. 24), see 15:5. “Turmoil or uproar” is used first at 26:5. “To wash off” is only used here. “Innocent” was used at verse 4. These are the only two uses of the word in the NT.

“Blood” (ver. 25) is used at verse 4. “To flog” (ver. 26) is used only here and Mark 15:15 (see under “Archaeology” below). “To hand over” was used at verse 2. “To crucify” was used at verse 22.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verbs “to have been accustomed” (ver. 15) and “to have known” (ver. 18) are both verbs in the pluperfect tense.

PARALLELS:

Jesus’ sentence to death is found also at Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

“His blood be on us” echoes judgment passages from the OT: Deut. 19:10, 13; Ezek. 18:13; 33:4-6; cf. Acts 18:6. “Washing hands” was a Jewish custom: Deut. 21:6-9; Psa. 26:6; 73:13. The abuse Jesus received fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah 53:5.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

While there is no extra-biblical collaboration of Pilate’s custom to release a prisoner during the feast, it was a custom in other countries. The gospel writers state that it was his custom. Some manuscripts have a surname for “Barabbas,” Jesus. It is more explicable that Christian scribes would purposely leave off his name than they would intentionally add his name. Therefore, we suspect the evidence is legitimate that his name should be added.

The scourge was a braided leather whip (a *flagellum*) with pieces of bone or metal embedded. The Romans had no limitation on the number of whips they would inflict. A man's back would be shredded so that bone and organs could be seen. Many died simply from the flogging, before they were crucified. As a carpenter, Jesus was probably very healthy physically.

The cross could be shaped like an "I," a "t," or a "T." The criminal could be fastened with cords or nails. There was a projection under the feet (a *sedile*) which the criminal could use to lift himself, by his feet, and take deep breaths. That's why the soldiers broke the legs of the criminals to hasten the suffocation and, thereby, hasten death (cf. John 19:31-33).

COMMENTS:

According to his practice, Pilate wanted to release a prisoner to the Jews, whomever they asked. There was a prisoner whom the Romans had arrested, an insurrectionist who probably had tried to lead a rebellion against Rome as the Jews had hoped the "messiah" would (see 26:55 and John 18:40). If Barabbas was, in fact, an insurrectionist, then Pilate is releasing a man who proved himself to be an enemy of Rome, in order to crucify a man who defended the payment of taxes to Rome (22:16-22)!

This man's name was "Barabbas" and some manuscripts attribute to him the name "Jesus." In this way, there was a choice between two men named "Jesus:" Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ. Pilate wanted to remind the crowd that Jesus had been known as "the Christ," that they had just days earlier considered Him such and praised Him as the "Son of David." He also knew that the religious leaders had handed Jesus to him motivated out of envy.

While Pilate was sitting on the seat of judgment, from which he would give his official decision, his wife sent a message to him. She had seen and heard enough about Jesus to know that He was a "righteous man" and the idea of killing such a man had given her bad dreams. We have no evidence nor reason to believe this dream was sent by Jehovah God. But, it was an appropriate message for her husband, which he promptly ignored.

The Sanhedrin had stirred up the people and provoked them to ask for the life of Barabbas, the insurrectionist. This crowd had praised Jesus as the Messiah, the "Son of David," just days before (21:9-11). Yet, their expectation of a "messiah" was different than what God and Jesus had intended (cf. John 6:14). Thus, it apparently was easy for the religious leaders to turn them against Jesus. God used their misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus and His work to bring Him to the crucifixion.

Pilate asked the crowd whom they wanted; they responded "Jesus Barabbas." Pilate asked what they wanted him to do with "Jesus Christ;" they cried out "Let Him be crucified!" Pilate, to his credit, responded, "For what evil did He do?" But the crowd had been worked up into a frenzy by their religious leaders and they cried out even louder: "Let Him be crucified!"

Pilate realized he had pushed the mob as far as he could and that a riot was beginning to form. So, as a part of the trial scene, he took water and washed his hands, at least visibly symbolizing that he was innocent of what they were about to do. Of course this action did not absolve Pilate of the responsibility he had to carry out justice. "You see to it!" he said to the Jews.

Then they cried out, "His blood [be] on us and on our children!" Surely they would regret that statement four decades later when the Roman army invades their capital and destroys their temple, just as Jesus predicted. However, it is also true, around 3,000 of them would respond to the gospel message preached by Peter 40 days later and they would be forgiven of their sin of crucifying the Son of God (Acts 2:38-39, 41). Pilate released Jesus Barabbas to them and he handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to prepare for His crucifixion.

APPLICATION:

The passage in verse 25 has been used, quite erroneously, to support anti-semitism. God did bring His wrath fully against Jerusalem in A. D. 70 for, among other things, rejecting His Son. However, the sin of the Jews in crucifying Jesus cannot be used to persecute Jews

today for they are no more guilty of crucifying (literally) Jesus than you and I are. The OT teaches that a man will not be punished for the sins of his children nor will children be punished for the sins of their father (Ezekiel 18:20).

Pilate's wife was accurate in describing Jesus as "that Righteous One." That became a Messianic title; see Acts 3:13-14; 7:52 and also compare 1 John 2:1.

TRANSLATION - 27:27-31:

27 At that time, the soldiers of the governor after taking Jesus into the praetorium, they gathered against Him all the cohort. **28** And after stripping Him, the scarlet cloak they clothed Him. **29** And after weaving a crown of thorns, after bowing before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail! King of the Jews!" **30** And after spitting on Him, they took the reed and continued hitting Him on His head. **31** And when they mocked Him, they stripped Him of the cloak and clothed Him with His mantle and lead Him to be crucified.

GREEK WORDS:

"Praetorium" (ver. 27) is a transliteration of a Latin word. It is found 8 times in the NT, only here in Matthew. Outside of the gospel accounts, it is found in Acts 23:35 and Philippians 1:13. The "cohort" is found only here in Matthew, out of 7 uses. "To strip" (ver. 28) is used here in 27:28, 31, out of 6 uses in the NT. "Cloak" is used only in this context: 27:28, 31. It was worn by the soldiers. "Scarlet" is used only here in Matthew; it is also used at Heb. 9:19; Rev. 17:3-4; 18:12, 16.

"To weave" (ver. 29) is used here; Mark 15:17; John 19:2. "Crown" (*stephanos*) gives us the name "Stephen." It is used only here in Matthew 27:29, out of 18 uses in the NT. "Thorns" was used first at 7:16. "Reed" was first used at 11:7. "Kneeling" was used first at 17:14. It is only used there, here, and Mark 1:40; 10:17. "To mock or ridicule" was used at 2:16 and 20:19 before this context: 27:29, 31, 41. "Hail" is a greeting and can be translated in various ways. It was first seen at 2:10. It can be translated "to rejoice." "King" was seen first at 1:6. The phrase "king of the Jews" is used 18 times in the four gospels. In Matthew, it is found at 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37.

"To spit" (ver. 30) was seen first at 26:67. This is its last use in Matthew. "To beat or to wound" was used first at 24:49. It will be used 13 times in the NT. "Head" was seen first at 5:36. "To strip" (ver. 31) was seen at verse 28. "Mantle" is seen first at 5:40.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verbs describing the abuse of Jesus are in the aorist tense of the verb which describes actions in the past in simple terms. But one verb, "continued hitting" (ver. 30) is in the imperfect tense, denoting continuous action. They kept hitting Jesus with the reed.

PARALLELS:

This is paralleled at Mark 15:16-20 and John 19:2-3.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Pilate's headquarters was the praetorium (ver. 27), a Greek transliteration of the Latin word. We do not know where the praetorium was located. But, the Roman soldiers gather there in order to have some fun at the expense of Jesus Christ.

COMMENTS:

The fulfillment of Jesus' words and prediction from 20:19 has started. The soldiers of the Roman army, perhaps hundreds, took Jesus into the praetorium and the whole cohort begin their abuse of the sinless Son of God. After stripping Him (we do not know if he was completely naked), they put on Him a purple or scarlet cloak from one of the military men, to imitate the royal purple worn by royalty. After they wove a crown from thorns, they put it on His head, to imitate the crown worn by royalty; perhaps it imitated the wreaths pictured around the

heads of emperors on their coins. Then they placed a reed in His right hand, to imitate the scepter of kings.

Kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, crying out, in imitation of the salute of caesars: "Hail! King of the Jews!" (used four times in Matthew: 2:2; 27:11, 19, 37). They spit on Him and then took the reed and continued hitting Him on the head with it. When the soldiers had their fill of the mockery, they removed the "royal" robe, put His own cloak back on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

APPLICATION:

A Roman citizen, such as Paul, could not be flogged (Acts 22:24-29). It will be unfortunate for these soldiers, as well as the Jews, and everyone living today who do not truly and humbly confess Jesus as Lord in this life (Phil. 2:9-11). They will, one day.

Keener makes a valuable point. Early Christians would not have concocted a "crucifixion" story of their Master and Savior in an age when crucifixion was seen as a death reserved only for the most despicable of criminals. Why would they portray their Savior as one crucified for treason? Unless the event was real, and the resurrection compelled them to tell the story?¹

The last half of this chapter shows Jesus carrying His cross to the site of His death (27:32-44). He is killed for confessing the truth (27:45-56), buried (27:57-61), and His tomb is sealed against thieves (27:62-66).

TRANSLATION - 27:32-44:

32 And coming out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon - this one they forced in order that he might carry His cross. **33** And after coming to a place called Golgotha, which is the Place of the Skull, being called, **34** they gave to Him to drink wine with gall having been mixed; and after tasting, He did not desire to drink. **35** And after crucifying Him, they divided His garments, casting a lot, **36** and sitting, they were guarding Him there.

37 And they placed above His head His accusation having been written: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." **38** At that time, they crucified with Him two robbers, one on the right and one on the left. **39** And those passing by blasphemed Him, shaking their heads **40** and saying, "The One destroying the temple and in three days, building [it], save Yourself, if the Son you are of God, [and] come down from the cross!"

41 Likewise even the chief priests were mocking with the scribes and elders, they kept saying, **42** "Others He saved; Himself He is not able to save. The king of Israel He is...[?], let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe in Him. **43** He has trusted in God; let Him rescue [Him] if He desires Him; for He said, "I am the Son of God." **44** The same thing even the robbers, crucified with Him, were heaping insults on Him.

GREEK WORDS:

"Cyrene" (ver. 32) is found six times in the NT: here; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26; Acts 6:9; 11:20; 13:1. We have seen the name "Simon" frequently, since 4:18. It most often refers to Simon Peter. This Simon (of Cyrene) is only found in this context. "To force" is found at 5:41; here; Mark 15:21. "To take or carry" is found 101 times in the NT, beginning at 4:6. "Cross" was found first at 10:38. "Golgotha" (ver. 33) is found three times: here; Mark 15:22; John 19:17. It is a transliteration of the Greek word for "skull." "Skull" is found here; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17.

"Wine" (ver. 34) is found first at 9:17. This is its only other use in Matthew. "Gall," a bitter substance, is found here and Acts 8:23. "To mix" is found here; Luke 13:1; Rev. 8:7; 15:2. "To taste" is found first at 16:28; this is its last use in Matthew. "To desire, want, will" is found

¹ Keener, 385.

first at 1:19. "To crucify" (ver. 35) was first seen at 20:19. The verb is used also at 23:34; 26:2; 27:22-23, 26, 31, 35, 38; 28:5. "To divide" is used 11 times in the NT, only here in Matthew. "Garment" was seen first at 5:40. "Lot" is used only here in Matthew; it is found 11 times in Matthew.

"To guard" (ver. 36) was seen first at 19:17. "Head" (ver. 37) is seen first at 5:36. "Accusation" or "charge, ground of complaint" was first seen at 19:3, 10. "King" is seen first at 1:6; it is used 115 times in the NT. The expression "King of the Jews" is found 18 times in the NT; in Matthew at: 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37. Mark uses the expression five times; Luke, three times; John, five times. "Jews" denotes the nation of Israel particularly after the Babylonian exile. The designation is seen first at 2:2. It is found in Matthew again at 27:11, 29, 37; 28:15.

"Robbers" (ver. 38) was seen first at 21:13. "To blaspheme" (ver. 39) was seen first at 9:3. The Greek word is transliterated *to blaspheme*; it means to speak badly or evil about someone, usually about God but not always. "To shake or move" was seen first at 23:4. This is its only other use in Matthew. "To destroy or demolish" (ver. 40) was used first at 5:17.

"Temple" refers to the temple itself, not to the temple complex; it was first used at 23:16-17.

"To build" is seen first at 7:24, 26. "To save" is used 106 times in the NT; first in Matthew at 1:21. "To come down" is found at earlier, beginning at 3:16. "Cross" was seen at verse 32.

"Chief priests" (ver. 41) were seen first at 2:4. "To ridicule or mock" is seen first at 2:16. "Scribes" were seen first at 2:4; "elders," first at 15:2. "To come down" (ver. 42) was seen at verse 40. "To believe" is seen first at 8:13. Matthew uses the verb 11 times. This is its last use in Matthew. "To depend on, trust" (ver. 43) is seen at 27:20, 43. "To rescue or deliver" was seen first at 6:13. This is its only other usage. "To will, want, desire" is used first at 27:34. The expression "Son of God" has been used in Matthew since 4:3, 6 at the temptations of Satan. The phrase is also used at: 5:9; 8:29; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54. "To heap insults" (ver. 44) was used at 5:11; 11:20; 27:44.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verb "to guard" (ver. 36) translates a verb in the imperfect tense, showing the guards' continual vigilance at the cross of Christ. Nothing would be done to or with the body of Jesus until He died. The verb "were saying" in verse 41 is also imperfect tense, showing the consistent mockery spoken by the religious leaders. "To depend on, trust" (ver. 43) translates a verb in the perfect tense, denoting a settled state of conviction. Of course here, the religious leaders are mocking Jesus' trust in God. "To heap insults" (ver. 44) translates the imperfect tense verb, showing the robbers continued the mockery for some time.

PARALLELS:

The crucifixion of Jesus is also found in Mark 15:21-32; Luke 23:26-43; and John 19:17-27.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Verse 35 pictures the fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, a psalm which will find various aspects of its fulfillment in this text. Psalm 22:1 is fulfilled in verse 46; 22:7 in verse 39; verse 8, in verse 43; verse 9, in Matthew 27:41-43; verses 16-17, in 27:44. Jesus, as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, fulfills the most graphic picture of the Servant, found in Isaiah 53. Verse 38 pictures the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12. The "shaking of the head" in verses 38-40 might be an allusion to Lamentations 2:15, when bystanders shook their head at the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in 586 B. C.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Cyrene" (ver. 32) was a Greek village on the coast of west Africa, in modern day Libya. Mark tells us (15:21) he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, whom apparently his audience would recognize! That suggests to us that at least Alexander and Rufus were Christians. Mark is believed to have written to the church at Rome, so see the reference at Romans 16:13.

Perhaps Simon's experience led him to become a follower of Christ, which he then taught to his sons, who become leaders in the church of Christ!

"Golgotha" (ver. 33) was otherwise known as "The place of the skull," but scholars do not know why it was called this. There is no evidence that it was on a hill resembling a skull. The path taken from the site of scourging and mockery to the execution site has come to be called the *Via Dolorosa*, the "way of sorrow."

Crucifixion was a method of torture and death invented by the Persians and perfected by the Romans. The English word "excruciating" literally means pain "out of [ex] the cross [cruce]." It was reserved for the worst criminals and those who were crucified were despised. A man's feet were nailed together, twisted, at the ankles at the bottom of the pole. The vertical post was called the *staticulum*. The horizontal post was called the *patibulum*, and weighed between 30-40 pounds. The criminal had to carry the *patibulum* to his execution site (cf. 10:38; 16:24). A peg on which the condemned could rest some weight was called the *sedile*.

His hands were nailed (sometimes tied with ropes) at the wrist (considered part of the hands), on either side of the crossbeam. The condemned were left on the cross for days, until they died from suffocation, loss of blood, or shock. In order to breathe, criminals would have to push up with their legs (which were nailed to the cross), to open up their diaphragm. Therefore, the very process of trying to breathe brought excruciating pain. This could prolong death so that in order to quicken death (for the Jews did not want to leave a body on the cross over night - Deut. 21:22-23), the Roman soldiers would break the legs (John 19:31-33), a process called *crurifragium*. The condemned would hang roughly seven feet high, just enough to get the feet above the ground.

To cast a lot could refer to throwing rocks or sticks and events were interpreted in light of the manner in which they fell.

COMMENTS:

Having scourged Jesus, bringing Him near death, the soldiers led Him out to the site of the crucifixion (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35-36; Heb. 13:13). Criminals normally carried their own crossbeam (horizontal beam) to the crucifixion site. While the text does not say, it is likely that Jesus was severely weakened from the scourging, which compelled the soldiers to force this Simon from Cyrene to carry the crossbeam. He was probably in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover (see Acts 2:10; 6:9 for reference to a synagogue of the Cyrenians in Jerusalem; 11:20; 13:1). Mark explains that Simon was the "father of Alexander and Rufus," which strongly implies that Mark's audience knew of "Alexander and Rufus." They must have been Christians in the audience for whom Mark wrote (believed to be Rome). Additionally, Paul, in Romans 16:13, mentions a "Rufus" in the church of Christ in Rome. That motivates us to speculate that Simon became a follower of Christ and then raises his sons to become Christians as well.

Once they reached the execution site, known as "Golgotha" or the "Place of the Skull," the soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with a bitter substance called "gall." Mark identifies it as "myrrh" (15:23). It is not clear if this drink was intended to have an intoxicating effect, which Jesus refused after tasting it so He could experience the full force of the death experience for mankind. Or if the effort on the soldiers was another effort at mockery, knowing Jesus would not want to drink such a bitter substance once He tasted it. "Calvary" comes from the Latin translation for "skull," *calvaria*.

It was not necessary for Matthew to record the details of the crucifixion since his audience would have been very familiar with the practice. See above under "Archaeology." Matthew, instead, passes over the whole procedure in one word, in the form of a participle in the Greek language. After they crucified Jesus, the soldiers divided His garments among themselves, casting a lot for them (see also John 19:23-24). Under Roman law, the soldiers had the right to the condemned criminals' clothes. Criminals were normally naked when they were crucified; whether the Romans allowed Jesus to wear a loincloth, out of sensibility for the Jewish morals, we do not know. Then the soldiers sat and waited for death to come and watched to be sure nothing was done with the body until death came.

Matthew also informs us that the soldiers had placed His accusation above His head, indicating His crime was sedition: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." It is ironic, for Jesus was, in fact, the King of the Jews and of the whole world (cf. Acts 17:6-7). Either Jesus or one of the soldiers probably carried the written accusation from the trial to Golgotha. More mockery and verbal abuse is hurled at Jesus. Those spectators passing by shook their heads in unbelief at this man, whom they thought would redeem Israel (cf. Luke 24:21). They quote the accusation against Him from His trial before the Sanhedrin: "The one destroying the temple and building it in three days..." (26:61). They called on Him to save Himself, if He was the "Son of God" (the same accusation Satan made against Him in 4:3, 6) They also called on Him to come down from the cross. It is ironic that it was *because* Jesus was the Son of God that He *stayed* on the cross! If He had saved Himself, He could not have saved *us*!

The mockery continues in the persons of the religious leaders: the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people. They ridiculed Him for "saving others." He did not (supposedly) have the power to save Himself! He claimed to be the "King of Israel" (this is the only time this phrase is found in the NT). They also challenged Him to come down from the cross. If He did so, they would believe Him! That was not a sincere statement because when He rose from the dead, they still did not believe, but rather threatened His messengers (Acts 4 & 5). Finally, they mocked Him for "having trusted" in God. If the feeling was reciprocal, then "Let God rescue Him!" He claimed to be the "Son of God;" let the Father rescue Him now!

The third group of mockers in this context is the two robbers or insurrectionists who were crucified with Him. These two might have been with Barabbas in the insurrection against the Romans. They had been more than just "robbers." But, they kept heaping up verbal abuse on Jesus. Luke tells us that one, eventually, had a change of heart (23:39-43).

APPLICATION:

Simon is illustrating what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount at 5:41.

At this point, Jesus bears the sin of all of humanity: 1 Cor. 1:18, 23-25; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:12-21; 8:3; Gal. 2:20; 3:13; 6:14; Eph. 2:1-6; 4:22-24; Col. 2:8, 14; Heb. 2:9; 9:26-28; 1 Peter 2:18-25. Jesus is living the teaching He gave His followers in 16:25. He gave His life for a ransom (20:28) and shed His blood for the forgiveness of sin (26:28), establishing a new covenant.

The soldiers and bystanders believe the cross is a mockery and a shame. It continued and continues to cause problems for people to believe that it took the death of Jesus to pay the penalty for sins (see 1 Cor. 1:18-23).

TRANSLATION - 27:45-56:

45 Now from the sixth hour, darkness came on all the land until the ninth hour. **46** And around the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" This is, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" **47** And some of those there having remained, after hearing, were saying that "This one summons Elijah." **48** And immediately, after running, one of them also after taking a sponge, after dipping in sour wine and after placing around a reed, he gave to Him to drink. **49** And the rest were saying, "Leave [Him] alone; let us see if coming Elijah will save Him."

50 And Jesus, again after shouting with a loud voice, released the spirit. **51** And behold, the veil of the temple was torn from top until the both into two and the earth shook and the rocks were torn. **52** And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints having fallen asleep were raised. **53** And after coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. **54** And the centurion and those with him guarding Jesus, after seeing the earthquake and the happenings, feared greatly, saying, "Truly This one was the Son of God."

55 And there were being there many women from a distance to observe, who followed Jesus from Galilee to serve Him. **56** Among whom were Mary, the Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

GREEK WORDS:

“Darkness” (ver. 46) was first seen at 4:16. “Land” was first seen at 2:6. It is generally translated “earth.” Here, as in its first few instances (2:6, 20-21; 4:15), it likely means the land of Israel. “To cry out” (ver. 46) is only used here in the NT. “Voice” is seen first at 2:18. “Eli” is Hebrew and found only here in the NT. “Lama” and “sabachthani” are Aramaic and found here and in Mark’s account: 15:34. The expression “My God” is found 154 times in the Bible; only here in Matthew, out of 17 times in the NT (once in Mark, 15:34; and twice in John, 20:17, 28). “To forsake” is found only here in Matthew, out of 10 uses in the NT.

“Elijah” (ver. 47) was seen first at 11:14. “To summon,” the verbal form of the noun “voice,” was seen first at 20:32. “To run” (ver. 48) is used here and 28:8 in Matthew, out of 20 uses in the NT. A “sponge” is found here, Mark 15:36; John 19:29. “To fill” was seen first at 22:10. This is its last use in the NT. Luke uses the word extensively in his gospel (13 times) and Acts (9 times). “Sour wine” is used here; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:29-30. “To place or put around” was seen first at 21:33. “Reed” was seen at 11:7. “To give to drink” was seen first at 10:42.

“To leave alone” (ver. 49) was seen first at 3:15. Matthew uses the verb 47 times. Its last use will be in the next verse. “To save” was seen earlier, at 27:40. “To shout” (ver. 50) is a different word than “to cry” in verse 46, although they are synonyms. This word was seen first at 8:29. “To release” is the verb just translated (in verse 49) as “to leave.” “Spirit” was seen first at 1:18. Here, the word refers to Jesus’ spirit, not the Holy Spirit.

“Behold” (ver. 51) is a favorite word of Matthew, to draw the readers’ attention to something important. Out of 200 uses in the NT, he uses it 62 times, beginning at 1:20. After 27:51, he will use the word in the context of the resurrection at: 28:2, 7, 9, 11, 20. The “veil” or “curtain” is referenced 6 times in the NT: 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 6:19; 9:3; 10:20. This word for “temple” was used at 23:16, referring to the temple itself. “To tear, tear apart” is used here for the veil or curtain of the temple as well as the rocks of the earth. This is its only uses in Matthew, out of 11 times in the NT. To “shake” as in an earthquake, is found first at 21:10. The Greek word gives us the English word for *seismograph*. “Rocks” was seen first at 7:24-25.

“Tombs” (ver. 52) is used first at 8:28. “To open” was seen first at 2:11. For “body,” see 5:29-30. “To sleep” is used here and 28:13, out of 18 uses in the NT. Here, it refers to “saints” who had died in the past and were still dead, until they were raised. “Saints” is not used by Matthew frequently. It was first used in 1:18, 20. Its last use will be 28:19. “To raise” does not always refer to the resurrection; it was first used at 1:24. “Resurrection” (ver. 53) is only used here in the NT. “To appear” is found only here in Matthew, out of 10 uses in the NT.

“Centurion” (ver. 54) was seen first at 8:5, 8, 13. This is the only other use of the word in Matthew. “To guard, keep” was used first at 19:17. “Fear” was used first at 1:20. It will be used in the next chapter at 28:5, 10. “Greatly” or “extremely” was seen first at 2:10. Matthew uses the word four out of its 11 times. “Truly” is used three times by Matthew: 14:33; 26:73; 27:54, out of 18 uses.

“Women” (ver. 55) was used first at 1:20, 24. Matthew uses the word 29 times. This is the first time Matthew uses the verb “to observe;” 28:1 is its only other use. It will be found 58 times in the NT. “To follow” was first seen in the call of the apostles in 4:20, 22, 25. Matthew uses the verb 25 times. “Galilee” was first seen at 2:22. “To serve” is the verb form of the noun which gives us *deacon*. It was first used at 4:11. “Mary” (ver. 56) was a popular name among Jewish women; the name is used 27 times in the NT. “Magdalene” is used 12 times. “James” is also a prominent Jewish name; it is used 42 times in the NT, most often for the apostle. “Joseph” is found 35 times. “Mother” is used first at 1:18; it is used 83 times in the NT, 26 times in Matthew. “Zebedee” was found first at 4:21.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

“To fall asleep” (ver. 52) translates the verb in the perfect tense, denoting a past action with a present result.

PARALLELS:

The death of Jesus is recorded also in Mark 15:33-41; Luke 23:44-49; John 19:28-30.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Matthew 27:47-49 fulfills a prophecy from Psalm 69:21. The resurrection of the “saints,” as a result of the resurrection of Christ (28:1), fulfills the OT anticipation of a resurrection: Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:7, 12-14.

Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 in verse 46 seems to be a mixture of both Hebrew and Aramaic. The Hebrew word for “My God” (*Eli*) would sound more like “Elijah” (Ilie) than the Aramaic (*Eloi*) would. However, in the state in which Jesus was, “*Eloi*” might have also easily been mistaken for “Elijah.” Elijah did not die (2 Kings 2:11) and Malachi predicted he would return (4:5-6; cf. Matt. 16:14).

Earthquakes were often used or seen as judgment from God: Judges 5:4; 2 Sam. 22:8; 1 Kings 19:11; Psa. 18:7; 77:18; Isa. 2:19, 21; 29:6; Jer. 10:10; Ezek. 26:18; Joel 3:16. It will also be symbolic in Revelation (6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18). Darkness was often used by the prophets to denote the judgment of God: Amos 8:9; Isaiah 59:9-10; Jer. 13:16; 15:9; Joel 2:2, 10, 31; Zeph. 1:15.

COMMENTS:

This paragraph records the death of the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, as He saves His people from their sins (1:21). It also records a number of events surrounding that extremely significant event in human history. It is no surprise that God would cause the whole earth to react to the death of His only, unique, sinless Son.

The first event was darkness, which covered the land of Israel for three hours, from noon (the 3rd hour) until 3 PM (the 9th hour). “Land” could refer to the earth, but here it likely refers to the nation of Israel. At the end of that three hour period of darkness, which likely reflects the judgment of God on humanity, Jesus cried out loudly, citing Psalm 22:1, asking why God had forsaken Him. While some doubt that the Father had actually forsaken His own Son, whether it is even metaphysically possible for the Triune God to forsake Himself, we believe that it was theologically necessary for God to turn His back on His Son as His Son represented the sins of humanity at that moment (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

When Jesus cited Psalm 22:1 in Hebrew, the audience believed that He was calling for the prophet Elijah, who had never died (2 Kings 2:11). At that point, one of the bystanders ran to get a sponge, filling it with the sour wine drunk by soldiers, and put it on a reed and gave it to Jesus to quench His parched throat. Perhaps the dry mouth is what mangled the name “My God” (*Eli*) to sound like “Elijah.” The rest of those standing around challenged one another to leave Jesus alone and let them watch and see if Elijah would return from hades and save this man, whom they still believed was an impostor.

Jesus cried out (Matthew uses a different verb here) again loudly and released His spirit into the hands of the Father (cf. 1 Peter 2:21-24). When the spirit leaves the body, death occurs (James 2:26). Jesus had predicted that He would give up His life on His own initiative (John 10:15-17).

The second event which attended the death of the Son of God was the tearing of the veil of the temple. This “veil” is the one which separated the holiest of holy room from the holy temple (Exo. 26:31-35; Lev. 16:2; 2 Chron. 3:14) it might otherwise refer to the curtain separating the temple from the outside world: Exo. 26:37; 38:18; Num. 3:26, reflecting God opening the way for all men to access Him through His Son. It could also reflect God’s judgment on the temple as it symbolized Israel’s rejection of Jesus (cf. Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4-18). This reminds us that Jesus is One greater than the temple (12:6). If there were any priests in the

temple at that time, and we presume there was since it was the hour for the sacrifice, it might explain why many priests later became Christians (Acts 6:7).

The third event is the earthquake. When this happened, the rocks were torn apart (the same verb used for the temple veil). When the rocks were torn apart, the tombs (graves) of holy ones (saints) were opened. When the tombs were opened, the saints who had fallen asleep (a well-known metaphor for death) were raised from death. When they were raised from the dead, they came out of the tombs and entered into the “holy city” (Jerusalem) and appeared to many, as further evidence of the physical reality of the resurrection of Jesus and of the theological reality that resurrection from the dead will be through connection to Jesus Christ. While the text here is ambiguous as to when all of this happened, we believe it would fit the historical events best if we understand an earthquake happened here and perhaps even the tombs were opened here, but the saints (those faithful to God under the law of Moses) did not raise and appear until after the resurrection of Christ. There is also an earthquake which happens at the resurrection itself, in 28:2, at which point it might have been when the tombs were opened.

The fourth event which attended the death of Christ was a natural result of the foregoing events: a Roman centurion and others with him were led to faith in Jesus Christ! This example of faith among Gentiles consummates a theme of Matthew beginning with the wisemen in chapter 1: 1:3, 5-6; 2:1-12; 8:10-12; 10:18; 15:21-28; 24:14. Before He returns to heaven, Jesus will command His disciples to go teach the whole world. For other “confessions” of Jesus’ nature, see 3:17; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5.

Finally, Matthew mentions the women who were following Jesus (see Luke 8:1-3). There were many, although Matthew only names a few. They had been with Jesus when He preached in Galilee and had followed Him since then, expending time, energy, and money to stay with Him. In contrast to the men, the women stayed with Him until the end. Matthew names them: Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (20:20). There is no evidence of the long-standing tradition in church history that Mary Magdalene was a former prostitute nor the woman from Luke 7:36-50.

Let us put the list of women, according to Matthew, Mark, and John beside each other:

Matthew	Mark	John
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Jesus’ mother
Mary, mother of James and Joseph	Mary, mother of James the younger and Joseph	Jesus’ mother’s sister
Mother of Zebedee’s sons	Salome	Mary, wife of Clopas Mary Magdalene

APPLICATION:

The Father turned His back on His Son since the Son now bore the sins of the world: Habakkuk 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13. Jesus understood that His death would be on behalf of the sins of the world: Matthew 20:28; 26:28. See also Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:20; Heb. 5:7-10; 7:27; 9:11-14; Gal. 2:20. Jesus’ death removed everything that separated man from God (Col. 2:14).

For the other statements Jesus made on the cross (this one apparently was #4 out of seven), see: Luke 23:34, 42-43; John 19:26-28, 30; Luke 23:46).

Jesus’ death brought reconciliation between man and God and between Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles): Ephesians 2:14. The centurion’s confession of faith reflects Matthew’s universal theme, which is emphasized in the rest of the NT: Rom. 11:11-24; 15:7-12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 3:9-11.

To “fall asleep” continued to be a metaphor for death in the NT: Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:6, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13.

TRANSLATION - 27:57-61:

57 And evening coming, there came a rich man from Arimathea, the name: Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. **58** This one, after coming to Pilate, asked for the body of Jesus. At that time, Pilate ordered [it] to be given. **59** Then, after taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen **60** And he placed it in his new tomb which he dug in the rock and after rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb, he left. **61** And there was there Mary, the Magdalene, and the other Mary sitting opposite the grave.

GREEK WORDS:

“Rich” (ver. 57) is found first at 19:23-24. This is its last use in Matthew; it is used 28 times in the NT. “Arimathea” is used here; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51; John 19:38. “Joseph” was a popular name among Jews; the name is found 35 times in the NT, 11 times in Matthew, first at 1:16. “To be a disciple” is the verbal form of the noun “disciple;” the verb is used four times: 13:52; 27:57; 28:19 and Acts 14:21. “Pilate” (ver. 58) is mentioned 55 times in the NT, first at 27:2. “To ask, ask for” is seen first at 5:42. “Body” was seen first at 5:29-30. “To command, order” was seen first at 8:18. “To give up, yield” was first seen at 5:26, 33.

“To wrap” (ver. 59) is used here; Luke 23:53; John 20:7. “Linen” is found here; Mark 14:51-52; 15:46; Luke 23:53. On “clean,” see 5:8. “To put, place” (ver. 60) was seen first at 5:15. “Tomb” was seen earlier at verse 52. “New” was used first at 9:17. “To dig” is used here and Mark 15:46. On “rock,” see 7:24-25. “To roll” is used only here and Mark 15:46. On “stone,” see 3:9. On “door,” see 6:6. On “grave,” see 23:27, 29. The word is used here at 27:61, 64, 66; 28:1; and Romans 3:13.

PARALLELS:

The burial of Jesus is recorded also in Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Isaiah 53:9, in a picture of the Suffering Servant, finds its fulfillment in verse 60.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Arimathea (ver. 57) is believed to be the same village as Ramathaim, the birthplace of the judge and prophet, Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1). It was located 22 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Relative to Jewish burials, the body would be washed first. Then it would be wrapped tightly in linen with spices added to the body. In Jesus’ burial, a whopping 75 pounds of spices were used, which was worthy of royalty (see John 19:39). A face cloth could also be used to cover the face (John 20:7). The tomb would be carved out of rock or inside a cave. The doorway could be low (2-3’ high) while the stone rolled in front of the door could be 4-6’ in diameter. The first room had places where the body could be laid, even prepared for the final burial. Sections along the wall, 6’ by 2’, would allow more than one body buried in a tomb, although Jesus was the only one buried in this one. A “bone box” or ossuary was also available to place the bones once the flesh had decomposed. The box was then moved to the back of the tomb to make room for future burials.

COMMENTS:

The burial of Jesus is an important aspect of the gospel message (1 Cor. 15:4) because it testifies to His death, which is important so the resurrection could happen. When evening came, a man named Joseph came to ask for the body of Jesus. John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Christ (19:38), as he was waiting for the “kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43). It was dangerous for Joseph to associate himself with the “criminal,” Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, he took the risk. Having a criminal buried in his tomb would also have defiled the tomb such that Joseph would have had to dig a new tomb.

Following Jewish burial practices, Joseph wrapped the mangled body of his friend in clean linen and placed the body in his tomb which had not yet been used by any family member. Then he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb, to keep out grave robbers but

more generally, to keep out animals. The stone was probably three to five feet in diameter, in a groove in the ground. It would be easy to roll it in front of the door, but difficult to roll it back.

As if to anticipate future critics saying the women went to the wrong tomb and really did not see the resurrected Christ, the Holy Spirit guides Matthew to note that the women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sat down, for some time, in front of the grave. It is significant for the authenticity of the event for the gospel writers to note the women were present, even the first witnesses of the resurrection (27:55-56, 61; 28:1, 5-10). Women were not considered reliable witnesses in the law courts; but God did!

APPLICATION:

The importance of the burial is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:4. It testifies to the fact that Jesus was dead. The soldiers knew he was dead. Pilate was convinced he was dead. The women believed he was dead. The apostles understood he was dead (see John 20:19). No one expected Jesus to raise from the dead, which testifies to the authenticity of their conversion and their message.

The burial of Jesus also provides the historical reference point for the fact that baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) is a burial (Romans 6:4; Col. 2:12).

TRANSLATION - 27:62-66:

62 And the next day, which is after the preparation, they gathered together the chief priests and the Pharisees before Pilate, **63** saying, "Sir, we remember that That deceiver said, while living, 'After three days I will arise.' **64** Therefore, order to be secured the grave until the third day, lest after coming His disciples may steal Him and may say to the people, 'He was raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go; secure as you know." **66** And these, after going, secured the grave, sealing the stone with a guard.

GREEK WORDS:

The "preparation [day]" (ver. 62) is mentioned also in Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42. This would be Friday, which means the men assembled on the Sabbath day. "To gather" was seen first at 2:4. The "chief priests" were seen first at 2:4 and last at 27:41. "Pharisees" were seen first at 3:7 and most recently at 23:29. "To remember" (ver. 63) is found first at 5:23. "Deceiver" is found here; 2 Cor. 6:8; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 John 7. "To arise" was seen first at 1:24. The verb "to order, command" (ver. 64) was just seen at 27:58. "To make secure" is seen at 27:64, 65, 66; Acts 16:24. "Disciple" was seen first at 5:1. The noun is used 72 times in Matthew. "To steal" was seen first at 6:19-20. "People" was seen at 1:21. "Dead" was seen first at 8:22. "Deception" is used 10 times in the NT, only here in Matthew.

"Guard" (ver. 65) is used here (27:65-66) and 28:11. "To seal" (ver. 66) is used only here in Matthew; it is used 15 times in the NT.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

Pilate's statement to the Jewish leaders (ver. 65) could be understood as an imperative: "Take your [own] guard" or an indicative: "You have a guard [at your disposal]."

PARALLELS:

This paragraph is not recorded by the other writers.

COMMENTS:

This event is only recorded by Matthew. On the Sabbath day, the day after the day of preparation for the Sabbath (Friday), the chief priests and Pharisees come to Pilate. While the disciples did not seem to understand Jesus' prediction about His resurrection (16:21; 17:9, 22-23; 20:18-19), His enemies did (although they did not believe it). The Pharisees believed in a general resurrection (Acts 23:6-9); they just did not believe in Jesus' resurrection. They spoke

to Pilate (“Sir” is the word for “Lord,” but here, it is better translated “Sir.”) and stated that they remembered the “deceiver” (the only time Jesus is so designated by the noun while the verb is used of Him in John 7:12, 47) said He would raise on the third day. This is probably a reference to Jesus’ statement in 12:39-41 (cf. 26:60-61), if not information shared by someone like Judas.

The Jewish leaders ask Pilate to order the tomb to be made secure so that the disciples cannot steal the body and deceive the people by claiming He rose from the dead. If that were to happen, the “last deception” (teaching of the resurrection) will be worse than the first (He was their “king” and the “Son of God”). Perhaps to finally be finished with this problem, Pilate gave a guard to the Jewish leaders. While we do not know if he is telling them “Take a [Roman] guard and make it secure” or “You have [your own Jewish] guard; make it secure.” It is likely that Pilate is giving them a Roman guard, who would answer to some degree to the Jewish leaders, but ultimately to Pilate himself. They were to make the tomb secure.

The leaders left Pilate, with their guard, and set the guard in front of the tomb until Monday (three days from the Sabbath) and sealed the tomb with perhaps clay or wax (cf. Dan. 6:17). It might have been sealed also with the seal of the governor. If anyone tampered with the stone, the seal would be broken. And the soldiers would be witnesses to the theft of the body.

APPLICATION:

There have been several rebuttals to the gospel accounts’ description of the death and resurrection of Christ. None of them honestly handle the evidence. The only honest conclusion to draw is that Jesus was dead when He was taken down from the cross and His tomb was empty on the first day of the week. The only thing left to determine is the theological significance of these events!

1. Some suggest the disciples stole the body; but the evidence is against that idea since the tomb was guarded by professional Roman soldiers and sealed.

2. Some argue the disciples invented the resurrection story, that it just a myth. Does it make sense that these men would suffer and die for a lie?

3. Some want to believe that Jesus only “swooned” on the cross and then the cool air of the tomb revived Him. But as we have pointed out, everyone involved knew Jesus was dead.

4. Some suggest the apostles hallucinated visions of the resurrected Christ. Whoever heard of such a mass body of people having the same hallucinations? Paul said that over 500 had seen the resurrected Christ: 1 Corinthians 15:6.

The resurrection of Jesus becomes the central message of the gospel: Acts 2:24; 3:15; 10:40; 13:30.