

Easter 2020

1. Last week was Palm Sunday, the beginning of a horrific week for our Lord and Savior. Today is Easter, a day set aside all over the world to commemorate the triumph of Christ. I thought we ought to review not only the resurrection but the events preceding and following the resurrection of God's uniquely born Son.

2. Let's begin our study just before the Passion Week when Jesus was preparing His disciples for the cross, the grave and the resurrection. It was Monday, two days before the Passover, in the city of Jerusalem.

3. Had you been a fly on the wall, you would have heard our Lord say, "Our Passover comes in two days. It is at that time you will see the Son of Man betrayed and handed over to the Sanhedrin guards."

- 3.1 Elsewhere in the city as our Lord was speaking to His disciples, the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, and several scribes were meeting in the chambers of Caiaphas. Recall, Annas was the power behind the throne, though technically Caiaphas was high priest. The group was conspiring to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him.

4. Several days previous, when Jesus was at Bethany dining with Simon the leper, a woman came up to Him as He was eating dinner and anointed Him with a bottle of very expensive perfume. When the disciples saw what was happening, they were furious. "That's criminal! The perfume could have been sold for a lot of money; we could have used the proceeds to feed the poor."

- 4.1 When Jesus realized their frame of mind, He decided to use the situation to teach of His coming arrest and crucifixion. "Why are you giving this woman a hard time? She has just done something wonderful. You will have the poor with you every day for the rest of your lives, but not Me. When she poured the perfume on My body, what she really did was anoint Me for burial. You can be sure that wherever and whenever her story is told, she will be forever remembered and admired."

- 4.2 The message of Jesus, however, didn't seem to impress any of the disciples except Judas Iscariot.

4.3 That event at Bethany angered Judas. He was so upset with the Lord that he decided Jesus was no longer worthy of support. "Ah," he thought to himself, "I will turn Him in to the Jewish authorities as a blasphemer and false teacher."

4.3.1 Before the high priest Judas bargained, "What will you give me if I hand Him over to you?" After a great deal of haggling, Judas and Caiaphas settled on a price of thirty pieces of silver.

4.3.2 Iscariot began looking for just the right moment to hand Him over. Judas thought, "The Passover would be a fitting day. Why not? Didn't Jesus often refer to Himself as the Lamb of God; let Him be our Passover Lamb!"

5. On the first of the seven Sabbath days, which began the Feast of The Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare Your Passover meal?"

5.1 Jesus answered, "Enter the city and as soon as you enter the gate you will find a certain man. Say to him, 'My Teacher says, My time is near.' I and My disciples plan to celebrate the Passover meal at your house."

5.2 The disciples followed Jesus' instructions to the letter, and prepared the meal. After sunset on what would be our Tuesday He and the twelve sat down to eat.

5.2.1 During the meal Jesus said, "I have something difficult but important to say. One of you is going to hand Me over to the Sanhedrin guards."

5.3 They were stunned and then began to ask, one after another, "It isn't me, is it, Master?"

5.3.1 Jesus answered, "The one who hands me over is someone I eat with daily, one who passes me food at the table. In one sense, you should not be alarmed; the Son of Man is entering into a way of treachery well-marked by the Scriptures--this should not surprise you. The prophet Zechariah prophesied five hundred years earlier, 'So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver.'"

5.4 Then Judas, who had already betrayed the Lord said, "It isn't me, is it Rabbi?" Jesus replied, "Don't play games with Me Judas."

5.5 During the meal Jesus took the bread, broke it and blessed it, then He gave it to His disciples. "Take, eat, this bread represents My body." Taking the cup and thanking God, He gave it to them. "Drink this, all of it. This represents My blood, God's new covenant for the forgiveness of sins."

5.6 Jesus then sadly reported, "I'll not be drinking wine from this cup again until sometime in the future when I'll drink with you in My Father's kingdom." They then sang a hymn and went out the east gate and up the Mount of Olives.

5.7 On the way up the mountain, Jesus stopped to let them rest and said, "Before the night's over, you're going to fall to pieces because of what happens to Me. There is a Scripture in the Old Testament that says, 'I'll strike the Shepherd--helter-skelter the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am resurrected, I your Shepherd will go ahead of you into Galilee. It is there you will be encouraged."

5.8 Peter interrupted, "Even if everyone else falls to pieces, I won't." "Don't be so sure," Jesus said. "This very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter protested, "Even if I had to die with you, I would never deny you." All the others joined in saying the same thing.

5.9 Then Jesus went with Peter, James and John to a garden called Gethsemane. He told the three, "Stay here while I go up ahead." Going ahead, He fell on His face, praying, "My Father if there is any other way, get me out of this. Nevertheless, not My will but let Your will be done."

5.10 When Jesus returned to the spot where He had left His disciples, He found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Can't you hang with Me even for an hour? Stay alert-- be in prayer. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything, but there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire."

5.11 He then left the disciples a second time. Again He prayed, "My Father if there is no other way, I'm ready. Do it Your way."

5.12 Returning to His disciples Christ again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open. This time He let them sleep and went back a third time to pray, going over the same ground one last time.

5.13 When He came back the third time, He said, "Are you going to sleep on and make a night of it? My time is up, the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's get going! My betrayer, old Satan, is near."

5.14 The words were barely out of His mouth when Judas showed up, bringing with him the Sanhedrin guards, Annas and Caiaphas, and their political cronies.

5.15 The guards were armed, brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a sign with them. "The one I kiss, that's the one--seize Him." Iscariot went straight to Jesus and greeted Him, "How are you, Rabbi?" then Judas kissed Him. Jesus said, "Friend, why this charade?"

5.16 The guardsmen then grabbed the Lord and roughed Him up. Peter pulled his sword and, taking a swing at the high priest's servant, he cut off his ear.

5.17 Jesus said, "Put your sword back where it belongs. Don't you realize I could call to My Father and He would immediately send twelve battalions of battle-hardened warrior angels? But this is not the plan; I must go with them."

5.18 Then Jesus addressed Caiaphas and his guards, "What is this, you come after Me with swords and clubs as if I were a dangerous criminal? Day after day I have been sitting in the Temple teaching, and you never so much as lifted a hand against Me."

5.19 Then all the disciples cut and ran. Jesus was taken to the palace of Caiaphas the high priest. Peter followed at a safe distance until they entered inside. Peter then wandered among the crowd standing outside in the courtyard.

5.20 Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas tried to cook up charges against Jesus in order to sentence Him to death. But even though many stepped up to make false accusations against Him, none of them made sense.

5.21 Finally two men came forward. "This blasphemer said, 'I can tear down the Temple of God and after three days rebuild it.'" Then Caiaphas stood up. "What is Your response to this accusation?"

5.22 Jesus kept silent. Then the high priest shouted, "I command You by the authority of the living God, are You the Messiah, the Son of God?"

5.23 Jesus rather unceremoniously answered, "You yourself said it. And that's not all. Soon you'll see for yourself. You will one day observe The Son of Man coming in all His glory, descending out of the Third Heaven and riding on a cloud."

5.24 At that, the high priest lost his temper. Ripping off his robe, he screamed, "He blasphemed! Why do we need witnesses to accuse Him? You all heard Him blaspheme! Are you going to stand for such blasphemy?"

5.25 The crowd shouted, "Death to Him!" Then those standing nearby spit in His face and banged Him around. They jeered as they slapped Him. "Prophecy, Messiah man, who hit You?"

5.26 All this time Peter was outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus, the Galilean." Peter vehemently denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about."

5.27 As he moved over toward the gate, someone else pointed at Peter and said, "This man was with Jesus, the Nazarene." Again he denied it, salting his denial with an oath, "Really, honest, I swear, I never laid eyes on the man."

5.28 Shortly after that another bystander approached Peter. "You've got to be one of them. Your Galilean accent gives you away." Then Peter got really nervous and swore, "Like hell I am, I don't know the Man." Just then a rooster crowed.

5.29 Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter left the courtyard and walked into the dark streets of Jerusalem where he cried, and cried and cried. Sobbing, he said repeatedly, "I am so unworthy, so unworthy."

6. In the first light of dawn, all the members of the Sanhedrin met and put the finishing touches on their plot to kill Jesus. Then they tied Him up and paraded Him before Pilate, the Roman governor.

7. Judas Iscariot realized Jesus was doomed. Overcome with remorse, he gave back the thirty silver coins, saying, "I've sinned. I've betrayed an innocent man."

7.1 One of the Sanhedrin said, "What do we care? That's your problem!" Judas threw the coins on the Temple floor and left. Then he went out and hung himself.

7.2 A priest picked up the silver pieces, but didn't know what to do with them. He thought, "It wouldn't be right to give this blood money as an offering."

7.2.1 The priest decided to get rid of it by buying a potter's field. They would use the field as a burial place for the homeless. That's how the field got the name murder meadow.

8. Jesus was in chains standing before Pilate, who questioned Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Christ responded, "If you say so." But when the accusations rained down hot and heavy from the high priest and the religious leaders, Jesus said nothing.

8.1 Pilate then asked Him, "Do you hear that long list of accusations? Aren't you going to say something?" Jesus kept silent--not a word from His mouth.

8.1.1 Thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

8.2 There was an old custom during the feast for the governor to pardon a single prisoner. At the time, they had the infamous Barabbas in prison. Before the crowd, Pilate said, "Which prisoner do you want me to pardon Barabbas or Jesus, the so-called Christ?" Caiaphas screamed "He is not our Christ!"

8.3 Pilate had found nothing to warrant Jesus' arrest, so he hoped the crowd would demand His release since the seditious career-criminal Barabbas was deserving of death and more.

8.4 Earlier Pilate's wife had exhorted him, "Don't get mixed up in judging this man they call Jesus. I've just been through a long and troubled night because I had a terrible nightmare about Him."

8.5 Meanwhile, Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas and their religious cronies had incited the crowd into asking for the pardon of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. The governor asked, "Which of the two do you want me to pardon?"

8.6 The crowd exclaimed, "Barabbas!" "Then what do I do with this Jesus?" They all shouted, "Nail Him to a cross!" Pilate objected, "But for what crime?" They yelled all the louder, "Crucify Him!"

8.7 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was imminent, he took a basin of water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd, saying, "I'm washing my hands of responsibility for this man's death. From now on, it's in your hands. You're judge and jury."

8.8 The crowd answered, "We'll take the blame, let His blood be on both us and our children." Then Pilate pardoned Barabbas and handed Jesus over for flogging and crucifixion.

8.8.1 Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah made more than 700 years earlier: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed."

9. Jesus was taken inside the governor's palace and Pilate's personal body guards gathered for some fun. They stripped Jesus and dressed Him in a crimson toga.

9.1 They plaited a crown from branches of a thorn bush and set it on His head. They put a stick in His right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before Him in mocking reverence. "Bravo, King of the Jews, Bravo!"

9.2 Then they spit on Him and repeatedly hit Him on the head with the stick and brutally flogged Him. His body was a mess, a mass of wounds, His face bloody and swollen; Jesus was unrecognizable.

9.2.1 When they had had their fun, they took off the toga and put His own clothes back on Him. Then they proceeded out of the palace to the place of the crucifixion.

9.3 Jesus in His weakened condition fell several times under the weight of the cross. Along the way the guards came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; he was made to carry the cross.

9.4 Arriving at Golgotha, the place they call "skull hill," they nailed Him to the cross and waited for Him to die an excruciating death. They whiled away the time by gambling for His clothes.

9.5 Above His head they had posted the criminal charge against Him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Jesus was heard several times to say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

9.6 Along with the Lord, they also crucified two criminals, one to His right, the other to His left.

9.6.1 People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: "You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days-- so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's son, come on down from that cross!"

9.7 Annas and Caiaphas, along with the rest of the Sanhedrin were right there mixing it up with the rest of them. They too laughed and made fun of Him. "He saved others but He can't save himself!"

9.7.1 Many in the crowd cried, "King of Israel is He? Then let Him get down from the cross. We'll all become believers then!" Even one of the criminals crucified next to Him joined in the mockery.

9.8 Jesus had been placed on the cross at about 9:00 on that Passover morning.

Suddenly at noon a strange darkness came over Golgotha; it lasted from noon to three.

9.8.1 Those standing around the cross were frightened and astonished. Little did they know that it was during these three strange hours of utter blackness that the Son of God died spiritually for the sins of the world. All sin was poured out on Him and judged.

9.9 As Jesus was being judged for our sin, He cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God the Father, My God the Holy Spirit, why have you abandoned Me?"

9.9.1 One of the bystanders who heard Him said, "He's calling for Elijah." A Roman soldier ran and got a sponge soaked with a narcotic mixture, and lifted it up on a stick so Jesus could drink. Jesus, however, turned His head, refusing to partake.

9.10 Just after 3:00 P.M. Jesus, crying out loudly, breathed his last. His final words were, "It is now finished in the past, with the result my work is complete." Sin was no longer an issue He had indeed made all things new. Several in the crowd remembered what Jesus had told Nicodemus.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Joh 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Joh 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

9.11 The captain of the guard and those with him, when they saw the darkness and the earthquake, were scared to death. One of the Roman soldiers said, "This Jesus must have been the Son of God!"

9.11.1 At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake and rocks were split in pieces. What's more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves came forth.

9.11.2 After Jesus' resurrection, many of the dead left the graveyard, entered the Holy City, and witnessed to many, explaining the meaning of the cross, the grave and the resurrection. Even the dead, wrapped in grave cloths, gave witness to Christ's victory.

10. There were quite a few women watching from a distance, women who had followed Jesus from Galilee in order to serve Him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome, wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John.

11. Late in the afternoon a wealthy man from Arimathea, a secret disciple, arrived. His name was Joseph. He, along with his friend Nicodemus, came out of their closet of secrecy and went to see Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Pilate granted their request.

11.1 Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linens, put Jesus' body in his own tomb, only recently cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the entrance.

12. After sundown, Annas, Caiaphas and several of their Pharisee friends arranged a meeting with Pilate. They said, "Sir, we just remembered Jesus often bragged to His disciples, 'after three days I will be raised.' We've got to get that tomb sealed until the third day. There's a good chance His disciples will come and steal the corpse and then go around saying, 'He's risen from the dead.' Then we'll be worse off than before."

13. Pilate told them, "You will have your guards. Go ahead and secure it the best you can." So they went out and secured the tomb, sealing the stone and Pilate posted Roman guards as he had promised.

14. After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James the less and Joseph, came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven and stood right next to them.

14.1 He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning radiated all around him. His garments shimmered snow white. The guards at the tomb were so frightened they couldn't move.

14.2 The angel spoke to the women, "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as He said."

14.2.1 Remember His words, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

14.3 The angel then said, "I rolled the stone away so you could see inside. Come and look. See, He is not here. Now, get on your way quickly and tell His disciples He is risen from the dead and is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see Him there. That's your message for the disciples."

15. The women lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" He said. They fell to their knees, embraced His feet and worshiped Him.

16. And so do we worship Him this morning as King of kings and Lord of lords as we wait expectantly for His return!

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