

*The  
Day Christ  
Died*

BY VANCE FERRELL

FROM 163 B.C. TO A.D. 135

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL  
BACKGROUND OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST



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*The Day that Christ Died*

*by Vance Ferrell*

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“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”

—*Desire of Ages, 83*

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“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”

—*Matthew 27:1-2*

*Before that Day*

*Chapter One*

*Before that Day*

*Twelve Key  
People  
and Events*

It is impossible to properly understand the world into which Jesus Christ was born, lived, and died, without understanding the relation of the Jewish nation to the Roman Empire. In this chapter, we will overview events and people in earlier years—that will help explain the background in which Christ's death occurred.

*1 - The Conquest  
by Pompey*

The turmoil of first century A.D. Judaism, into which Jesus was born and lived, began over a century before with the Maccabean Revolt (168 B.C.) by the Jews against the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. It would result in nearly a century of fighting against the Syrians and among themselves. But then, in 63 B.C., a new power from the West marched into Palestine: a Roman army under the leadership of General Cnaeus Pompey.

The arrival of the Roman eagles was a land-

mark event for the Jewish people. One that would greatly affect them for centuries to come. And so we shall begin this incredible story at that point. Cnaeus Pompey (148-106 B.C.) was a veteran of many Roman military campaigns who hungered for more power. Through general bribery, he had been made consul in 70 B.C. by the Roman senate. There was no question about his self-control and courage in battle.

Gradually, the Romans had conquered more and more territory in the East. Finally, in 63 B.C., Pompey arrived before the gates of Jerusalem. He was only 42-years-old at the time. Pompey had just taken Syria and Palestine; now he had arrived at Jerusalem, and was about to take it and all Palestine. Upon departing, he would conquer Egypt and Persia.

As one might expect, this was a major crisis. Should the Jews yield to Roman domination or should they resist? All Judaea split into two groups. Some Jews were determined to resist to the end. But there were others who valued their lives more than independence. Quietly, one night, they opened the gates of Jerusalem—and Pompey's army marched in. He at once besieged the inner part of the city where the opposition group had fortified themselves.

Camping with his army inside the city, on the north side of the Temple area wall, Pompey brought his battering rams against that wall. These gigantic hammers made thunder as they struck the wall, and soon caused the greatest of the Temple towers to collapse, taking with it a part of the wall of the Temple. A great slaughter of Jews followed, and over 12,000 fell that day. However, in respect to the religion of the Jews while Pompey took some other things, he did not touch the sacred vessels of the temple.

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## 2 - The Reign of Herod the Great

All the intrigue and warfare of that turbulent century would ere long lead to the rise of an Edomite who, under Roman authority, would become ruler of the Jews—and cast a shadow of influence over them for more than a century: Herod the Great.

When Pompey first marched into Palestine, several Jews had been warring with one another for control of the nation. But upon his arrival, only the faction led by John Hyrcanus II sided with him. In addition, the Edomite governor of Idumaea—Antipater—also supported Pompey. After Pompey's siege of Jerusalem, which took three months, he appointed John Hyrcanus II both high priest and ethnarch (political leader) of Judaea, and retained Antipater as governor of Idumaea. Then Pompey left. Judaea was now a Roman province.

Crassus was not as kind as Pompey. Nine years later, in 54 B.C., Marcus Crassus (115-53 B.C.), governor of Syria, while on his way to Otesiphon, stopped by Jerusalem and looted the Temple of some 10,000 talents. The next year, learning that Crassus had been defeated and slain in battle, the Jews rebelled against the Romans. But Longinus, Crassus' successor as governor of Syria, fought the Jews for 11 years and put down the revolt in 43 B.C. But throughout that time, both Hyrcanus and Antipater remained loyal to Rome.

By this time, the Mediterranean and its bordering provinces had become a Roman lake. Indeed, the Romans called the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum*—"Our Sea." But there still were two rival powers in control of the Roman Empire: Pompey was supreme in the East and Julius Caesar was rising in the West. Sooner or later their legions would clash in combat. In 48 B.C., in the Battle of Pharsalus, Pompey was defeated by Julius Caesar.

Upon hearing the news, both John Hyrcanus II and Antipater immediately switched their loyalty to Julius Caesar. As a reward, Julius Caesar appointed Antipater as procurator of Judaea, and made Hyrcanus high priest.

But then tragedy struck. On March 15, 44 B.C., Julius Caesar, ruler of the Roman Empire, was assassinated in the Senate chamber by Brutus and Cassius, two of his closest friends. The next year (43 B.C.), Antipater, the procurator of Judaea, was poisoned by a rival. It was that same year that Longinus, governor of Syria, put down the Jewish revolt and sold 30,000 Jews into slavery. But, amid all the turmoil in Palestine, one of Antipater's four sons, Herod, remained solidly loyal to Rome.

The same year that the Jewish revolt was terminated, Parthians swept across the desert into Judaea and occupied the land. They set up as their puppet king, Antigonus, the last of the Hasmoneans (the Jewish Maccabean family which had led out in warfare against Syria over a century earlier). In 41 B.C., Antony and Octavian jointly agreed to make Herod tetrarch (ruler) of Judaea, and finance his Jewish army with Roman funds. Herod successfully drove out the Parthians, and sent Antigonus to Antony for execution.

As a reward for his faithfulness, in 37 B.C. Herod was crowned "king" of Judaea (although, in actuality, he still remained in subservience to Rome). The Jews hated the fact that an Edomite was their "king." Henceforth, Herod had almost unlimited control of Judaea. On the death of Julius Caesar, a "triumvirate" of three men had been set up to rule the territory controlled by Rome: Octavian in the West; Mark Antony in the East; and Lepidus in North Africa.

During this period, taxes were greatly increased throughout the empire, and many provinces rose in rebellion. But Herod faithfully raised the taxes required of his territory and sent them in. Herod always fully cooperated with his Roman masters. Yet Cleopatra almost ended his career.

After the murder of Caesar, Mark Antony came to Alexandria, the great learning center of Egypt and the Western World. (Its three libraries earlier had 550,000 parchment or papyrus

volumes; none of them survived the later Muslim invasion.) In Alexandria, Mark Antony came under the spell of Cleopatra. She, for her part, secretly wanted to use Antony to conquer the entire Roman world. Queenship of Egypt was not enough for her. But, before taking on Octavian in the West, she decided to get Herod the Great on her side—or have him slain.

She called him to Egypt, but he refused to do what she asked, knowing full well that Antony would not permit a rival in his love for Cleopatra. Like Potiphar's wife, Cleopatra was angered by Herod's refusal. So she told Antony that Herod was a traitor and was secretly conspiring against him. Antony summoned Herod to Alexandria to answer charges of sedition. But Herod, ever the fox, came with rich gifts for Antony. They alone saved him from death. In deepest anger at the failure of her plot to slay Herod, Cleopatra demanded that he give her the coast of Palestine, which was then done.

But a few years later, after the Battle of Actium (27 B.C.), both Antony and Cleopatra died, and Octavian—Augustus Caesar—returned the coastal lands to Herod.

As soon as Augustus Caesar was fully in power, Herod the Great set to work, with Roman aid, in reconquering those portions of Judaea which still remained in rebellion to Rome. Herod also slew every possible person who could be a rival, including several close relatives. Herod killed John Hyrcanus II, the high priest; Herod killed his wife, Mariamne, and her mother, Alexandra. Later, in 7 B.C., he had several his own sons, by Mariamne, strangled to death.

Herod also engaged in immense building projects, which included his own palace in Jerusalem; the city of Samaria and a heathen temple there; the seaport of Caesarea; along with several private fortresses for himself (including Masada, which he specifically built as a refuge to flee to, in case Cleopatra sent troops to kill him; the Herodium, a festal retreat and his intended final burial place; and Machaerus, where John the Baptist was later imprisoned and beheaded).

Of course, the Temple at Jerusalem is generally considered to have been his greatest construction project. Not until everything was put into position, did Herod begin work on it. Skilled

workmen, numbering 10,000, were chosen for the task. A thousand wagons were prepared to carry immense stones to the site. The site itself (the Temple mount) was enlarged to twice its previous size of some 17 acres. This was done by new excavation work, on the north side, and the construction of immense retaining walls rising 450 feet above the Kidron Valley floor, on the southeast. The flat surface of the Temple mount measured 351 yards, on the north side; 512, on the east; 536, on the west; and 309, on the south. Inside that immense area, Herod rebuilt the Temple, with Corinthian columns in bronze, its various courts and gates, and all enclosed within outer walls with spacious covered cloisters—where the teachers of Israel instructed their pupils. In one of those rooms, Jesus would later speak to the doctors of the law.

Herod also built a palace for himself, which occupied the citadel area on the west side of Jerusalem. Fifteen acres in size, it was surrounded by a wall which, according to Josephus, was about sixty-five feet high. Part of that palace is preserved today, in the massive lower walls of the citadel beside the Jaffa Gate.

Later in the first century A.D., when the Roman procurators ruled Judaea, this palace became their headquarters. It was here that Christ would be brought before Pilate for His Roman trial. The main part of the Temple at Jerusalem, begun in 19 B.C., was finished in 18 months. But the entire Temple was not completed until A.D. 64, only six years before it was destroyed by the legions of Titus in A.D. 70. The Temple occupied the same ground plan as that of its predecessor, but Herod increased its elevation to 100 cubits. Josephus tells us it was constructed of white stones, each one immense in size: 25 cubits (37½ feet) in length.

Who was this Augustus Caesar, who figures so prominently in the story of the birth of Christ? In the very year in which Pompey conquered Jerusalem (63 B.C.), a child by the name of Octavian (Gaius Octavius) was born. Julius Caesar, his great uncle, later adopted him as his son and heir. Upon the death of Julius Caesar, the triumvirate of three rulers was set up. Eventually, Mark Antony turned from ruling his territory to spending his time with women, notably Cleopatra, the last ruler of Egypt.

In 32 B.C., Octavian led a navy to meet

Antony in battle, and won the Battle of Actium. Henceforth, Octavian was the new ruler of Palestine. Herod immediately gave him his loyalty. In 27 B.C., Octavian took the title, Augustus Caesar, and founded the Roman Empire. He ruled the Western World for 41 years and brought peace to all its territories until his death in A.D. 14.

### 3 - *The Census of 4 B.C.*

**Luke 2:1-3**

In the year, 4 B.C., Caesar Augustus issued a proclamation, calling on everyone in the entire empire to go to the city of their birth and register for tax purposes. Every ten to fourteen years, the rulers of Rome found out how many people were in the empire; not only the *dyes Romani*, (the Roman citizens), but also those living in Spain, Gaul, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. We know from Roman historical records that this was done periodically (generally every 14 years) until A.D. 175.

As with all the other tax-enrollment decrees, this “decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (*Lk 2:1*), was actually an order for the taking of a census. The tax levy on each nation was based on the census of its people. Rome used the income to build great buildings and sport arenas, and provide the people with free *panem et circenses* (“bread and circuses”) to keep them contented.

This particular census was taken “when Cyrenius was governor of Syria” (*Lk 2:2*). He was the Senator P Sulpicius Quirinius, who is known to us from Roman documents. Until recently, it was thought that there was a historical problem here: Quirinius did not go as legate to Syria until A.D. 6—ten years after that census. In A.D. 6, Coponius was sent with him from Rome to be the first procurator of Judaea. Arriving, they carried out another census between A.D. 6 and 7. But that could not be the one mentioned by Luke—because Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. Yet, only a few decades previous, a fragment of a Roman inscription was found at Antioch, which mentioned that Quirinius had been the emperor’s legate in Syria on a previous occasion, in the days of Saturninus, the proconsul. Quirinius had gone to Syria between 10 and 7 B.C., established his

## *The Day Christ Died*

seat of government there and ruled for several years. While there, he led a campaign against the Homanadenses, a tribe in the Taurus Mountains of Asia Minor. So Quirinius was, indeed, “governor of Syria” at the time stated in Luke 2:2.

### 4 - *The Birth of Christ*

**Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-7**

Thus it came to pass that, in 4 B.C., “all went to be taxed [Greek: apographo, ‘enrolled’], every one into his own city” (*Lk 2:3*). This included two young adults living in the town of Nazareth.

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”—*Luke 2:6-7*.

When Christ was born, He was laid in a manger. This was a trough where cattle were fed. An early Christian writer, Justin Martyr (c.A.D. 110-165), wrote that Jesus was born in a cave. So where was Jesus born? There are several possibilities:

Today in Bethlehem, caves are still used to stable sheep and cattle. You will find there a number of old houses, built over limestone caves. (Less frequently, the house was built into a cliff, with the cave behind the house.) The people lived in the houses, and their animals were kept at night underneath in the caves. It is a very efficient method: The animals were themselves sheltered, and heat from the animals rose and kept the people warm; so one dwelling serves all. In most instances, the cave is level with the road, and the house, above it, is reached by climbing stone steps. Within the cave, which has been cut into the soft limestone, a stone trough is cut from the rock. Iron rings are attached to it, where the animals were tied at night.

Several centuries later, in A.D. 325, Macanus,



the Christian bishop of Jerusalem, informed Emperor Constantine that, in Bethlehem, there was a cave which the people of the town venerated as the birthplace of Christ. The next year, construction of a church began over that cave. Whether or not it is the correct site, we cannot know. But today it is called the Church of the Nativity. The cave itself (called the Grotto of the Nativity), beneath the church building (which has been rebuilt many times), is about forty feet long and twelve feet wide. At its entrance is a heavy, iron-studded door, which is so narrow that only one person can enter at a time and so low that the tall must stoop before entering.

There is also another possibility: On the evening of the Nativity, Joseph and Mary may have found refuge in a *fundak*, a walled enclosure open to the sky with covered wooden stalls built against the enclosing walls for the accommodation of cattle. The most protected part of the *fundak* would be the feeding trough, set against the back wall.

And so, in fulfillment of the prophecy made centuries earlier, the Eternal One, known in this world as Jesus Christ, was born in the little town of Bethlehem, which in the Hebrew means “the house we get bread from.” He who was to be the Saviour of all (Who in this world would accept Him?) had come to earth to live a life of obedience as an example to us and then die at the hands of those He came to save.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”—*Micah 5:2*.

Why does it say “Ephratah” in Micah 5:2? It is not commonly known that there were two Jewish “Bethlehems” in existence at that time. The promised Messiah was born in the right one: Bethlehem Ephratah, which was the Bethlehem in Judaea only five miles from Jerusalem, where King David had been born a thousand years earlier. (The other Bethlehem, in Palestine, was Bethlehem of Zebulun.) Near the Judaeian Bethlehem is the tomb of Rachel, the wife of Jacob; for we are told:

“And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.”—*Gen 35:19*.

That is why the prophecy of Micah 5:2, which foretold where the Messiah would be born, said it would be “Bethlehem Ephratah”—Bethlehem,

also called Ephratah.

## 5 - The Flight into Egypt

**Matthew 2:12-18**

In the providence of God, the wise men from the East (the *Magi*) were guided so that they arrived in 4 B.C.—just after the birth of Christ, which apparently occurred in the early spring of that year. Learning from the Magi that a genuine King had been born to the throne, Herod the Great almost immediately had the infants of Bethlehem slain. But, warned in a dream, Joseph and Mary had already fled to Egypt, where they remained for a time. We know that the Magi arrived almost immediately after Christ’s birth (and not many months later), because Herod died soon after. Josephus tells us that, shortly before Herod’s death, there was an eclipse of the moon (*Antiquities, 17, 5*). Based on that fact, astronomers tell us that Herod died shortly after March 13, 4 B.C. Christ was probably born not more than a month or so earlier.

(If He was not born that year, he would have had to be born 10 to 14 years earlier, during the previous census of Augustus, while Herod was alive to meet with the Magi. But if that was so, certain other facts would not fit.)

What about that December 25 date? It is commonly supposed that Jesus was born on December 25, but the evidence is clear that Jesus was born in the spring of the year, when the shepherds were out in the fields with their sheep. (In December, the sheep were penned up to keep them and their owners warm.)

Actually, *Dies Natalis Invicti* (December 25) was the “Birthday of the Unconquerable One”—Mithras, also called *Sol Invictus*, the “Unconquerable sun god.” In the third century A.D., the more worldly Christians in the larger cities of the empire began celebrating the birth of Christ on the birthday of the sun god. They were accommodating their pagan friends, in order to be better accepted by them.

Later still, Christian leaders in Alexandria and Rome transferred the worship day from the seventh day to the Sun Day, the day on which Mithras, the sun god, was worshiped. This transferal helped bring large accessions into the Christian church from half-converted sun worshipers in the

fourth century.

And so it was that Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child were guided by the angels to go quickly to a place of refuge in Egypt.

An exile from any part of the Roman world could more easily lose himself in Egypt than anywhere else. He would find those of his own race and language. In addition, he would no longer be subject to the ordinary surveillance of a Roman governor, nor would he be at the mercy of some petty king.

There was a reason for this: Egypt differed from all the other provinces of the Roman Empire. It was directly subject to the administration of the emperor. Because it was the source of grain for the teeming populace of Rome, it was important that the emperor keep it under direct control. No senator or general could even set foot in Egypt without special permission. In fact, the army there was under the command of the wealthy classes of Egypt.

On the road from Palestine to Egypt, about six miles north of (what is today called) Cairo, is the quiet little village of Mataria. It is situated on the eastern bank of the Nile. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (who lived in the first century A.D.), wrote that a Jewish settlement was there in which herbs (and especially Balsam bushes) were cultivated. That herbal settlement was started about 37 B.C., by order of Cleopatra. It has been suggested that Joseph may have settled his family in or near Mataria and its fragrant balsam gardens.

## 6 - *The Slaughter* *after Herod's Death*

**Matthew 2:16-23**

Joseph had been warned in a dream to leave Palestine, and not return until later. There were a number of reasons why it was best for Joseph, Mary, and the Child to get out of Judaea when they did. The murder of the children in Bethlehem, as recorded in Matt 2:16-23, was only the beginning of several years of severe unrest in the nation. Here is what happened:

Five days before his own death in 4 B.C., Herod the Great had his son, Antipater, assassi-

nated. Herod had already slain a variety of relatives: sons, wife, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and most anyone else he considered to be a possible rival. But three sons were still living. Somehow, those three survivors had managed to avoid offending their father.

So, after eliminating Antipater, Herod called for writing materials, and he wrote a will. Archelaus was to succeed to the kingship of Judaea, Herod Antipas was to be tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip was to be tetrarch of Transjordan and the territory east of the Lake of Galilee.

It was said of Herod by his enemies, "He stole to the throne like a fox, ruled like a tiger, and died like a dog." When the news spread that Herod the Great had passed away, and that he intended that his sons perpetuate this Edomite rule—the Jews immediately arose in revolt. In spite of his building projects, Herod had been a very harsh ruler. The Jews utterly hated the house of Herod and all who represented it.

Archelaus, the new governor of Judaea and one of Herod's sons, replied by sending troops to Jerusalem. On one day, 3,000 Jews were slain, and the courts of the Temple were strewn with corpses. Meanwhile, Herod's will (in which he divided his territory among his three sons) had to be approved by Emperor Augustus. Both Archelaus and Herod Antipas immediately set out for Rome, to present themselves to him. But, at the same time, fifty Jewish elders also went to Rome. They pled with the emperor to no longer permit any descendant of Herod to reign over the Jews.

Yet, the riots back home undercut their pleas. Augustus Caesar was afraid to let anyone but a Herod manage the tumultuous Jews. While they were gone, a Roman legion had been dispatched to Jerusalem to keep the peace. But, at that very time, thousands of pilgrims were streaming into the city for the Feast of Weeks. It was not yet settled whether or not the sons of Herod the Great might perpetuate the Edomite rule, and many were seething with anger. Bloody skirmishes occurred on the streets, and bitter fighting broke out in the Temple area. Stones were thrown at the Roman troops. Angered by the resistance, the soldiers rushed into the Temple, set fire to the arcades, and pillaged all they could lay hands on. Sabinus (a government auditor, temporarily in town) helped himself to 400 talents of silver from the Temple.

To the Jews, this was like throwing gasoline on the fire. As rioting Jews drew near, he and the soldiers accompanying him on this looting project barely escaped. Rushing west from the Temple, he entered Herod's palace and barricaded the doors and windows. Rapidly, the revolt spread through the countryside—including Bethlehem.

Government palaces throughout Judaea were plundered and set ablaze. The situation became so desperate that Quintilius Varus, the governor of Syria, hastened to the scene with a powerful Roman army, strengthened with troops from Beirut and Arabia. As soon as the army approached the city of Jerusalem, the rebels fled through the opposite gates. In hot pursuit, the soldiers captured them in droves. Two thousand Jews were crucified.

Hearing of what had happened, Caesar Augustus rejected the pleas of the Jewish elders—and confirmed Philip as tetrarch in the northeast; Antipas as tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea; and Archelaus as king of Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria. All this occurred while Joseph, Mary, and the Child remained in Egypt. Jesus would later stand trial before that same Antipas (Herod Antipas) on the day that He died.

## 7 - A Home in Nazareth

**Matthew 2:19-23**

Joseph was told in a dream to return to Palestine. Journeying back with Mary and the Child, Joseph thought he should settle in Bethlehem, since that was the city of David. (But Micah 5:2 only predicted that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, not that He would be raised there.)

But then Joseph learned that Archelaus, one of Herod's most vicious sons, was ruler of Judaea; and, being told of the riots and killings which had occurred in Jerusalem—just over a couple hills from Bethlehem, he headed northward to his hometown: Nazareth in the Galilean hills.

The town of Nazareth was (and still is) built in a hollow in the side of a hill. From it, one can look out over the broad expanse of the Plain of Esdraelon. Just as they did back in the time of Jesus, women still draw water from the only well in the entire area. It is known as "Mary's Well," and has been the name of that fountain for as long as anyone can remember.

Old Nazareth, at an elevation of 1,200 feet, lies farther up the hill than modern Nazareth, with its population of 8,000. From that higher elevation, one can see far away to the Plain of Megiddo. Gardens and fields surround the little village of farmers and craftsmen. Groves of date palms, fig trees, and pomegranates clothe the encircling hills in friendly green. The fields are full of wheat and barley, and vineyards yield their delicious fruit.

It is of interest that Nazareth was located near several thoroughfares of travel. The Roman military road from the north, which came down through the hills of Galilee, passed Nazareth. Not far south, an ancient caravan route between Damascus and Egypt crossed the plain of Jezreel. Also, not far away, was the main highway from Jerusalem to, what is today called, Haifa. The little town still has the Arabic name of *En-Nazirah*. Excellent, free-working limestone is still dug out of that hill.

Jesus probably lived in a white limestone house, similar to those seen there today. But the only place on the Nazareth hillside which can be clearly identified as existing in the time of Christ—is that single well, to which everyone must go for water. That was the well from which Jesus Himself drew water so very long ago.

During His youth, Jesus carefully studied the Sacred Scriptures in a home school with the aid of His mother, Mary. Great Jewish schools were held in the leading cities of Judaea, and especially at the Temple in Jerusalem. Hillel (c.75 B.C.-c.A.D. 10), a Babylon-born Pharisaic scholar, was at that time the president of the Sanhedrin and founder and director of the famous "School of Hillel" in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Philo Judaeus (Philo, the Jew) was writing his famous Jewish philosophical works in Alexandria. The speculative teachings of the *Talmud*, although not yet put into written form, were being taught in the schools of Judaea to the youth.

Although there was a synagogue school in Nazareth, Jesus, instead, studied the Word of God and the natural world about Him. He was to become a highly educated teacher; yet His training was of a different type than that of others.

## 8 - Events During Jesus' Youth

**Luke 2:41-52**

When Jesus was about 10 years old, Judaea became a Roman province. The Jews finally managed to successfully petition Rome to banish Archelaus (A.D. 6). In his place, Emperor Augustus appointed the first of the procurators (Coponius). But Herod's son, Antipas, continued on as tetrarch of Galilee (where Nazareth was located) until A.D. 39.

That same year (A.D. 6), a man named Judas, the Galilean, started a revolt. He is said to have led several hundred people into the desert. When the Romans put down the revolt, they mercilessly slew the people. The incident is mentioned in Acts 5:37. Refugees from the slaughter fled to various towns in Judaea and Galilee, and Jesus probably met and spoke with some of them.

A third incident that year (A.D. 6) was the appointment, by Quirinius, of Annas to the office of high priest. Annas, being a Sadducee, was a nonbeliever in the doctrine of the resurrection—and therefore much more willing to cooperate with the Roman masters of Palestine. From the time that Jesus was ten years old, onward, Annas controlled the high-priestly office. On the day of Christ's death, He was brought before Annas for examination.

In A.D. 8, Jesus was 12-years-old, and His parents took Him to Jerusalem. This was the first time He had ever been there, and the first time He had seen the Temple and its services. It was on this occasion that He spoke with the doctors of the law and confounded them with the depth of His knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures. Throughout His life, Jesus did not concern Himself with Pharisaic rules and regulations which they tried to foist on the people as though they were inspired of God. Instead, Jesus had carefully studied the Old Testament, understood it thoroughly, and presented it clearly to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

The leaders were startled, and wanted Jesus as a student in their schools, so they could mold His mind and make Him a copy of themselves.

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But Jesus continued studying the Word of God on His own. Hillel, the great master teacher of Israel, was still alive (about 78-years-old) and probably led out in asking Jesus questions. Hillel died two years later.

When Jesus was 18, Emperor Augustus died and Tiberius ascended the throne of the empire. He would rule until A.D. 37. Looking back from a later time, the Roman historian, Tacitus, called Tiberius a tyrant. The next year (A.D. 15), Valerius Gratus became the fourth procurator of Judaea. He would govern Judaea until A.D. 26, the year before Jesus was baptized and began His ministry.

That same year (A.D. 26), several other events occurred: (1) It was the year before Jesus was baptized and began His ministry. He was 29 years old. (2) Emperor Tiberius retired to the Island of Capri, leaving his trusted friend, Sejanus, prefect of the praetorian guard, in charge of Rome and the empire. (3) Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, began preaching. (4) The seventh procurator, Pontius Pilate, was appointed to govern Judaea. He would retain that position until A.D. 35—four years after he gave permission for Christ to be crucified.

## 9 - Sepphoris: *Jesus' Next-door Neighbor*

Josephus mentions a city by the name of Sepphoris, which was rebuilt in the first century A.D., surrounded with a wall, and then became a leading city of Galilee throughout most of the century (*Antiquities*, 18, 2). That item of information took on a special interest when, in 1931, it was discovered that Sepphoris was close to Nazareth and was built when Jesus was a young man.

At that time, Herod Antipas ruled Galilee. The son of Herod the Great, he was the same Herod who later beheaded John the Baptist and officiated in one of the trials of Christ. In 4 B.C., on the death of his father and his own return from Rome with his appointment as the new ruler of Galilee, Antipas decided to build himself a new capital city. He wanted it to become the largest city in the province of Galilee.

So, in the spring of 3 B.C., at about the time

that Jesus had His first birthday, Antipas selected the smoldering ruins of Sepphoris as the location of his new capital. That year (or the next), Joseph moved to Nazareth with His family.

Why had Sepphoris earlier been burned to the ground? As mentioned earlier, major riots and rebellions flared up in several locations in the months following the death of Herod the Great. Sepphoris had been a center of the uprisings in Galilee. A rebel leader, named Judas, the son of Ezekias, attacked Herod the Great's arsenal and armed his men with its weapons. In reprisal, the Roman legate of Syria, Quintilius Varus, ordered his legions to crush the rebels in Galilee. The Roman army, commanded by Varus' son and by Gaius (a friend of Varus), was supported by infantry and cavalry sent by Aretas, the Nabataean king of Arabia. This combined force attacked Sepphoris, burned it to the ground, and sold its inhabitants into slavery.

Shortly after that event, Jesus' parents returned with Him from Egypt and made their home in tiny Nazareth, a town of about 400 people. But, within less than a year, Herod Antipas decided to rebuild Sepphoris. Rebuilding it took two decades. In the years to come, Sepphoris was to become the nerve center for the government's control of Galilee and Peraea. Political policy, military strategy, economic regulations, and cultural affairs were administered from this seat of power. And it was only a few miles from tiny Nazareth, nestled on a neighboring hill.

Josephus tells us that Sepphoris was the largest and most modern city in the region of Galilee. The town of Nazareth, set in the saddle of a hill, faced directly toward Sepphoris, the center of which was on a hill on the other side of a fertile plain. Leroy Waterman, of the University of Michigan, who excavated Sepphoris in 1931, said that, from Nazareth, he could see the peak of snowy Mount Hermon to the west; the blue Mediterranean beyond that; and, closer, the hill which was the center of the city of Sepphoris. Growing up, Jesus could see that same view. Waterman adds that it is only an hour's walk from Nazareth to Sepphoris and that, in the first century, it was the second largest city in Palestine—second only to Jerusalem in importance, and probably in size.

Beneath the city of Sepphoris, a large underground reservoir was carved, by the Romans, out of the limestone bedrock of the hill. It was 541 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 22 feet high. A

surface aqueduct brought water to it from the springs of Abel, three miles away. That reservoir was used till the fifth century. Apparently, Sepphoris had a population of about 30,000 inhabitants—Jews, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans. Roads from it went to several other Greco-Roman centers of trade.

Located three miles north of Nazareth and 700 feet below it, Sepphoris had colonnaded streets, theaters, villas, a forum, and a governmental palace. Much of it was constructed of white limestone and colored marble. The amphitheater seated 4,000 people. Archaeologists, working in the 1980s, also found a colonnaded main street bordered by shops and public buildings, pools, fountains, public baths, ritual baths, a residential building, and the location of Antipas' palace.

In order to take advantage of the coolness, a large part of Sepphoris was built on the side of the hills facing away from Nazareth, which was south of it. The entire city covered about 500 acres, and was nestled on a hill which rose 700 feet from the valley floor. So, in the providence of God, Jesus' early years were spent in the comparative isolation of a very small country town.

But, as He entered His teen years, He was able to help His father in the carpenter shop, preparing items to be used at Sepphoris and elsewhere. It is possible that He may, at times, have worked on the carpentry crews at Sepphoris. Scholars believe that, because of the nearness of Nazareth to Sepphoris, Jesus probably spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. (Hebrew, as a spoken language, disappeared centuries earlier; and Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Roman world.)

It should also be mentioned that another major building project during the youth of Jesus was the city of Tiberius, which Herod Antipas constructed on the west bank of Lake Galilee. That lake was not too far from Nazareth, either.

## 10 - *The Final Journey* *to Jerusalem*

**Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-19;  
Luke 19:1-48; John 11:12-15**

And so the years passed, and we draw near to the end—that final day which not only kindles

our deepest feelings, but so vitally affects the destinies of mankind. It was time for Jesus to set out upon His last journey before His death. It would take him from Capernaum, through Palestine, to Jerusalem.

But He did not go there by the short route, which went from Galilee to the Holy City directly south through Samaria. That was the high road which led through the hills of Judaea, alongside Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, by Sychar (ancient Shechem), through Bethel and on down to Jerusalem. Instead of taking that three-day journey on foot, Jesus traveled by way of “the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan” (*Mk 10:1*). Rapidly the route descended downward into the wide Jordan valley. Crossing over into Peraea on the other side of the river, Jesus journeyed with His disciples by clusters of tamarisks, poplars, and licorice trees. At the ancient ford, by Jericho, the little group crossed the Jordan and entered that fabled city of antiquity. It had been greatly modernized by Herod the Great.

As they approached the city, they could see in the distance the palace, called Cyprus, which King Herod had built. Farther in the distance loomed the Roman amphitheater, set in the hills west of the city. The Romans had even built a circus for the amusement of the multitudes.

Before entering the gates, Jesus and His disciples may have stopped to rest in the shade of one of the groves of palm trees that Jericho was so famous for. Around them were balsam plantations and gardens with flowers.

The little band then went to the home of a Jewish tax collector, by the name of Zacchaeus. Preparations were made, and soon the sun had set. The Sabbath had begun. Would we not have liked to spend that Sabbath with Jesus, and listened to what He had to say! The next morning they set out again on their journey. For Jesus had set His face to go to Jerusalem. The only route there from this area lay through the center of this Jericho metropolis, and then up into the hills along the Jericho road which, Jesus Himself said, had bandits.

The Passover was nearing, and thousands of Jews were also making their way to the Jewish capital from every direction. Because this was the major route to the Holy City from the east, Jesus and His disciples found themselves in the company of large numbers of pilgrims. Slowly the little

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group trudged upward along the winding, twisting road, bordered from time to time by steep cliffs. It is twenty-three miles from Jericho to Jerusalem, and most of the way was hot and dusty. But, gradually they climbed higher; the tropical heat departed, and the air became bracing cooler.

As they came opposite Bethany, Jesus and His disciples paused to rest while two were sent to borrow a young donkey. Taking His seat astride it, the little group continued on. But this act was fraught with meaning; for it was the customary manner in which kings entered the Holy City. Recognizing that fact, the excitement of the crowd reached fever pitch, “Hosanna to the Son of David . . . Hosanna in the highest,” they shouted, as they acclaimed Him the promised Messiah (*Matt 21:9*). Then they saw it.

### 11 - A View of the Temple

**Luke 19:41-44**

Near the end of their journey, at the highest point on the road, suddenly the city of Jerusalem is spread out before the traveler from Jericho. Coming from behind the summit of the Mount of Olives, they looked down below them and—before them like a great panorama—was the entire city. Immediately below them was the immense Temple mount, with the Temple in its midst.

At that time in history, it was one of the most beautiful views to be seen anywhere in the world. One hundred and fifty feet wide and high, the front of the Temple faced eastward, toward the place where Jesus and the people stood. Built entirely of light marble and decorated with gold, its pillared colonnades formed a great square around spacious courts and vestibules. Josephus, the first-century historian, said it sparkled “like a snow-capped mountain.” Gleaming in the fast-westering sunlight, the Temple glistened like a pile of snow.

From where Jesus and the people stood on Mount Olivet, they were looking due west toward the Temple and the city beyond. The great walls of the Temple mount towered 250 feet high above the Kidron Valley beneath it. To the right of it were the sturdy walls of the Roman garrison—the Tower of Antonia, with its four great corner turrets, each 120 feet high. In the distance, and some-

what to the right, could be seen the three towers of the palace of Herod in the northwest corner of the city. In just five days, Christ would be tried twice before Pilate, in that building; sentence would be handed down—condemning Him to death. Beyond the western wall (later known as the “wailing wall”) of the Temple mount—two other palaces could also be seen in the distance: the palace of the high priest, where Christ would soon be tried thrice before the Jews, and the palace of the Hasmoneans, where He would be tried before the visiting Herod Antipas.

Then the eyes of Jesus again returned to the Temple, just below and across the Kidron Valley. On Mount Moriah was a flat area of 750 feet square. Along its boundaries were outer-walled porticoes or cloisters. They were roofed with cedar and engraved with beautiful designs. Supporting them were multiple rows of Corinthian columns.

In the porticoes, teachers met with their pupils, to study ancient writings and the Aramaic language. In the main outer court were the money changers, busily changing coins of every nation for the Temple shekel, the only coin accepted by the priests. Close by were the sellers of sheep, goats, and doves, shamelessly making merchandise in the courts of the Temple.

From this outer court (called the Court of the Gentiles), only Jews could walk through the gates into the Court of the Women. From there, only Jewish men could climb the broad stairs and enter into the Court of the Men. Beyond that was the Court of the Priests, where was located the immense altar of burnt offering. Just beyond that were wide stone steps leading up to two immense bronze doors—75 feet high and 24 feet wide, overhung with a golden vine.

That building, the Temple proper, was constructed entirely of white marble, in set-back style. Decorations and trim in gold plating overlaid much of it.

Inside the building was a large room divided into two apartments by a single, one-inch thick embroidered curtain that was blue, purple, and scarlet. Standing within the first apartment before the veil, one could see on the right, or north side, the golden table bearing the unleavened “shewbread,” or “Bread of the Presence.” On the left, or south side, was the golden seven-branched lampstand. Directly in front of the dividing veil was the golden altar of incense.

Beyond the veil was the second apartment. It was, according to Josephus, a room with “nothing whatever.” Centuries before, it had contained the Ark of the Covenant. But, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., the prophet Jeremiah had friends hide it in a cave. It has never been found.

As Jesus and the throng paused to gaze down at the immense building, the people were silent, entranced by the beauty of the scene. It all held deep meaning for Jesus. Within sight was the Sheep Gate, through which Jesus would be led in a few days on His way to Golgotha. Realizing how Jerusalem and the people were so soon to destroy themselves by their actions, Jesus was overcome by grief. And Jesus wept.

Jesus wept for a city so soon to be desolated. Jesus wept for a people who would soon slay Him, their only Saviour. Jesus wept for a world, hardened in rebellion which so needed to return to its God. As usual, His concerns were for others.

## 12 - *The Final Week*

**Matthew 21:1-26; Mark 11:1-14; Luke 19:29-22:8; John 12:12-19**

The leaders of the people gathered in the court of the Sanhedrin, enraged that Jesus would permit the crowds to accompany Him as the king into the city. But they were also terrified because, late that same afternoon when He entered the city, He cleansed the Temple, for the second time, of its buyers and sellers. They were determined that Jesus must die.

Overriding the protests of a few members, their principal concerns were whether to do it through the Roman court, what charge to use if they did so, and how to get the job done before Passover. Learning that Judas had approached one of their number with an offer to betray Jesus, they worked out a contract to pay him to do just that. All that was needed was for the traitor to return and lead them to Jesus in the dark of the night.

One day ran into another, and the week was quickly passing. Then, on Thursday afternoon, Jesus told His disciples to prepare a room where they could have supper together. Little did they know it would be His last before His agony and death.

*Chapter Two**The Day Christ Died**Twelve Key  
Events*

**Matthew 28:17; Mark 14:12-15:4-7; Luke 22:7-23:56; John 13:1-20**

Repeatedly, Jesus thought of that hour which was to come (*Jn 7:20; 8:30; 12:23; 12:27; 13:1; 17:1; Lk 22:53*). Finally that time came—the 24-hour period in which Jesus would give His final teachings to His disciples, agonize in an orchard, be arrested, stand before six courts, be scourged two times, attacked and nearly slain four times, crucified, and buried. His trial took place soon after midnight on the 14th day of Nisan (also called Abib), but the 14th day began several hours earlier.

Although the Roman day (for legal purposes) began at midnight, the Hebrews began their day at sunset. We will base our study of this 24-hour period on the fact that the Jews were required to begin and end each day at sunset (*Gen 1:5, 8, etc.; Lev 23:32*); interestingly enough, following their example, at that time every other people in the Near East did likewise.

So, in the time clock of Heaven, Jesus would eat the Passover with His disciples that evening. (He did so, because it was still a valid service on Thursday evening; type had not yet met antitype.) Then the next afternoon He would die as the Lamb of God—the great Passover Lamb who protects all who would accept and, by His grace, obey Him. Thus this special day—the day that Christ died—began at sunset on Thursday and

ended at sunset on Friday.

Because Passover occurs each year at the end of March or the beginning of April, we will assume that sunset on that particular day was at 6 p.m., since March 21 is vernal equinox and the days and nights would be of equal length at that time. Therefore sunrise, when Jesus was brought to Pilate at the “third hour,” was 6 a.m. (*Mk 15:25*); Jesus was led out to be crucified, “the sixth hour,” or 9 a.m.; Jesus died the ninth hour, 12 noon, when darkness covered the land (*Matt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44; Jn 19:14*). When the darkness ended, it was 3 p.m. His burial was completed before 6 p.m., when the Bible Sabbath began.

Let us now consider twelve key events which occurred on that fateful day: the 14th day of the first Jewish month (*Nisan*).

*1 - The Final Instructions*

**Mark 13:12-31;  
Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-17:2-8**

On one of the highest sections of Jerusalem (known long ago as the upper city and today as Mount Zion, and located just north of the Temple mount) is a large, cool room, reached by climbing some 20 exterior steps. Lying above what is reputed to be the Tomb of David, the room has beautiful Byzantine. This is said to be the upper room where Jesus met with His disciples on that final Thursday evening. It was built by the crusaders about a thousand years later. Where was that upper room actually located? We do not know.

How would you like to hear special instruc-



tions, from Jesus? You can find them in John, chapters 13 to 17. Christ gave some special information to His disciples at the beginning of this 24-hour period. Realizing it would be the last time He would be with them before His death, He had important things to share with them.

First, He taught them that they were to wash one another's feet as He had washed theirs (*Jn 13:2-17*). The disciples, each one eager to attain a higher position than the others, had been discussing the question of which one of them "was the greatest" on the way to the upper room. Filled with self-importance, they had forgotten to summon someone to wash their feet before the meal (a common practice in the Near East at that time). No one was about to humble himself to do the task. Then Jesus arose, and stunned them all—by doing it Himself! This act humbled eleven of the disciples, so they were prepared for the deeper truths He would share with them later that evening. But the same act confirmed in Judas the suspicion that Christ was too demeaning to ever assert His kingship and take the rule of Israel. Surely, he thought, there was no further gain in associating with Him.

Then, as all of them were again seated, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper (*Matt 26:26-29; Lk 24:30; 1 Cor 11:23*). This ordinance was to be the memorial of His death on Friday, just as baptism was to be the memorial of His resurrection (*Rom 6:3-8*). Some say that Sundaykeeping is the memorial of Christ's resurrection, but we are not told that anywhere in Scripture. It was baptism which was to the memorial of Christ's resurrection.

As they ate their evening meal, Christ told His disciples who would betray Him (*Jn 13:18-30*). Judas, not fully hearing Christ's words about dipping the bread—and filled with satanic hatred and a desire for revenge, left the room. He was determined to complete his agreement to betray Christ.

Following his departure, Jesus gave His disciples still more truths, which we are told about in John's gospel. He gave His followers a new commandment to love one another (*Jn 13:34-35*); yet not actually new, for He had been revealing it all along. Then Christ predicted that the disciples would forsake Him in the coming crisis, and that Peter would deny Him (*Jn 13:36-38*).

Next, Jesus foretold His Second Coming to earth at a later time (*Jn 14:1-3*), that He was the only way to heaven (*Jn 14:4-6*), and that His character was just like that of God the Father (*Jn 14:7-12*).

Then He told them to obey all His commandments (*Jn 14:15, 21, 23*), and He said that He would send them His Holy Spirit, to enable them to do so (*Jn 14:16-30*). Finally, they sang a hymn (*Matt 26:30*), left the upper room, and started out for Gethsemane (*Matt 26:30; DA 674*).

Although the sun had already set (it was probably about 9 p.m. by this time), they could see the pathway plainly because it was the time of the full moon. (The moon is always full at the time of the spring Passover.)

As they walked along, Jesus explained to them the deep truth about how close their relationship must be to Him—in order to remain by His side and overcome as He had overcome (*Jn 15:1-9*). They must be as closely attached to Him as the branches of the vine are to the parent stock, or trunk, of the vine. Only in this way, He explained, could they love as He loved (*Jn 15:9*), and obey His commandments (*Jn 15:10-14*). He then explained that the world would hate them because they were like Him (*John 15:18-25*). Again, He promised to send the Spirit to dwell with and in them (*Jn 15:26*), so they would be enabled to love as He loved and obey as He obeyed. Jesus then went into greater detail on the suffering and persecution His disciples would experience in the years ahead (*Jn 16:1-3*); but, He said, the Holy Spirit would be sent to help them stand true (*Jn 16:4-15*).

Then Jesus explained that, although He would leave them for a time, He would return (*Jn 16:16-22*); and, in that day, they would rejoice (*Jn 16:22-23*). Therefore, because the Father loved them as He did, they were to ask and receive that which was needed to cling to Christ live like Him (*Jn 16:24-28*). At this, the disciples assured Him of their love and faith, but He warned them that—very shortly—they would desert Him. But, looking to Him by faith, they would be safe (*Jn 16:29-33*).

Leaving the upper room, Jesus and His disciples had headed toward the Kidron Valley. Only in recent decades has a small stone stairway been found which led from the eastern side of the Temple mount down into the Kidron Valley. Jesus

and His disciples may have taken that shortcut through the Temple mount rather than going around it. But He probably walked around the Temple mount, for He had many things to tell His disciples. The jostling crowds were in the Temple courts that evening, so He may not have used the stairs.

It is known that, when Jesus was in Jerusalem, Gethsemane was a place He often went to pray. So His disciples were not surprised that, when supper was completed,—He wanted to go there that evening in the gathering darkness. Carefully, they made their way down to the little creek and arrived at a small bridge. As they reached the bottom of the trail, at the brook Kedron, Jesus knelt with them and prayed a most beautiful prayer.

It is frequently said that the wonderful prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 is the “Lord’s Prayer.” But, that is actually the disciples’ prayer; It is the one that Jesus taught His disciples (*Matt* 6:9). The Lord’s Prayer is found in the seventeenth chapter of John, and it is a glorious prayer! Read it on your knees several times, and pray over it! It is so filled with the love of God—for you and for your loved ones! The more you read it, the better you will understand it.

Crossing the bridge, on the far side, the road turned south to go around the south end of Olivet. But, instead, Jesus and His little band walked up the hill along a little path a short distance. In front of them was the entrance to the olive orchard.

But, just then, He swayed as a terrible grief came over Him. At this point, Jesus began bearing the sins of the world. The agony of Jesus and His separation from the Father began at Gethsemane. His three days “in the heart of the earth” began on Thursday evening. Three days and three nights later, on early Sunday morning, He would rise from the dead. (In the Bible, part of a day is counted as a whole, and we are here speaking about parts or all of three night times and three daytimes.) Many people in the East still count time that way.

# The Day Christ Died

## 2 - The

## Gethsemane Experience

**Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42;  
Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1**

Gethsemane was a garden on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. At its base was the Kidron Valley. From its slopes could be seen, just to the west, the Temple Mount and Jerusalem beyond. At its summit was the place where Jesus and the crowd had viewed the Temple just four days earlier. The word, Gethsemane, meant “oil press.” And that was what Gethsemane was—a large olive orchard. The orchard was large enough for a rock-hewn pressing vat to be there. So it was here, amid the silent trees, that Christ pled for a world lost in sin. And it was here that He was betrayed.

Queen Helena, mother of Constantine I (A.D. 306-337), went to Jerusalem in A.D. 326 and tried to locate this garden. Today olive groves owned by the Armenian, Greek, Russian, and Franciscan (Catholic) Churches are to be found on that hillside. Somewhere in that general area was Gethsemane. If you go there today, you will still find a few old olive trees. It is said that some of them are at least 800 years old. But none, now existing, were there when Jesus knelt in the garden in A.D. 31, nearly 2,000 years ago. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, tells us that, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus (A.D. 69-70), every tree within miles was cut down and used to crucify Jews (*Wars of the Jews*, 5, 3). More about that later.

Arriving at Gethsemane, Jesus bade eight of them stop and pray near its entrance while He went a little farther into the garden with Peter, James, and John. There were only eleven disciples now; Judas had left to meet his appointment with the priests. The triumphal entry was four days past, and a horrible death would come on the morrow. It was time to pray.

We are told about the Gethsemane experience and the arrest which concluded it in Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; and John 18:1-2. Pausing, Jesus spoke to the three: “Tarry ye here,” He said, “and watch with

Me.” Then He walked a short distance beyond, and fell prostrate upon the earth. He felt that the weight of the sins of the world were separating Him from the Father. It is a strange fact that men and women can spend a day or a lifetime separated from God, and care not. Yet Christ was in an agony when He found Himself separated from the Father. There is a deep lesson here for us. No problem of life is severe, as long as we are with Jesus and as long as we are obeying His Word. It is sin which can destroy us, not the perplexities of life or persecution by those around us.

Jesus was enduring the wrath of God against sin.

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.”—*Zechariah 13:7*.

As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. As Jesus sensed His unity with the Father was broken up, He felt that, in His human nature, He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. Satan pressed the situation upon Him: His disciples would forsake and deny Him, and He would die at the hands of those He came to save. “Why not give up, and leave,” Satan whispered.

Rising eventually from the earth, Jesus returned to the disciples. But He found them sleeping. Back He went and fell to the ground again in earnest prayer for strength to meet the test ahead. Again He returned to His disciples, and again they were sleeping. A third time He prayed and accepted the cup of suffering. He would drink it to its dregs.

In agony, “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Although this is a very unusual phenomenon, bloody sweat (known medically as *hemathidrosis*) may occur in highly emotional states. As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender. Louis XVI is said to have sweat blood as he was being taken to the guillotine. Bloody sweat is a real occurrence, although extremely rare.

Then Christ fell to the ground, as though dying. It was His concern for a lost race, His vicarious bearing of our sins, and His separation from His Father—which caused this great grief; it was not the thought of the terrible experience He would undergo within a few hours. “If this

cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

At that moment, an angel was sent to strengthen Christ for what was ahead. The angel came, not to remove the cup, but to encourage Him that the Father approved of His drinking it. Christ was told that He would see the travail of His soul and would be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. In Gethsemane, Christ tasted death for every man.

He now arose and went to His disciples. Thinking how little prepared they were for what was about to happen, Christ looked sorrowfully upon them and said, “Sleep on now, and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” As He stood there, in the distance, the footsteps of the mob could be heard, and Christ said, “Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.”

## 3 - The Arrest and Betrayal

**Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52;  
Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12**

While Jesus pled with His Father, for those for whom He was soon to die, His disciples had fallen asleep. But Judas was not sleeping; he was quite busy. This was to be the night; Judas had made sure of that. Meeting with the chief priests and Pharisees, he “received a band of men and officers” (*Jn 18:3*). It is an intriguing fact that Judas, who would rather make a shekel than do anything else, had only made a deal to sell Christ for the going price of a slave—a paltry thirty pieces of silver. To get rid of Jesus, the scheming priests would willingly have paid the traitor a small king’s ransom. Yet, when they made their first offer, Judas quickly accepted it without trying to dicker for more.

The religious leaders knew how to get the job done. Temple police were sent with Judas to take Jesus. As they hurried through the streets, they were joined by rabble loitering on the streets who had nothing else to do that night. Soon a band of thugs, armed with clubs, were headed down one street and up another.

It is quite likely that a detachment of Roman soldiers also followed them, to keep an eye on what was going on. There was always a special danger from riots when the Jews gathered for any occasion, and the city was full of them on this night before the Passover. (The Jews did have authority to make arrests and try Jewish citizens in the court of the Sanhedrin; what they did not have was authority to issue the death sentence or execute it.) Historians tell us there is the very strong possibility that it was Roman Temple guards who did the actual arresting. This would be a Roman military detachment that policed the Temple grounds (because Jewish riots often started in that area). The Jewish leaders may, as customary, have informed the Romans that they wanted to arrest a Jew. Roman guards may then have been sent with them to make the arrest and bring the suspect to the Sanhedrin for examination.

From the best we can tell, it was midnight when the mob left the high priest's palace. Jesus had been in the garden a little under three hours. According to custom, the gates of the Temple would have been thrown open to the public at midnight. As the feasts commemorating the Passover deliverance from Egypt ended, the celebrants left the houses and, in ever greater numbers, thronged the streets. At midnight they entered the Temple and then, about an hour or so later, they began retiring for the night. Avoiding the more frequented streets, the arrest party headed toward Kidron Valley. With Judas leading them, they were certain they would be able to find Jesus.

Jesus knew they were coming. He would voluntarily surrender; in fact, He would soon tell His disciples He could have 72,000 angels to protect Him, if He chose not to be taken by the rabble. In the Roman Empire, at that time, a legion numbered six thousand men, and Jesus said twelve legions of angels would be sent by the Father, if He requested it.

At the height of the glory and power of the Roman Empire, under Augustus Caesar, there were only 25 legions of Roman soldiers in the entire empire! So Jesus could instantly have had, in angels, the equivalent of one-half the combined armies of Rome. And, under God, one good angel is more powerful than 185,000 men (*Isa 37:36*).

Down the eastern slope of Mount Zion, the mob hurried toward the Kidron, cursing as they went. Across the bridge, and then up the worn path leading into the garden, they marched. The silence of the garden was no more. Holding torches to lighten the way, they followed Judas. He knew right where to go. Had not Judas promised them:

“Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He. Hold Him fast!”—*Matthew 26:48*.

“Immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”—*Mark 14:43*.

The *Talmud* mentions the clubs of the street rabble and the staves of the Boethusian high priests who had been in control of the populace of Jerusalem since the days of Herod the Great:

“A plague on the house of Boethus: a plague on their clubs!

“A plague on the house of Annas: a plague on their spying! . . . For they are high priests, and their sons are in the Treasury.

“And their sons-in-law in the Government, and their servants beat the people with staves.”—*Talmud*.

That was the Annas to which Jesus would soon be led.

Judas was in the lead, where he had always wanted to be. He was proud he could be considered so important by the Jewish leaders that night. Judas was so anxious to have an important position, that he was willing to betray Christ. Beware lest you do that also. In order to protect His disciples, Jesus stepped forward. Then, with them in the rear, He said, “Whom seek ye?” The course reply came, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am He.”

As these words were spoken, the angel who had recently ministered to Christ—passed between Him and the mob. Immediately, amid a burst of light, the mob was thrown to the ground. Christ could easily have made His escape, but He did not do so. In this incident, a divine warning had been given to the mob. Yet they heeded it not. They staggered to their feet; their hardness was unchanged. But they were temporarily confused, and not certain what to do.

Again, Jesus asked, “Whom seek ye?” Once again they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” In reply, Jesus said, “I have told you that I am He. If

therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." This He said to protect the disciples. As usual, He was ready to sacrifice Himself for others.

Far more hardened than the others—was Judas. He had already rejected far more truth than anyone else there. Now he boldly stepped forward. Drawing close to Christ, Judas kissed Him repeatedly. He wanted there to be no doubt as to the identity of the Man He was paid to betray. Looking at him, Jesus said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And then He added sorrowfully, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Such a statement should have broken Judas' heart, but controlled by Satan he stood before Christ, bold and defiant.

Emboldened by Judas' approach to Christ, the officers stepped forward and bound His hands. At this, Peter stepped forward and, drawing his sword, swung it toward one of the men binding Christ. But he only succeeded in cutting off an ear. Immediately, Christ slipped His hands out of the tight ropes and the hands of the strong men around Him; and, reaching out, He replaced the ear and instantly healed the wound. Then to Peter He spoke words all of us should take to heart; "Put up again thy sword into his place. For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

It was then that He assured the disciples that He could, if He desired, receive 12 legions of angels to protect Him. But, He said He must drink the cup which His Father had apportioned Him. And now, turning to the religious leaders and the mob about them, He told them that they did their work best in the dark of the night. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." At this, the disciples turned and ran. "They all forsook Him, and fled."

According to Hebrew law, the arrest of Jesus was illegal on four separate counts:

1 - All legal proceedings, including arrests, were forbidden at night. It was a well-established and inflexible rule of Hebrew law that arrests and trials, leading to capital punishment [death], could not occur at night. Dupin, the famous French lawyer, explicitly states that both the trial and arrest of Jesus was illegal because both were held at night (*Walter M. Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 226-227*).

2 - The use of a traitor, and thus an accomplice, in effecting an arrest or securing a conviction,

was forbidden by Hebrew law. "Turning state's evidence" was illegal in Hebrew jurisprudence (*Lev 19:16-18*).

"The testimony of an accomplice is not permissible by rabbinic law . . . and no man's life, nor his liberty, nor his reputation can be endangered by the malice of one who has confessed himself a criminal or accomplice of the one judged."—*S. Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 274*.

"The ancient Hebrews forbade the use of the testimony of an accomplice . . . The arrest of Jesus was ordered upon the supposition that He was a criminal; this same supposition would have made Judas, who had aided, encouraged, and abetted Jesus in the propagation of His faith, an accomplice. If Judas was not an accomplice, Jesus was innocent, and His arrest an outrage, and therefore illegal."—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 226-229*.

3 - The arrest was not the result of a legal summons.

"His capture was not the result of a legal mandate from a court whose intentions were to conduct a legal trial for the purpose of teaching a righteous judgment."—*Chandler, Vol. 2, 237*.

"This arrest . . . was the execution of an illegal and factious resolution of the Sanhedrin . . . There was no idea of apprehending a citizen in order to try him upon a charge which after sincere and regular judgment might be found just or unfounded; the intention was simply to seize a man and do away with him."—*Giovanni Rosadi, The trial of Jesus, 114*.

4 - According to Hebrew law, it was illegal to bind an uncondemned man (*Jn 18:12-13*). Thus, in connection with the midnight arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, there took place the first four of a series of more than a score of illegal acts that made the entire proceeding the greatest travesty on justice in all the annals of mankind.

## 4 - The Hearing before Annas

**John 18:13; 19-24**

Caiaphas was the high priest at the time when Jesus was arrested. However, Jesus was initially taken to Annas for trial. He was then taken to Caiaphas for two trials under the Sanhedrin. The third Jewish trial occurred just after dawn, and

was shorter. The word, Annas, is a Hebrew word for “merciful.” So much for the Hebrew; Annas was a crafty man, willing to kill when it would further his own ends.

About the year A.D. 6, Quirinius appointed 37-year-old Annas as high priest in Jerusalem. Quirinius was the high Roman official (died in A.D. 21), mentioned in Luke 2:2 as governor of Syria at the time of Christ’s birth, when Augustus issued a census for tax purposes. But nine years later, in A.D. 15, Annas was deposed by the procurator of Judaea, Valerius Gratus, who replaced him with Ismael, son of Phiabi. However, by that time, Annas was powerful enough that he was able to retain control of the high priestly office for decades to come (*Lk 3:2*).

Very likely, during the time that his relatives held the priesthood, Annas’ official title was *sagan*, or high priest’s deputy. When Christ came before them in the early hours of that fateful Friday, Annas was the president of the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas was the official high priest. Both he and Caiaphas were called “high priests” in Luke 3:2. In Acts 4:6, Annas is called “high priest,” and Caiaphas is “of his kindred.” Annas was so influential that the people of Judaea called him “high priest” even when someone else was! He was the real high priest, and the others were just puppets.

Annas was 56 when Christ was brought before him for the first of the three Jewish trials.

After being securely bound by the Temple guard in Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to Annas in the palace of the high priest. That palace was built in something of a duplex palace arrangement, with a courtyard in between. On one side was Annas’ residence and on the other, the high priest’s.

Over the years, Annas had become more and more crafty. Sixteen years before, the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus had deposed him from the high priest’s office for imposing and executing capital sentences which had been forbidden by the imperial government. He had tried to learn his lessons, and had become the most politically powerful Jew in the world. Although he was now only an ex-high priest, it was he who decided who would hold that office. Prior to his time, the high priest presided over the Sanhedrin; but, during the “reign of Annas,” he himself was its president. Annas practically dictated

its decisions.

The office of the high priest remained in his family for 51 years after he was deposed (A.D. 15-66). So Jesus was brought before Annas for an initial examination. But, for all practical purposes, it was a trial. Josephus, the historian, tells us that Annas was “haughty, audacious, and cruel.”

Jesus was examined by two preliminary hearings before being tried before the supreme Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin. This first hearing, before Annas, took place shortly after midnight. It was followed by two others before the Sanhedrin.

It had been decided that Caiaphas, the current high priest, would preside over both sessions of the Sanhedrin. In these hearings, Jesus was closely questioned regarding His disciples and His teachings. Only John mentions the first hearing before Annas (*Jn 18:13-24*). John 18:19-24 gives the questioning before Annas. It was hoped that Jesus would make some statement on which an indictment could be based, charging Him with blasphemy against God, sedition to the government, or both.

This was the first of a series of six trials constituting the world’s master judicial burlesque and travesty on justice. Jesus was condemned by two separate tribunals, one Hebrew and the other Roman. Each of the two court trials was divided into three parts: the first trial being Christ’s hearings before Annas, and two before the Sanhedrin. The second trial was before Pilate, Herod, and again before Pilate. In the preliminary hearing before Annas, it was hoped that Jesus would incriminate Himself, and thus furnish evidence which would convict Him before the Sanhedrin.

Christ was to be tried formally before the Sanhedrin; but, before Annas He was subjected to a preliminary trial. We will later learn that it was illegal to do this in the manner in which it was done, for several reasons.

The priests hoped to establish that Jesus was guilty of sedition; that is, treason against the Roman government. Only such a charge would be accepted by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, as a basis for crucifying Christ.

Christ read their purpose as an open book, and He could easily have thwarted their objec-

tive. But, throughout all six trials, we will find that Jesus was silent when He should be silent, and He spoke when He should speak. Several times He spoke because principle required it, even though to do so would lead to His condemnation. "I spake openly to the world," He said in reply to their questions. "I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort." A legal trial depended on witnesses; where were they? Jesus was saying, "Why askest thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said."

At this, Annas was silenced; for he feared that Christ might unveil things which the leaders wished to keep secret. One of his officers, standing by, was angered that Christ's words should cause such uncertainty. So he smote Christ on the face. "Answerest Thou the high priest so?" Turning to that man, Jesus said calmly, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil. But if well, why smitest thou Me?" Once again, men were trying to assume evil, without establishing it. But, through it all, Christ spoke no burning words of retaliation. All this time Christ was bound, indicating He had already been condemned. But that had not yet happened.

Annas had gained nothing. Baffled, he told those in the room that Christ should be taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

## 5 - The First Trial before Caiaphas

**Matthew 26:57-27:1, 3-5;  
Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-71;  
John 18:15-18**

Quickly, Jesus was hurried across the courtyard which separated the portion of the palace of the high priest, in which Annas resided, to the other half, in which Caiaphas lived. Each section had its own meeting hall. Ordinarily, the Sanhedrin met in a special apartment in the Temple precincts; but, since the Temple was closed at night and there was no time to lose, this special night meeting had to be held at the palace of the high priest.

This was the second of the two preliminary hearings Jesus appeared before, prior to being

tried before the supreme Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin. In the preliminary hearings before Annas and Caiaphas, it was hoped that Jesus would incriminate Himself, and thus furnish evidence which would convict Him before the Jewish tribunal. After appearing before Annas, Jesus was led away to a hearing before Caiaphas (*Matt 26:57*). It is estimated that Jesus was brought before Caiaphas at about 2:30 a.m.

Who was Caiaphas? His full name was Joseph Caiaphas, and he was the official high priest throughout the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus (*Lk 3:2* and *Jn 18:13*). When Caiaphas married one of Annas' daughters, Annas persuaded the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus, to appoint his new son-in-law as high priest. Joseph Caiaphas was appointed high priest in the year A.D. 18. He remained high priest for 18 years, the longest of any of the family of Annas. Apparently, he was in his mid-forties when Jesus appeared before him for trial. The name, Caiaphas, means "the oppressor"; and Rosadi declares that "his intellectual caliber was below mediocrity," and that the power he wielded was only nominal—Annas was the real power behind the priesthood in those days. Caiaphas was deposed by Vitellius the same year Pilate was kicked out of office—in AD. 36.

After appearing before Annas (with Caiaphas and other key Sanhedrin enemies present) in Annas' residence in the high priest's palace, Christ was then taken across a courtyard to the court of the Sanhedrin—for an appearance before that body, under the direction of Caiaphas. (For the trial before the Sanhedrin, Christ could instead have been taken from the high priest's palace to a courtroom of the Sanhedrin, in an inner apartment of the Temple; for there were two different Sanhedrin courtrooms in the city. But the time was limited, and soon it would be dawn.

So we have very good reason to believe that the trial of Christ before the Sanhedrin was held in that courtroom located within the high priest's palace, just across the courtyard from where Christ was tried before Annas. It was in this courtyard that the rabble awaited the outcome of the hearings before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin. A maid, one of the servants of the palace, kept the door of the courtyard. She was the one who admitted John and Peter. It was in that courtyard that Peter later denied his Lord,

as a rooster began its early-morning crowing (*Jn 18:15-18; Lk 22:54-62*).

What was the Sanhedrin? The Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court in the time of Jesus. It was also called “the Council of the Seventy.” The Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem was the leading Jewish judicial body in the nation. It was founded several hundred years earlier, during the time of Persian control of the nation. Other names for it were the Council of Elders, the Great Council, and the House of the Great Judgment. In addition, each town had its local Jewish council, but all were answerable to the Great Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin had 71 members, with the high priest as chairman. The membership consisted of the chief priest, all retired high priests, and the scribes who were the leading elders of the nation. These were generally the wealthiest Jews. When death or apostasy occurred, new members were appointed for life by the council itself, with the concurrence of the Roman authorities.

When Herod the Great took Jerusalem in 37 B.C., he executed members of the Sanhedrin which had sided with his rival, Antigonus. Henceforth, the Sanhedrin was reduced from a political to a religious authority in the nation. When, on the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., Archelaus gained control, the extent of control by the Sanhedrin was limited to Archelaus’ territory (Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria).

After the outbreak of the Roman war in A.D. 66, the Sanhedrin disappeared amid the turbulence and fighting. It was later replaced by the Council of Jamnia, under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba. Jamnia was a small town located near Joppa. The meeting place of the Great Sanhedrin normally was the *Hall of Hewn Stone* in the Court of Israel (the second of the innermost courts of the Temple). The Jewish name for this hall was *Gazith*.

The Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the Elders of Israel, first came into existence in the period of Seleucid rule (c.200 B.C.), to replace the earlier council, mentioned in Numbers 11:16, which advised Moses. Membership in the Sanhedrin originally consisted of priestly aristocracy, selected by the high priest. But, in Roman times, it included an increasing number of Pharisees, Sadducees, and a few professional scribes. These 71 men (including the high priest as president) claimed supreme authority over

every Jew throughout the world. Orthodox Jews everywhere acknowledged it. But, by the time of Christ, the Roman government (with it the Herods and the procurators) only recognized those Sanhedrin court cases in Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria which concerned a Jew who had violated Jewish law, if the penalty was not the death sentence. So if the Sanhedrin voted the death sentence, it had to be ratified by the Roman government before it could be carried out.

No brief overview of the Sanhedrin is complete without a glance at its leading teachers. In the first century A.D., the two leading Pharisaic teachers were Hillel, 75 B.C.-A.D. 10, and Shammai. Hillel was a pacifier, not a reformer. He made it easier to loan money and obtain divorces. His rival, Shammai, taught a much stricter interpretation of the Jewish writings and rejected divorce. Hillel’s leading scholar, Gamaliel, was also his grandson. He was the member of the Sanhedrin who gave the counsel mentioned in Acts 5:34. Saul of Tarsus had studied under him, before becoming a Christian (*Acts 22:3*).

Two factions continually fought with one another for control of the Sanhedrin. On one side were the Pharisees, with their helpers, a majority of the scribes. The very name, “Pharisee,” was an aspersion that was given them by the Sadducees who called them *Perushim*, or separatists. The Pharisees separated themselves from those they considered “unclean,” and continually practiced rituals of purification; rarely did any of their rituals have a Biblical basis. The Pharisees could invent rules faster than the people could learn them. Josephus, himself a Pharisee, said they were “a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest, and to explain the laws more precisely” (*Wars, i, 8.14*). The Pharisees loved fastings and washings. Most of the middle class sided with this group.

The Pharisees were so adept at burying the Ten Commandments beneath a pile of man-made rules, that the end result was the violation of the Decalogue—in order to obey those rules! A good example of this is found in Mark 7:11, a rule which destroyed obedience to the fifth commandment, under pretense of obeying it. A Jew did not need to care for his aged parents, if he would agree that, at his death, all his property and wealth would be given to the Temple.



Siding with the Pharisees were most of the scribes. The scribes were the *Hakamin*, the learned. Most of them were Pharisees, but a few were Sadducees. They were not a sect, but a profession. They were writers and scholars, who lectured on pharisaic books in schools and synagogues, and debated it with their opponents. While the rest of the Pharisees walked around showing off how well they could keep the thousands of invented regulations, the Pharisaic scribes were then ones who occupied themselves with dreaming up the regulations. The rabbis of later centuries fit the pattern of Pharisaic scribes. They studied the Jewish speculative books, added still more commentaries to the margins, and taught it all to the people.

On the other side were the Sadducees. Most of the upper clergy and upper classes belonged to the Sadducees, so named after their founder Zadok. They were the *Zadokim*. They were nationalistic in politics and orthodox in religion; they were concerned about the enforcement of the *Torah*, but rejected the multitude of additional ordinances of the oral tradition and liberal interpretations devised by the Pharisees. They did not believe in the possibility of life after death, and were content to enjoy this world.

A third class, not represented at the Sanhedrin trial of Christ, consisted of the Essenes. These were very strict Jews who lived in communes under monastery-like conditions. They have become much better known since the 1947 discovery of the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls (written between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100) in a cave near *Khirbat Qumran*. (Since then, scrolls in 11 more caves have been found.) A few Essenes married and lived in towns, but most of them were almost monastic celibates who lived in Qumran, a community on the west side of the Dead Sea.

When the council had assembled in the judgment hall of the high priest's palace, Caiaphas took the seat as the presiding officer that morning. On either side were seated the judges: a large number of the Sanhedrin members. Roman soldiers stood at attention on either side of the platform below the raised throne where Caiaphas sat. Directly below him stood Jesus, still bound.

The men in that room had plotted and looked forward to this moment for over two years. At last, they had Jesus before them. They must not let Him slip from their grasp. The excitement

was intense, yet Christ was calm and serene. While the men lived with their guilt and counseled with their fears, His trust was in God. As every other man who first looked upon Jesus—from the arrest through to His death—Caiaphas was convicted that he was looking upon the Son of God. Quickly banishing the thought, he spoke sharply to Christ. But Jesus gave no reply.

All recognized that they did not have an easy task before them. If Christ displayed His power or if He stirred up a controversy in the room, their objectives would be thwarted. It would be easy for this to be done. The Pharisees and Sadducees were at sword's points on many issues, theological and otherwise. All that would be needed was for Jesus to raise one of them, and immediately the two sides would begin arguing with one another. That fear automatically eliminated much of what Jesus had said publicly. Yes, He had denounced the scribes and Pharisees, but so had the Sadducees. He had disregarded Jewish traditions which were not in the Old Testament, but the Sadducees disregarded most everything religious.

So Caiaphas thought best to turn to false witnesses to prove the case. Men were brought in who had been bribed to accuse Jesus of inciting rebellion and trying to set up a separate government. But their statements were vague and contradictory. Repeatedly, they falsified one another's words, as well as their own. Exasperated, the council did not know what to do. Finally, they settled on one of Christ's earlier statements—and tried to twist it into a charge. He had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (*Jn 2:19*). As John commented, "He spake of the temple of His body" (*Jn 2:21*). But the Sanhedrin now tried to twist that to mean that Christ had threatened to destroy the Temple at Jerusalem. But there was nothing treasonable in talk about rebuilding a Jewish church building, if someone else tore it down. Yet this was all Caiaphas and his cohorts could come up with.

As the trial progressed, His accusers repeatedly became entangled and confused. Something had to be done. Caiaphas was desperate. It appeared as if all their plottings were about to fail. Rising out of his judgment chair, Caiaphas pointed his finger at Christ and in anger said, "Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?" But Jesus remained silent (*Matt 26:62-63*). At last, Caiaphas raised

his hand toward heaven, and cried out, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

At this, Jesus spoke. He knew that to answer now was to make His death certain, but the query was made by the highest religious authority of the nation and in the name of the Most High. But more, His relationship to His Father was being called in question. He Himself had told His disciples, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (*Matt 10:32*). Now He exemplified what He had taught. Knowing full well that His answer would lead to His condemnation, He spoke. The peace of heaven was on His face as He said, "Thou has said." That was a Jewish term, meaning, "Yes, I am."

Then Christ added a warning: "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Looking into His face as He spoke, Caiaphas and the others started back as they heard those words. They knew He spoke the truth and that they dared not condemn Him. Yet they yielded to Satan and did it anyway. But that moment would remain in their memory for the rest of their lives. The room was silent. Who had the nerve to speak after this? But, by this time, Caiaphas was remarkably hardened.

Some action was needed to bring the situation back into their hands. Reaching down with both hands, he deliberately tore his magnificent high priestly robes, and then screamed: "What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" All knew it was now or never. So, unanimously, they condemned Him to death.

By rending his priestly robes, Caiaphas had placed himself under the death sentence (*Lev 10:6*). Yet no one cared to think about God's laws now, any more than they had for years. All that mattered to them was their man-made rules and their thirst for innocent blood.

The trial before Annas, and the first one before the Sanhedrin, were both illegal on five separate counts:

1 - They were a violation of the rule of law that forbade all proceedings by night. M. Dupin, the French advocate, in speaking of these hear-

ings said:

"Now the Jewish law prohibited all proceedings by night; [this] therefore, was another infraction of the law."—*M. Dupin*.

2 - Hebrew law prohibited a judge or a magistrate, sitting alone, from questioning an accused person judicially or to sit in judgment on his legal rights, either by day or by night. No single-judge courts were allowed. Their smallest sessions had three and their largest, seventy-one judges. "Be not a sole judge, for there is no sole judge but one [God]" was a well-known saying in the Jewish *Mishna*. It was believed that God alone was capable of judging without counsel.

3 - Private preliminary hearings—no matter how many judges were present—were specifically forbidden by Jewish law.

"A principle perpetually reproduced in the Hebrew Scriptures relates to the two conditions of publicity and liberty. An accused man was never subjected to private or secret examination, lest, in his perplexity, he furnish damaging testimony against himself."—*Joseph Salvador, Histoire des Institutions de Moise, 365-366*.

But it was to obtain just such evidence that Jesus was questioned in that first hearing. The second hearing (the first trial before the Sanhedrin) was similar, for it also tried to obtain evidence to present at the second trial. But there was no such rule in Hebrew law, permitting preliminary hearings to decide if the accused should be tried.

4 - The hands of Christ were bound during the three Jewish trials. This signified that He had already been condemned. Yet, under Jewish law, the one accused was not to be bound until he had been condemned. But He was not condemned during the trial before Caiaphas, nor during nearly all the trials that followed it.

5 - The Striking of Jesus by the officer during the hearing before Annas (*Jn 18:22*) was an act of brutality which Hebrew jurisprudence did not tolerate . . . It was an outrage upon the Hebrew sense of justice and humanity which in its normal state was very pure and lofty."—*Chandler, Vol. 1, 245*.

According to Chandler, Jesus gave the correct reply to His smiter (*Jn 18:23*):

"Jesus planted Himself squarely upon His legal rights as a Jewish citizen. It was in every word [his reply] the voice of pure Hebrew justice."—*Chandler, Vol. 1, 246*.

Such an act—a court officer striking a defendant in a court trial—would be illegal in any court in the world. Christ was acting within His legal rights when He refused to answer the questions of the high priest. His statement was an appeal for the legal testimony of witnesses.

Thus we have five illegalities in the first two Jewish trials. When we consider the next Hebrew trial, we will learn about 24 additional ones.

During this first trial before the Sanhedrin, two significant events occurred. The first was Peter's denial.

In the upper room, Peter had repeatedly rejected Christ's warning that he would later deny his Lord. Yet he did it during the first Sanhedrin trial. The prediction was: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice" (*Mk 14:30*). And that is exactly what happened. After Jesus was examined before Annas, He was taken across the open courtyard to the residence of Caiaphas for a trial before the Sanhedrin. During that trial, John entered that courtyard, and obtained entrance for Peter. Both of them stood there and listened to much of the proceedings. Then, three times, Peter was questioned as to his relationship to Jesus. A rooster crowed the second time, just after Peter's third denial. Then Jesus turned and looked pityingly at Peter,—and Peter ran in shame from the courtyard. We are told in, *Desire of Ages*, that he went to Gethsemane. There he fell upon the ground and wept and wept, and prayed for forgiveness.

There was also another person who sinned that night. It was Judas. Peter denied His Master, and Judas betrayed Him. The great crisis in Judas' life also reached its climax during that first trial before the Sanhedrin. Seeing that Jesus was not going to flee His captors and that He was going to permit them to slay Him,—Judas suddenly strode down to the front of the courtroom, flung down the thirty pieces of silver, and demanded that Caiaphas release Jesus. "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" he said. But Caiaphas shook him off and said, "What is that to us? See thou to that" (*Matt 27:4*). Seeing he would not be able to gain the release of Jesus, Judas cried and ran from the scene.

What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Both had terribly sinned against their Master. One thing made all the difference: Peter

went out and pled with God for forgiveness; Judas went out and hanged himself. One chose to return to God; the other chose not to.

After Caiaphas tore his priestly robes (which, as we have noted, was contrary to Hebrew law and the rules given to Moses in Lev 10:6), he turned to the men in the Sanhedrin and asked for them to condemn Jesus. This they did.

## 6 - The Second Trial before the Sanhedrin

**Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1;  
Luke 22:66-71**

There were three Jewish trials: the preliminary hearing before Annas (*DA 698-703*), the first trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (*DA 703-714*), and the second (daylight) trial before that body (*DA 714-715*). Not yet having an accusation which would stand in a Roman court of law, the third trial was convened. In both the second and third trials, Jesus was asked if He was the Messiah, and He said that He was.

As soon as Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, in the second hearing, condemned Christ for blasphemy, Jesus was taken to a guardroom. There He remained for some time—probably about an hour. During this time, He was unprotected and the guards and the mob pulled Him one way and another, and struck Him. Filled with demons, they attacked Him. Never was a criminal treated in so inhuman a manner as was Jesus in that guardroom.

During this interim, Annas, Caiaphas, and the members of the Sanhedrin who were present at the first council trial counseled together. The problem was that, although they themselves had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, they did not have a charge which the Romans would accept as worthy of His death. What was needed was not a charge of *blasphemy* against the Jewish religion, but *treason* against the Roman government. Another problem was that some of the Sanhedrin members, desirous of seeing Christ slain, had not been present. They needed to be called in. At the same time, Annas and Caiaphas were careful not to notify Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathaea—for, in the past, they had inter-

ferred with attempts to lay plans in the council to seize and slay Jesus.

Lastly, it seemed well to convene one final trial right at daybreak. This one should be briefer, so they could then rush Jesus to Pilate for ratification of the sentence.

So at daybreak, about 6 a.m., Jesus was taken from the guardroom and led back into the council room of the Sanhedrin. He had declared Himself to be the Son of God, and they had construed this into a charge against Him. But, in Roman eyes, it was not a charge worthy of death. "Art Thou the Christ? Tell us," they ordered Him. But Christ remained silent. Additional questions followed. Finally, Jesus said, "If I tell you, ye will not believe." Then He added a solemn warning: "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God,"

At this, every man in the room leaned forward breathlessly, "Art thou then the Son of God?" they asked. Jesus replied, "Ye say that I am" (a Jewish idiom for "Yes, I am"). Immediately, the room was in a pandemonium, as they cried to one another, "What need we of any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of His own mouth!" And so this second session of the Sanhedrin condemned Christ.

In their excitement, they ended the trial and arose to their feet. But, the fact remained that they still did not have the proper charge. They still only had a charge of blasphemy against their religion, not of sedition against the Roman government.

Then came still another scene of abuse and mockery of Christ. And it occurred right there in the presence of the Jewish priests and rulers. When the condemnation of Jesus was pronounced by the judges, a satanic fury took possession of the crowd. Like wild beasts, they made a rush toward Jesus, as they cried, "Put Him to death!" It was only the Roman soldiers which kept Him from being slain on the spot. Then Jesus was hurriedly taken to Pilate's judgment hall.

In the preceding section, we discussed five illegalities in the first two Hebrew trials of Christ. But there were still more. Here are 24 illegal aspects in the third Jewish trial, many of which would also apply to the first two trials:

1 - Hebrew law demanded two sessions of

the Sanhedrin in case of condemnation, to be held a day apart. In the case of a capital [death sentence] trial, sentence could not be pronounced until the afternoon of the second day. The Hebrew trial of Jesus was thus illegal, for it was concluded within one day; the entire proceedings taking place on the fourteenth of Nisan, the first lunar month of the Jewish year. Here is what the law says:

"In pecuniary cases [concerning money fines], a trial may end the same day it began. In capital cases [where the death sentence was sought], acquittal may be pronounced the same day, but the pronouncing of death sentence must be deferred until the following day in the hope that some argument may meanwhile be discovered in favor of the accused."—*Mishna, sect. 8, "Sanhedrin," 32; also found in sect. 4; 1).*

It is evident from Mark 14:53, 15:1, and other passages that there were two separate sessions of the Sanhedrin, and that they were both held the same night. The first was held very early in the morning before daylight, with only a portion of the members present, probably a quorum composed of the bitterest enemies of Jesus. With Caiaphas they had been up all night in their concern to do away with this Man whom they so much hated.

The second session was held at break of day with the elders, the scribes, and the whole council present. This morning session was probably an attempt to give a semblance of legality to the proceedings, to make them conform to the Hebrew law requiring daylight trials and at least two trials. But being held the same day, only a few hours apart and one of them in the dark of night—they were nothing more than a subterfuge. Repeatedly, these men trampled upon Hebrew law in their efforts to destroy Jesus and the few pretenses of legality they did observe were due to the fact that their examinations would be followed by a Roman court hearing.

2 - The fact that the first of these trials was a night trial invalidated both, and was itself illegal. Like the Romans (and most modern civilizations), the Jews prohibited all legal proceedings by night. Night trials would encourage secret sessions which were forbidden. All who wished should be able to attend it, for someone might have testimony or evidence in favor of the defendant. Also it is well-known that men do not think well and make wise decisions at night. It is unfortunate that many churches today hold

night meetings to decide legal matters concerning rules, standards, and members, when the courts of the land refuse to do so.

In the Hebrew system, according to Mendelsohn:

“Criminal cases can be acted upon by the various courts during the daytime only, by Lesser Sanhedrins from the close of the morning service till noon, and by the Greater Sanhedrin till the evening sacrifice.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 112.

“Let a capital offense be tried during the day, but suspend it at night.”—*From the Mishna*.

Maimonides, a famous Jewish writer of many centuries ago, explained the reason for this:

“The reason why the trial of a capital offense could not be held at night is because, as oral tradition says, the examination of such a charge is like diagnosing a wound—In either case a more thorough and searching examination can be made by daylight.”—*Maimonides, “Sanhedrin,” III*.

3 - The Hebrew trial and condemnation of Jesus was illegal because it took place before the morning sacrifice.

“The Sanhedrin sat from the close of the morning sacrifice to the time of the evening sacrifice.”—*Talmud, Jerus, “Sanhedrin,” C.I., Vol. 19*.

“No session of court could take place before the offering of the morning sacrifice.”—*M.M. Lemann, Jesus before the Sanhedrin*, 109.

“Since the morning sacrifice was offered at the dawn of day, it was hardly possible for the Sanhedrin to assemble until the hour after that time.”—*Mishna, Talmid, or of the Perpetual Sacrifice, C. III*.

The reason for this rule of Hebrew law was that no man was considered competent to act as a judge in any question—regarding capital punishment or otherwise—until sacrifice and prayers had been offered to the great Judge of heaven. The three Hebrew trials of Jesus were entirely completed soon after the break of day, and hence before the morning sacrifice had been offered.

4 - The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was held on the day before the seventh-day Sabbath.

5 - The trial was illegal because it was held on the day of a Jewish ceremonial holy day—the

Passover. Hebrew courts were not permitted to meet on the weekly seventh-day Sabbath nor on the day before it occurred. In addition, court trials were not permitted on a festival or ceremonial sabbath, such as the Passover, nor on the day before it took place.

The trial of Jesus occurred on the day before the weekly Sabbath and on the day of the yearly Passover, which was a ceremonial sabbath. Therefore, for both of these reasons, the trial of Jesus was unlawful by Jewish law.

“‘Court trials must not be held on the Sabbath, nor on any holy day.’”—*Talmud*.

That was the Talmudic law in the matter. And, of course, the trial of a capital punishment case could not be commenced on the day before the seventh-day Sabbath or before a ceremonial sabbath because, in case of conviction, there must be a second trial the following day—on the Sabbath or on the holy day.

“They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on that of any festival.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin,” IV, 1*.

No court of justice in Israel was ever permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath nor on any of the seven Biblical holidays (see Leviticus 23 for a list of them).

“In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday nor the day previous to any holiday, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than overnight or to continue them on the Sabbath or holiday.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*, 67.

The trial and execution of Jesus was not only on the preparation day of the weekly Sabbath but, also that year, on the Passover Sabbath. Because the Passover Sabbath and the seventh-day Sabbath were adjacent to each other on that particular year, the Jews called it a “double Sabbath” or a “high day” (*Jn 19:31*). In a double sense, the proceedings against Jesus were thus illegal.

6 - Between the two Sanhedrin court trials, as dawn was nearing, the Jewish leaders permitted the rabble to spit upon, torment, and persecute Jesus, the Uncondemned (*Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63-65*; the Old Testament prophecies about this: *Ps 18:4; 69:12; Isa 50:6*). The laws of most nations presume a person to be innocent until he is proven guilty; and, prior to a final sentence of condemnation, he is entitled to and given every possible protection by the court

from ill treatment. The permitting of a small riot over the person of Jesus, between the two court hearings, was totally illegal by Hebrew law.

7 - The Hebrew court trials of Christ never produced any acceptable testimony of witnesses against Jesus; yet, sentence of condemnation was pronounced. This was illegal. Consider these facts: According to *Mark 14:55-64*, two separate charges were brought against Jesus in this court of law. The first was sedition, or a rising of discontent against the Jewish and Roman governments through inflammatory speeches and actions. But this charge had to be abandoned because the witnesses could not agree (*Mk 14:55-57, 59*). Their testimonies against Jesus were so mutually contradictory and false that even the wicked judges who had bribed them to give it had to reject what they said. But, according to Hebrew law, the testimonies of the witnesses must agree in all essential details or it must be rejected, and the defendant standing trial must be released at once.

“If one witness contradicts another, the testimony is not accepted.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin,” C.V. 2.*

Much of what the Jewish leaders seemed to be basing things on was hearsay evidence, but this too was forbidden under Jewish law.

“Hearsay evidence was barred equally in civil as in criminal cases, no matter how strongly the witness might believe in what he heard and however worthy and numerous were his informants.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus.*

And so the only hope of the enemies of Jesus was to bring about His condemnation through a change of charges from sedition against the government to blasphemy against God. But this switchover was to result in more illegalities.

8 - The accusation, charge, and indictment against Christ was illegal on two counts—It was vague and indefinite,

“The entire criminal procedure of the Mosaic code rests upon four rules: certainty in the indictment, publicity in the discussion, full freedom granted to the accused, and assurance against all dangers in errors of testimony.”—*Joseph Salvador, Histoire des Institutions de Moise, 365.*

The second charge was never clearly formulated in this court of law.

9 - An indictment against a person must deal with a definite crime, and the trial must be

carried to completion on the basis of that charge. No prosecutor is ever permitted to change charges during the court proceedings because of a failure to prove the first charge on which the trial was based! When the false witnesses failed to prove the charge of sedition, Jesus should have been set at liberty and the case dismissed. But this was not done. Instead, the presiding judge suddenly shifted to a new charge, that of blasphemy.

10 - As we have seen above, not one witness could be found against Jesus;—but, in Hebrew law, not one but at least two witnesses must come forward and convincingly testify before sentence of condemnation could be pronounced (*Deut 17:6; 19:15; Num 35:30*). And the testimonies of at least two witnesses must agree.

11 - The use of false witnesses was another serious infraction of Hebrew law. Such conduct not only disqualified the judge in the case from having further jurisdiction in that trial; but, on the basis of it, he would also be relieved of his judgeship entirely. It also condemned the false witnesses involved to suffer the very penalty they sought to bring upon the accused.

Those who testified against Jesus were themselves deserving of death. Under Hebrew law, false witnesses were severely dealt with. Perjury placed a witness in a position fully as serious as that of the one he testified against. This rule is based on Deuteronomy 19:18-21:

“Hebrew law provided that false witnesses should suffer the penalty provided for the commission of the crime which they sought by their testimony to fix upon the accused.”—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 140.*

12 - For some time before His trial, the Jewish authorities had Jesus constantly shadowed by hired informers, or spies. This also was unlawful (*Lk 20:20*). But in spite of this, when brought to witness against Him, their testimonies were too contradictory to agree.

13 - Under Hebrew law, the judge was supposed to seek for evidence only in behalf of the accused.

“The judges leaned always to the side of the defendant and gave him the advantage of every possible doubt.”—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 153-154.*

The judge was not, during the court trial, to be searching for evidence that would convict the defendant. Benny declares that it was a maxim

of the Jews that “the Sanhedrin was to save, not to destroy life.” Here are two other interesting maxims recorded in the *Mishna*: “Man’s life belongs to God, and only according to the law of God may it be disposed of.” “Whosoever preserves one worthy of life is as meritorious as if he had preserved the world.”

Hebrew law provided no lawyers either to defend or to prosecute. The judges were the defenders, and the witnesses the prosecutors.

“The only prosecutors known to Talmudic criminal jurisprudence are the witnesses to the crime. Their duty is to bring the matter to the cognizance of the court, and to bear witness against the criminal. In capital cases, they are the legal executioners also. Of an official accuser or prosecutor, there is nowhere any trace in the laws of the ancient Hebrews.”—S. Mendelsohn, *The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 110.

14 - To ensure justice to the accused, under Hebrew law, the arguments must begin in his behalf.

15 - Nothing was permitted to be said against him till after at least one of the judges had spoken in his behalf. Neither of these two rules were followed in the case of Jesus.

16 - The sentence against Jesus was unlawful because it was founded on His own confession (*Mk 14:61-64*).

“Self-accusation in cases of capital crime was worthless. For, if not guilty, he accuses himself of a falsehood; if guilty, he is a wicked man. And no wicked man, according to Hebrew law, is permitted to testify, especially not in penal cases.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*, 74.

Rabbi Wise was a learned Jewish rabbi of a century ago. The judges of Christ not only violated the law by acting as accusers, which only witnesses were to do; but, in addition, they illegally extracted a confession from Jesus and, then, used it as the basis for a death sentence.

“We hold it as fundamental, that no one shall prejudice himself. If a man accuses himself before a tribunal, we must not believe him, unless the fact is attested by two other witnesses . . . for our law does not condemn upon the simple confession of the accused [alone J.]”—*Hebrew law, quoted in M. Dupin, The Trial of Jesus before Caiaphas and Pilate*.

Maimonides is an ancient Hebrew legal authority. He says this:

“We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence that no one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be used against him unless properly attested by two other witnesses.”—*Maimonides, “Sanhedrin,” IV, 2*.

“Not only is self-condemnation never extorted from the defendant by means of torture, but no attempt is ever made to lead him on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses [two or more] minutely corroborate his self-accusation.”—S. Mendelsohn, *The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 133.

17 - One of the strangest rules of law ever known was one in the Hebrew legal system: A person could not be convicted on a unanimous vote of the judges.

“A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day of the trial has the effect of an acquittal.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 141.

“If none of the judges defend the culprit, *i.e.*, all pronounce him guilty, having no defender in the court, the verdict of guilty was invalid and the sentence of death could not be executed.”—*Rabbi Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*, 74.

The reasons for this rule is simple. It was the duty of the judges to defend the man; and at least one of them had to do it—or he had no one on his side to see that he received justice. Remember that, under Hebrew law, there were no defense lawyers. This was the work of the judges—and at least one of them had to do it.

“With the Anglo-Saxon jury, a unanimous verdict is necessary to convict; but, with the Hebrew Sanhedrin unanimity, the unanimous verdict was fatal [to the case against the accused], and therefore should have resulted in an acquittal . . . Now, if the verdict was unanimous in favor of condemnation, it was evident that the prisoner had no friend or defender in court [for by Jewish law, he had only the judges as his defenders].”—*Chandler, The Trial of Christ, Vol. 1, 280-281*.

Scripture is clear—a unanimous verdict based solely on the testimony of Jesus was handed down by the Sanhedrin judges. “They answered and said, He is guilty of death” (*Matt 26:66*). “They all condemned Him to be guilty of death” (*Mk 14:64*). This unanimous sentence was

predicted over 600 years earlier (*Isa 59:16; 63:3, 5*).

It is significant that throughout the trial, Jesus was silent when falsely accused, when one might normally speak.—And then He spoke at a time when silence would have been His best defense.

“The condemnation had already been decided upon before the trial . . . Jesus knew it, and disdained to reply to what was advanced in the first place because it was false; [but] what was advanced in the second place He of His own accord freely admitted because, in its material basis, it was true. When a false and unjust charge was brought against Him, He held His peace, and He answered when no proof, not even a false one, constrained Him to speak.”—*Giovanni Rosadi, The Trial of Jesus, 180.*

Jesus was asked a direct question as to whether He was the Messiah. It would have been to His personal advantage to remain silent, and He would have been within His rights to do so. We well-know He could not have been compelled to speak if He did not want to. But silence, at this time, would have been a virtual denial of His identity and mission. In every case, Jesus was always true to the right.

18 - The trial was concluded by a judge that had been disqualified to conduct it. This too was illegal. Under the Mosaic code, if a high priest intentionally tore his clothing, he was automatically disqualified as high priest, and was to receive the death sentence (*Lev 10:6; 21:10*). Caiaphas did this during the trial of Jesus. The official garments of the high priest were symbolic of the Messiah. Also such an act would reveal a rage that was beneath the dignity of the high priest.

“An ordinary Israelite could, as an emblem of bereavement, tear his garments; but, to the high priest, it was forbidden because his vestments, being made after the express orders of God, were figurative of his office.”—*M.M. Lemann, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, 140.*

19 - By Hebrew law, the balloting carried on here was illegal. In a criminal case, the judges must vote one at a time, beginning with the youngest. Each, in his turn, had to arise and cast his vote and then state his reason for his decision. Both the vote and the reasons for it must be written down by scribes before the next man stood up to give his sentence in the matter. Instead of this, Jesus was condemned by an ac-

clamation—a single chorus of approval (*Matt 26:66; Mk 14:64*).

“In ordinary cases the judges voted according to seniority, the oldest commencing; in a capital trial, the reverse order was followed [the youngest voted individually before the older ones].”—*Philip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews, 73-74.*

“Let the judges each in his turn absolve or condemn.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin,” XV.*

The decisions of each judge could not be recorded if this practice were not followed.

“The members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the form of a semicircle at the extremities of which a secretary was placed, whose business it was to record the votes. One of these secretaries recorded the votes in favor of the accused; the other, those against him.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin” IV, 3.*

20 - The verdict against Jesus was also illegal because it was not given in the place required by Hebrew law. It was believed that Deuteronomy 17:8-9 meant that the death sentence could only be pronounced in one certain place. For this, they chose a room in the Temple that was called “The Hall of Gazith,” or “the hall of hewn stone.” Mendelsohn tells us that outside of this judgment hall no capital trial could be conducted, and no capital sentence pronounced. Here is what the law says:

“A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place.”—*Maimonides, “Sanhedrin,” XIV.*

A sentence in the *Talmud* declares:

“After leaving the hall Gazith no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone whosoever.”—*Tulmud, Bab., Abodah Zarah, or of Idolatry, Chap. 1, Vol. 8.*

It is evident from the record that Jesus was tried and condemned in the palace of Caiaphas on Mount Zion, and not in the hall of hewn stone. Edersheim, the Christian Jew, comments on this:

“There is truly not a tittle of evidence for the assumption of commentators, that Christ was led from the palace of Caiaphas into the council chamber. The whole proceedings took place in the former, and from it Christ was brought to Pilate.”—*Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 2, 556.*

21 - The trial of Christ was illegal because it was based on bribery. The judges of Jesus had bribed Judas to deliver Him into their hands for a specified sum of money (*Lk 22:3-6*). Geikie



says that the “thirty pieces of silver” was the price paid for a slave. Dwight L. Moody once said, “God sent His only-begotten Son to ransom man; and man offered thirty pieces of silver for Him.”

The Mosaic code was very severe on those who wrested judgment through bribery (*Ex 23:1-8*). Under Hebrew law, this included judges who gave bribes as well as received them. In all nations and in all ages, the giving or receiving of bribes by judges disqualifies them from office and nullifies their verdict. In this case, the evidence of bribery was publicly given by Judas, in the midst of the judgment hail and in the sight of all the spectators, when he returned the bribe money and confessed his part in the matter (*Matt 27:1-6*). According to Acts 1:19, this was done so publicly that “it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem.”

22 - The condemnation of Jesus, by the Sanhedrin, was illegal since the judges were disqualified to pass sentence upon Him because of their hatred of Him. Benny, the noted Jewish legal expert, states the law of the Hebrews—and of all nations—when he says:

“Nor under any circumstances, was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges.”—*Philip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews*, 37.

“Nor must there be on the judicial bench either a relation or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or of the accuser.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 108.

If the defendant has the slightest reason to suspect the enmity of a judge, he can demand that his case be brought before another judge. And what is the record? Within the six months previous to the trial, there had been at least three meetings of the Sanhedrin, the highest council and court in the land,—specifically for the purpose of planning the death of Christ.

The first of these three sessions is given us in John 7:37-53. The second occurred a few weeks before the trial, and is recorded in John 11:41-53. The third council meeting, to plan His death, took place just before the Passover (*Lk 22:1-3*). And, of course, their judicial enmity against Christ is also shown not only by the bribery of Judas, but also by the hiring of the false witnesses. Jesus had been condemned and even sentenced to die, before the trial ever began.

23 - The judges of Christ were also disqualified to listen to the case or to pass verdict on it because most of them had been dishonestly elected to office. Under Hebrew law, the members of the Sanhedrin must be chosen only because of high nobility of character.

“The robe of the unfairly elected judge is to be respected not more than the blanket of the ass.”—*Mendelsohn, Hebrew Maxims and Rules*, 182. 24.

24 - In addition, they were to receive no salary or reward for their membership in the Sanhedrin. It is a well-known fact that many of the judges of Jesus were not only degenerate and corrupt in character, but they had purchased their seats in the council and were making merchandise of their offices. In fact, several of them had grown rich by this means. This was especially true of the family of Annas, the high priest. The amount of information available to support these last two illegalities would fill most of this sheet of paper.

“Throughout the whole course of that trial [of Jesus before the Sanhedrin] the rules of the Jewish law of procedure were grossly violated, and the accused was deprived of rights belonging even to the meanest [lowest] citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before His arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial; He was tried on a feast day, and before sunrise; He was compelled to criminate himself, and this, under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and He was sentenced on the same day of the conviction. In all these particulars the law was wholly disregarded.”—*Simon Greenleaf, The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*, 566.

Simon Greenleaf was professor of law at Harvard University at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was considered to be one of the outstanding legal minds of his day.

“Grasping priests denounced Him; false witnesses accused Him; Judges of bad faith condemned Him; a friend betrayed Him; no one defended Him; He was dragged with every kind of contumacy and violence to the malefactor’s cross, where He spoke the last words of truth and brotherhood among men. It was one of the greatest and most memorable acts of injustice.”—*Giovanni Rosadi, The Trial of Christ*, 1.

## 7 - *The First Trial* *before Pilate*

**Matthew 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-6;  
Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38**

Lucius Pontius Pilate was a Spaniard, born in the city of Seville, probably about the time of the birth of Christ. We never would have heard of him, except by a unique set of events that made him one of the most famous men of all history. For Pilate was the judge that approved the death sentence upon Jesus Christ.

According to the existing law, the sentence of death upon Jesus had to be approved by the Roman procurator, to whom belonged the so-called *ius gladii*. Only he could authorize the death penalty. And the procurator of Judaea at that time was Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-36).

The name, "Pontius," may have been given him because of fighting that was done earlier by someone in the family in the Pontus (Black Sea region) of the Roman Empire. "Pilate" may stem from *pilatus*, "javelin," which was given to victors of certain armed combats. We are told that his father, Marcus Pontius, won the *pilum*, or javelin, for heroic Roman service; and that the name, *Pilati*, was taken henceforth as the family name to commemorate this medal of valor.

Having fought in the German campaigns of Germanicus, young Pilate, at the conclusion of the war, went to Rome. Rome was the place to go if you wanted a good job, and Pilate was determined to get it.

He had not been long in this city, famous for size and debauchery, when he met Claudia, the youngest daughter of Julia. Now, this Julia was the daughter of the previous emperor—Augustus Caesar. She was the black sheep of the family. Julia was so vile that, after having married Tiberius, her third husband, her own father, Augustus, banished her from Rome because of her lewd and dissolute life. Suetonius, the Roman historian, tells us that nothing so embittered the life of Augustus as did the shameful conduct of his own daughter, Julia.

While Julia was in exile, she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, Claudia. The father was a

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Roman soldier. But all would go well for Claudia; for on the death of Augustus, her mother's third husband, Tiberius, became emperor. At about the age of thirteen, Claudia was sent to Rome to be raised in the palace of the emperor. Pontius Pilate arrived in Rome when she was about sixteen.

After the wedding in a pagan temple in Rome, as Lucius Pilate and Claudia came out to enter an imperial litter and be borne by slaves to the palace, Pilate was stopped and drawn aside. It was Tiberius, the emperor himself. He had been one of the twelve witnesses required to attend the marriage ceremony. Tiberius held him back and handed him an official document which he had taken from under his coat. And so Pontius Pilate received his wedding present—the governorship of Judaea—with orders to proceed at once to Caesarea, to take over the office recently vacated by the recall of Valerius Gratus. It was A.D. 26, and what would the future hold for Pilate? Little did he dream what it would bring five years later.

Palestine had been conquered in 63 B.C. by the Roman general, Pompey. At that time it passed under Roman rule. Nine years after the birth of Christ, in A.D. 6, Judaea was made a Roman province, under the rulership of governors, called procurators. Pontius Pilate was the sixth of these procurators.

The procurators were personally appointed by the emperor, and were sent out from Rome as his personal representatives. Judaea was considered one of the most difficult of the provinces to rule at that time, and it is somewhat surprising that it was given to a man as inexperienced as Pilate. In 1961, in the ruins of the Roman theater at Caesarea, an inscription was found chiseled into rock. The engraving mentions the names of Emperor Tiberius and Pontius Pilate. It read:

"In honor of Julius Tiberius/Marcus Pontius Pilate/prefect of Judaea."

Immediately, Pilate was notified that his ship was waiting to take him to his province—and that Claudia would be sent soon after. He did not see her again for several months, at which time she rejoined him at the port city of Caesarea, on the coast of Palestine.

It was a large area that Pilate had been given the rulership of. But, when he arrived in Judaea,

he was totally unprepared for governorship. He had never governed anything in his life, much less an entire nation. One blunder after another brought upon him the intense hatred of the Jewish people that he now ruled over.

The coastal city of Caesarea was the Roman capital of Judaea. Pilate decided to make it his summer capital, and relocate the winter capital in Jerusalem. This bothered the Jews. But, when he brought with him to Jerusalem the military standards on which Caesar's image was prominently displayed, the city almost rioted. The people petitioned Pilate to remove them, but he refused. This went on for several days. Then, following a near-slaughter of a large number of the populace, he finally relented and sent the shields and images back to Caesarea.

After this, Pilate made a secret deal with some of the Jewish leaders and obtained Temple money to use to repair the aqueduct, or water supply, to Jerusalem. When the Jews learned of this, another riot took place. Pilate sent his soldiers among the mob with concealed daggers—and a great massacre followed.

Still later, he placed pagan shields dedicated to heathen gods into his winter home in Jerusalem. Again he refused to remove them until, at the request of the people, a direct order came from Tiberius that Pilate take them away. The predecessors of Pilate had been careful to avoid offense to the Jews because of their religious ideas; but, of this, Pilate cared little. Proud and tactless, Pilate defied the religious beliefs of those whom he had been sent to govern until the emperor himself had to step in, at the appeal of the people, and personally require Pilate to retract some of his more headstrong ways. All of these experiences served only to deepen Pilate's hatred of the Jews and their hatred of him.

Both Josephus and Philo, two first-century writers, have left on record a very ugly picture of the character of Pontius Pilate. Philo Judaeus lived at the same time Pilate did, and he charged him with "corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, endless and intolerable cruelties" (*Philo Judaeus, De Legatione ad Calum, 1034*).

By A.D. 31, Pilate had learned to stay most of the time in Caesarea, the provincial capital of Judaea. He spent but a few days each year in

Jerusalem, and this was usually during the great national Jewish festivals when the danger of insurrection was the greatest.

And he had reason to be wary; for, throughout that century, the Romans repeatedly had more trouble with the Jews than with any other people that they governed. The Jews had become a turbulent nation. Embittered because of the loss of their kingly and judicial authority, they seethed with continual discontent that a foreign power ruled them. These feelings seemed to run highest during their national gatherings.

Josephus, the first-century historian, estimated the number attending a single Passover at 2,700,000, including the population at Jerusalem. And so it was, that on such occasions, the governor made sure he too was at Jerusalem—accompanied by a small army.

Before his death in 4 B.C., Herod the Great had built an ornate fortress palace in Jerusalem; and, during his visits to the city, Pilate stayed there. Josephus tells us it was the official residence of the procurators—the governors—of the province, whenever they stopped over in Jerusalem. It was commonly known as the "palace of Herod." The palace was located in the northwest quarter of the city. From its upper windows the entire city and surrounding countryside could be seen.

One of the wings of the palace contained an assembly room in which Roman court trials were held. This was the praetorium of Mark 15:16, the common hall of Matthew 27:27, the hall of judgment of John 18:28, and the judgment hall of John 18:28, 33; 19:9; and Acts 23:35. (There was a second Roman judgment hall in the fortress Antonia, just north of the Temple mount. But we will assume in this study that Pilate, when awakened at Herod's palace, went directly to the judgment hall located in the same building.)

The palace of Herod was the most magnificent home in the city. It was surrounded by walls that were sixty-five feet high, from which rose strong towers. Within the palace were spacious rooms with elaborate carvings on both walls and ceilings that were inlaid with gold, silver, and precious stones. Between the palace and the guard walls were groves, gardens, pools, and walkways. This palace was to become the hall of judgment and condemnation for Jesus Christ, the Creator of the world and its only Saviour.

The sun was just coming up. It was that time of morning when birds sing their hardest. But Pilate didn't want to hear it; he wanted to sleep. And he knew he would need it, for this was the time when trouble could begin. The morning would bring the height of the Passover festival.

But, hurrying through the streets, priests and rabble pressed toward the gate of the palace of Herod. Upon reaching it, they halted. Passover preparation had already begun, and "defilement" (according to their man-made regulations) was sure to be theirs if they entered this heathen building today. But their hearts were already defiled with the hope of murdering another innocent person. Gradually the crowd increased, and with it the noise.

And so when aroused, Pilate knew he had better get out there right away. To please the impious Jewish leaders, the Roman trial of Christ took place outside the gate, and not in the praetorium, where the pavement, or Roman judgment seat, was. This was the first of several illegalities that occurred during the trial. We will learn later that only the private questioning and handwashing occurred inside.

There were two trial sessions before Pilate, interrupted by another before Herod Antipas. You can read the complete story of the first trial before Pilate in Matthew 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; and John 18:28-38. The trial before Herod is given in Luke 23:6-12. The continuation of the trial before Pilate is given in Matthew 27:15-31; Mark 15:6-20; Luke 23:13-25; and John 18:38-19:16.

As he strode through the massive rooms of the palace toward the gate, Pilate was told that the Jews had a prisoner to be sentenced,—and just now he was only too glad to be agreeable. It would put the Jews in a good humor and perhaps make the weekend go better. Pilate had never been a man to worry much about justice.

Ignoring the prisoner, Pilate immediately directed his attention toward the priests, and called out, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" In reply, the evasive answer was "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." Pilate was used to this kind of reply from these men. So he let them have him—that's what they wanted. "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." "We can't do it ourselves—for we want the death sentence."

And, just then, for the first time, Pilate looked at Jesus. Stunned, Pilate hardly saw the crowd, hardly heard the curses and impatient calls of the rabble and the Pharisees—for Pilate's eyes were riveted on the face of Jesus. Pilate had never seen a face like that before in his life. It had such purity. And there was such a kindness in it. It bore a king-like expression of patience and dignity beyond anything he had ever seen before. And Pilate was no stranger to the palaces of royalty and kings.

From somewhere he heard contemptuous voices call out the name of the prisoner. "Jesus," they said. He had heard of Him. What had he heard? Memories of reports submitted to him over the past three years about this man's activities—His sayings, the speeches, those miracles—it was coming back to his memory. Pilate was confused. It seemed like an immense decision lay ahead of him. And somehow he knew he hadn't prepared himself to meet it.

Then Pilate spoke, and demanded a formal charge against the prisoner. The Jews were surprised. Pilate usually went along with them better than this. Amid hooting and yells from back in the crowd, the priests called out that Pilate should accept their conclusions in the matter without asking too many questions. But, by now, Pilate was trying for the firmness of decision that in the past he had never taken time to develop. More clearly he was recalling to mind stories of paralytics and lepers cleansed—and even members of his own centurions' families healed.

Although Pilate did not have much firmness of character, his office had taught him to read people; and it was clear as the day that the Man before him was totally innocent of any accusation. Yet it was not the innocence nor the stories—it was the face of Jesus that held Pilate back from handing Him over to His enemies. Pilate knew he didn't dare. In the shimmering heat of the early morning, Pilate saw before him a man that was Godlike.

But the uncertainty that Pilate's apparent firmness had brought to the Jewish leaders quickly passed from them. Important principles in the great controversy between Christ and Satan were here being worked out; and it seemed as if, on this day, these men were in close league with devils in their desperation to destroy Jesus. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that

He Himself is Christ, a king.”

The men who sought in vain to find a valid charge against Christ, when He appeared before them three times earlier that morning, now dreamed up another on the spot. A political charge was needed—and so three were given. And each one, though without a foundation in fact, was a charge of treason against the government of Rome.

Pilate well-knew that a procurator, when holding a trial against a provincial citizen, could use either Roman law or the laws of the nation of the national that was being judged. But if the charge was treason, only Roman law could be applied. And so it was Roman law that Pilate must follow in this, the most famous court trial in history.

We know what Roman court law was; for it was the law used in court trials at Rome, and it was required that it be applied the same way in the provinces. Because of this, we know that the Roman trial of Jesus before Pilate was illegal in a number of instances. Even though we will consider them more fully later in this study, just now we will list eleven of them:

1 - Private citizens were to submit the charges and prosecute the case in a Roman court—not provincial public officials. Even though a trial had previously been conducted by the Sanhedrin, their death sentence required a brand new trial by Rome—and private citizens must initiate and prosecute it. But, instead, the Jewish leaders only wanted their own illegal trials ratified.

2 - If there was more than one accuser, a preliminary hearing must be held to decide which one should prosecute the case. Instead, the Jews brought Jesus—and a confused bunch of anonymous accusers in the mob voiced a variety of complaints.

3 - This preliminary hearing must be an entirely private one—a closed door affair with the defendant, the prosecutors, and those testifying being the only ones present. —It was not to be held out on the street with a mob screaming in the background.

4 - Only after such an initial hearing could the several prosecutors frame an indictment; that is, state in words the charge against the man. But, instead, no properly held, initial Roman

hearing had been conducted, nor would it be.

5 - It was only after that hearing that the indictment could be presented to the judge. Instead, the “trial” of Jesus before Pilate continually edged closer to mob rule.

6 - Only after the indictment had been properly presented, could the trial date be appointed, and then fixed on the legal calendar of coming events. Instead, neither Pilate nor his courtroom attendants were given any advance notice of this sudden appearance.

7 - When the day of the trial actually came, the judges and jurors were to be summoned by heralds. Instead, we see something akin to a vigilant party, intent on killing a selected man.

8 - Next, the impaneling of the jury was to begin. This was done in this way: The names of a number of citizens were written on clay tablets and deposited in an urn or clay bowl. Then the number required was drawn out. Instead, we find only the angry roars of a street mob deciding what came next.

9 - *Only in the forum—the Roman courtroom—could the trial be conducted.* Seats were placed for the Roman judges in that officially approved legislative hall. But, instead, the Jewish leaders had decided that everything was to be done on their terms, or else.

10 - The Roman court was held on the pavement (more on this later). The doors were to be shut, not open to the crass multitude outside. But Pilate, when on the pavement at the end of the trial, had to shout back and forth to the mob standing outside in the street.

11 - Decisions were arrived at by balloting, and this was done as black (condemnation) stones or white (acquittal) stones were deposited in an urn as it was passed. But, instead, the cry, “Let Him be crucified,” was the only balloting that was done.

However flawed might be the presentation, and however lacking the evidence, these charges of sedition or treason against the government hit Pilate in a weak spot. We are told that, according to Chandler, the emperor Tiberius Caesar was

“a morbid and capricious tyrant, whose fretful and suspicious temper would kindle into fire at the slightest suggestion of treason in any quarter. Tacitus, the Roman historian, records

fifty-two cases of prosecution for treason during the reign of Tiberius . . . The most harmless acts were at times construed into an affront to the majesty or into an assault upon the safety of this miserable despot.”—*Walter M. Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 2, 70.*

Pilate was well-aware that Judaea was a powder keg. And he knew that Rome recognized it also. The emperor did not want problems with the Jews; Tiberius had told Pilate that several times. The charge the Jews brought against Jesus might be construed as more serious by the emperor and the senate—because it originated in Jerusalem. Pilate wished that, five years earlier, his step-grandfather-in-law had given him a charter to rule some other part of the empire. Why did he send him to this place?

And now for the first time, Pilate entered the Forum, or Roman judgement hall (the praetorium), where the entire trial was supposed to have been held. But it was only for a few minutes. Pilate wanted to speak quietly with Jesus. Hearing the charge of treason, his firmness was already crumbling, and he thought that something Jesus might say could give him a fresh outlook on a direction he should head in all this. This idea of standing resolutely for the right because it was right—without further ado, simply setting Jesus free—never occurred to him.

The conversation that ensued can be read in John 18:33-38. It has many lessons for us. At a time when it was not in Jesus’ best interest to acknowledge that He might be a king,—He told Pilate, three times in this interview, that He was one! Yet each time He also told him that His kingdom was not of this world. It is obvious that Jesus only gave Pilate this information to help Pilate personally, regardless of how it might affect the outcome of the trial. It was truth that Pilate needed. Pilate needed salvation. And Jesus was more concerned that Pilate have it than that His own life be spared.

But then, after asking for the information—Pilate walked out. Business was calling. If I could write one phrase on Pilate’s tombstone, I would etch the words, “He didn’t wait for an answer.”

Pilate was convinced now that Jesus was thoroughly innocent. Reaching the gate, Pilate rendered his official decision as the presiding Roman judge in the case—“I find in Him no fault at all.” One of the most prominent legal minds in American court history—none other than

Simon Greenleaf—has written a book on this trial. Consider his words:

“Here was a sentence of acquittal, judicially pronounced, and irreversible, except by a higher power, upon appeal: and it was the duty of Pilate thereupon to have discharged Him.”—*Simon Greenleaf, The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice, 565.*

Dr. Greenleaf was a professor of law at Harvard University at the turn of the century, and was considered to be one of the keenest students of jurisprudence of his time.

Clearly, it was the duty of the procurator to enforce his decision. Not only should he immediately release Jesus, but he should protect Him from the fury of the mob as well. This he could easily do; for, with a single command from him, a detachment of Roman soldiers would immediately have dispersed the crowd.

But Pilate did not do that. Instead, he hesitated. That hesitation destroyed him. With eager anticipation, the Jewish leaders had awaited the return of Pilate. When he appeared and summarily declared Jesus innocent, it was too much. Amid the terrific roar of shouting voices, another baseless charge, was hurled. “He stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

The Jews were trying to reopen the case that Pilate had just closed, and this Pilate should not have permitted. He had already rendered a verdict of innocence. The trial was actually over; the case only waiting to be dismissed. It was a rule of Roman law that “no man shall be put twice in jeopardy.” This same principle of double jeopardy is an important one, even in modern law. A man cannot be tried in a court of law twice on the same charge.

But, instead of reacting to this offense to the Roman system of law, Pilate used it as an excuse for an easier way out of it all. Rather than stand by the Roman law now that the trial had been concluded, Pilate reopened the case and sent Jesus to Herod. When everything was all settled, Pilate opened it up again as a way to solve it.

## 8 - The Trial before Herod

**Luke 23:8-12**

Herod Antipas (4 B.C.-A.D. 39) was the brother of Archelaus (mentioned in Matt 2:22), and the eldest of the three sons of Herod the Great,—the man who tried to kill Christ at His birth (*Matt 2:13:16*). Herod the Great had ruled for 33 years (37-34 B.C.); but his son, Herod Antipas, ruled Galilee and Peraea even longer: 43 years (4 B.C.-A.D. 39). Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea; his provincial capital was Tiberius, in Galilee.

In the New Testament, Herod Antipas is generally referred to as “Herod.” So it is easy to imagine that it was Herod the Great who slew John the Baptist and before whom Christ was tried. But Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.; the “Herod” of Christ’s ministry and crucifixion was Herod Antipas, the eldest son of Herod the Great.

It was probably some time before A.D. 23 that Herod Antipas first met Herodias in Rome. This woman was the wife of Herod’s half-brother, Philip (not the Philip which ruled Ituraea and Trachonitis). Her husband, Philip, lived quietly in Rome; and, apparently, Herodias wanted more excitement than he offered. She was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, and Herod Antipas was his son by a different mother.

During a visit to Rome, Herod fell in love with Herodias, his niece, and she left her husband and went to live with him. (Philip was married to his niece, Herodias, who fell in love with her uncle, Antipas—who was Philip’s brother.)

Learning that Herod was returning from a trip to Rome with Herodias as his new consort, Herod’s rightful queen, a daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, fled to Petra before her husband, Herod, could arrive and detain her. She feared that he might imprison and slay her.

Later, when John the Baptist rebuked the adulterous pair, Herodias seethed with hatred and determined to plan a way to slay John. When she married Herod, Herodias had brought Salome, her daughter, with her. It is Josephus, the historian, who tells us Salome’s name, and also the prison where Herodias pressured Herod into incarcerating John: the fortress of Machaerus,

one of several strongholds which Herod the Great had built. It lies in the rugged country on the east side of the Dead Sea, in what was once Moab. Arabs today call it *El-Mashnaka*, the “hanging palace.” Far to the north can be seen that part of the Jordan Valley where John earlier baptized the people, and where he was arrested by officers sent by Herod.

Salome must have been about 19 years old when John was slain. As a result of the drunken state of Herod and his guests that evening, and the wild dancing of the girl, John was beheaded (*Mk 6:21-28*). That probably occurred about a year or so before Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod for examination. After permitting John to be slain, Herod Antipas was filled with guilt and remorse. He could not seem to shake it.

Herod Antipas happened to be in Jerusalem during the week that Jesus was brought to trial. So, when Pilate heard “Galilee” mentioned, he thought that perhaps he could transfer jurisdiction of this case (actually a concluded case, for Pilate had already rendered his verdict of innocence) to Herod. So Jesus, the One no one wanted, was sent to Herod—the man who, at a drunken party, had ordered the death of one of the godliest men of the century—John the Baptist.

Under escort of a praetorian cohort, Jesus was sent to the palace of the Maccabees (also called the palace of the Asmoneans) where Herod was accustomed to stay on his trips to Jerusalem. The mob again hurried down the streets of the city, bound for yet another courtroom.

This palace, used by Herod when in Jerusalem, was in the same quarter of the city as the palace of Herod. An older building, it lay but a few streets to the northeast, within the same old city wall. It was on the slope of the same hill that Herod’s palace crested.

The Jews had refused to enter Pilate’s headquarters, but Herod was in a far uglier spirit. They were not going to pull that trick on him. He cared nought for Jewish fooleries. If they wanted to talk to Herod Antipas, they would have to enter his courtroom. So, without complaint, they did.

Jesus was to appear before the man whose hands were stained with the blood of John the Baptist. But hardened though he was, Herod was glad to see Jesus. Now that Jesus had come to

him, he hoped that, by releasing Jesus, he could silence his accusing conscience. Yet, in addition, Herod wanted to satisfy his idle curiosity. He wanted Jesus to provide him with some grand entertainment. So he ordered the sick and the lame to be brought in, so he might see them healed in front of him. It would all bring him some laughs, and then, he promised, he would release Jesus.

Hearing this, the Jewish leaders were thoroughly frightened. They well-knew Jesus' power over disease and feared for what was ahead. But to everyone's surprise—Jesus did nothing and said nothing. He was not to work miracles to save Himself. Herod had no intention of killing this Man who was so popular with the common people throughout two provinces. Jesus was considered by many to be a prophet, just as John had been. And the stain of one of their deaths was enough for Herod. Yet he was not prepared for the amazing self-control of Christ. Herod was a hardened man—and Jesus had no words for him. Try as he would, Herod could obtain no healings, and not even a reply from the Man who stood before him. Now, this was a rebuke to his ego and authority which Antipas would not tolerate.

The silence of Jesus finally brought the patience of Herod to an end. Maddened with fury, Herod left his throne and acted like a demon; he was immediately accompanied in this diabolical work by nearly everyone in the room. They mauled and struck Him. Few will ever know what Jesus went through that day, so that man might have another chance to return to God and again in His strength obey His laws.

“And Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”—*Luke 23:11*.

If the Roman soldiers, standing there in Herod's courtroom, had not saved Him, Herod, the rabble, and the priests would have torn Him to pieces.

Twice robes would be placed on Christ on this day. Here, before Herod, was the first; later, in the second trial before Pilate, would be the second. But, amid it all, Christ stood there in calm patience. He seemed to be as a god on His throne. Gradually the tumult ceased; and, with bated breath, the people drew back. Herod was thunderstruck, and dared not pronounce sentence in the case. That was technically equiva-

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lent to an acquittal. Yet Herod did not acquit Him, but instead sent Jesus back to Pilate.

The manner in which Herod conducted himself and what he permitted the mob to do to Christ was clearly illegal under Roman law.

### 9 - The Second Trial before Pilate

**Matthew 27:15-28; Mark 15:6-15;  
Luke 23:13-25; John 18:38-40**

Pilate clearly recognized that Herod's action was the same as an acquittal. And he said so, when Jesus returned.

“Ye have brought this Man unto me as one that perverteth the people. And, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod, for I sent you to Him, and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.”—*Luke 23:15*.

For a second time, Pilate had rendered a verdict of “not guilty.” But instead of releasing Jesus, he said he would have Christ beaten before freeing Him.

This was a Roman scourging. Jesus would receive two before He was sent to the hill of Calvary. What was a Roman scourging? Scourging, or flogging, was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt. The usual instrument was a short whip (Latin: *fiagrum* or *flagellum*; Greek: *phragellion*) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals. Occasionally, staves were also used.

The victim was either stripped to the waist (exposing his back) or stripped entirely. Then he was usually bound to a post with his hands tied together; and the scourge applied to the back, buttocks, and legs with lacerating blows.

As the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The scourging was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of col-



lapse or death. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

This scourging of Jesus in the praetorium is mentioned in 1 Peter 2:24. An analysis, in the Greek of that text, indicates that scourging was especially harsh. It is not known whether the number of Roman lashes was limited to 39, as required under Jewish law. Within a very short time, Jesus would receive a second scourging in this second trial before Pilate!

Once again, Pilate was trying to escape the responsibility for freeing Jesus. He thought that by flogging Jesus, he could satisfy the Jews and Jesus would be set free. For the second time, he had a golden opportunity to release Him; and, for the second time, he cowardly let it pass. It was Pilate's fatal vacillation which doomed Jesus and destroyed himself.

Immediately there went up a cry and shout for Jesus' death that was deafening. Gradually it subsided as Pilate proposed something new. It was the Jewish custom that one criminal be freed at each yearly Passover. Pilate now graciously offered to let Jesus be the one set at liberty. Placing Jesus before the people, next to Barabbas who was a hardened criminal, he appealed to their sympathies and asked them which man they wanted to be released. "Whither of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" The contrast between the two men was unmistakable.

Pilate was certain the crowd would choose Jesus. But Pilate was wrong. With a roar as of an ocean in a storm came the reply, "Barabbas, Barabbas." "And what shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" he shouted at the top of his lungs. Like surging waves of sound came the answer, "Let Him be crucified!" This pagan custom had come down from the days of Athens and early Rome. During national festivals, the people had the privilege of choosing one imprisoned criminal, and the government would release him. Pilate had selected, as the alternate choice, the most dangerous and notorious criminal in Roman custody in Judaea.

The name, "Barabbas," means "the son of Abba," which, translated, means "the son of father." In 1892, an ancient Syriac New Testament was found in St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. It has a different translation of Matthew 27:17, and reads: "Which Jesus will you have, *Jesus* the son of Abba or *Jesus* the King?" We

have reason to believe that Barabbas was an emboldened criminal who had claimed to be the Messiah and had gathered a following prior to his imprisonment for robbery and murder. To prove his claim as king of the Jews, he had instigated an insurrection which resulted in the death of many men (*Mk 15:7*).

"Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead."—*Acts 3:14-15*.

Many men are still doing the same thing today. In countless ways, small and great, they are rejecting the only One who can save them and searching for saviours elsewhere.

The last concern for legality and justice was forgotten now, amid the cursing and shouting. All that remained was the battle between the will of Pilate and the will of the mob. Pilate saw that, amid it all, Jesus stood there calm and Godlike while the deafening noise of jealousy, envy, and hatred beat about Him. Pilate was never to forget the scene, but just now he felt very helpless and defeated.

But then, something occurred which terrorized Pilate. When Pilate had aroused from sleep early that morning at the cries of the Jews, his wife Claudia, the adopted daughter of Tiberius, continued to sleep. After he left, she was given a dream of the entire court trial, Pilate, the Jews, and Christ. She, too, looked on the face of Jesus; she saw the death sentence, handed down by her husband; and she saw Calvary. And now the granddaughter of an emperor was fully awake, hearing in fear from her maids about what was going on at the gate of the palace. Quickly, she penned an urgent note to her husband,

"Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream."—*Matthew 27:19*.

Receiving it with bloodless face, he read it. Pilate was more frightened than he had ever been before in his life. Perhaps this was a god that stood before him. What was he to do? All he could think of was to try and work out another deal with Christ's adversaries. He was sure it would take some kind of compromise to make the Jews willing to see Jesus released. Again, He took Jesus into the praetorium.

"The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head; they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands. Pilate therefore

went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, BEHOLD THE MAN!"—*John 19:2-5*.

What was this "crown of thorns" (*Mk 15:17*) which was pressed into Christ's head? Experts say that it was woven from the Syrian Christ's-thorn (*Paliurus spina-christi* or *Zizyphus jujuba*). This is a bush or small tree, ten to fifteen feet high, with plain white twigs. Each of its stipules have two thorns which curve backward. According to Dr. G.E. Post, who is an expert on these matters, this plant still grows in the region of old Jerusalem, especially in the area where Golgotha is said to have been. The present writer has seen a crown woven of that thorn bush. The thorns are remarkably large, and the pain must have been intense when it was pressed into Christ's forehead.

In his desperation, Pilate allowed this beating of the Innocent One to take place, hoping that in some way this terrible scene would at last awaken pity and mercy in the minds of the blood-thirsty rabble. But it did not. As mentioned earlier, the lashes which Jesus received came from a whip with a short handle to which were fastened several cords tipped with pieces of iron, lead, or bone. With each lash, these sharp pieces tore into the flesh and buried themselves in the victim's bare back. This had been followed by a beating and mauling at the hands of the soldiers that was a spectacle of horror.

In it all, Jesus maintained a dignified silence through which shone a kingly bearing that astonished even the men beating Him. This living torture took place within the praetorium; and, following it, Jesus was brought out and presented to the Jews. It was the custom of the time to turn condemned criminals over to the soldiers and the populace for torment, mockery, and ridicule, as an additional part of their punishment. Of this humiliating experience, Jesus had also received more than the usual portion.

Four times Jesus was attacked, buffeted, and struck on this day: The first was in the guard-room, between the first and second trials before the Sanhedrin. The second was in the Sanhedrin judgment hall, at the end of the second trial. The third was in Herod's courtroom, at the end of

that trial. The fourth was in the praetorium, near the end of the second trial before Pilate. Said Taticus, the Roman historian, "To the sufferings of those who were put to death were added mockery and derision." But, in the case of Jesus, no legitimate charge had been brought against Him. Indeed, Pilate had repeatedly declared Him innocent.

"Behold the Man!" Pilate cried, as he presented Him. And now, twenty centuries later, I ask you, Behold the Man! Behold what He went through for you. Behold all that He did that you might have eternal life—Behold what your God has done for you!

In presenting Jesus to the multitude for the third time, Pilate had declared Jesus to be innocent. "That ye may know that I find no fault in Him." In response, a massive crescendo of sound erupted. "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" In disgust with the unfeeling Jews, Pilate cried out above the uproar, "Oh, take ye Him, and crucify Him yourselves!—for I find no fault in Him" (*Jn 19:6*)! Pilate challenged them to take the law into their own hands.

In response, they flung back, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die—because He made Himself the Son of God (*Jn 19:7*)! So that was it! It wasn't treason at all. They said He must die *because He was a god*—and what did that mean? Pilate's fearful thoughts were in a whirl. Again, he thought of his wife's dream.

"From thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, if thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."—*John 19:12*.

That settled the matter for the procurator. The battle was over. Pilate felt like a broken man. For the first time in the trial, Pilate called for a chair and sat down. Pilate's backer in Rome, Sejanus, was fast losing his hold over Tiberius, and Pilate well-knew this. In fact, later that same year Sejanus was to be put to death by order of the emperor. Three times in five years Pilate had nearly driven the Jews to revolt, and another near-miss could very well mean his end.

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha."—*John 19:13*.

*Gabbatha* means "ridge." Pavement is a translation of the Greek word, *lithostrotos*. These

were large, flat stones on a raised place, above the crowd surrounding the Roman governor and the one on trial. In this way, all could see the governor and the one being tried, and the accused could see all his accusers. What did such a pavement look like; how big was it?

It is thought likely that Christ was tried at the praetorium (Judgment hall) of Pilate, at his residence, in the palace of Herod. (The Jews were in a rush to get the job done quickly, so they could be expected to go directly to where Pilate was sleeping rather than across down by the Temple. Also, Pilate's residence was closer to both the palace of the high priest and the palace of the Asmoneans, where the other trials were held.)

But there was also another Roman judgment hall in town which Pilate could use: It was located at the fortress Antonia (today called the Haram esh-Sherif), immediately northwest of the Temple area. L.H. Vincent, an archaeologist, found the pavement at the Antonia several decades ago. That pavement consisted of large, flat stones, and marked the raised place from whence the Roman governor would issue his official decisions.

This excavated pavement at the Antonia was nearly 3,000 square yards in size. You can go to Jerusalem today and see it: massive slabs of stone about three feet square and a foot or more thick. It was found below about 15 feet of dirt and rubbish, which had accumulated over the past nearly 2,000 years.

Directly above it (15 feet up) is, what is today known as, the *Ecce Homo* ("Behold the Man") Arch, which is alongside of the *Via Dolorosa* ("Street of Weeping"). That arch did not exist in the time of Christ, but may have been built by Herod Agrippa I (A.D. 41-44); but, more likely, it was built by Emperor Hadrian (AD. 135). Oddly enough, in ancient times off-duty Roman soldiers had scratched games into the surface of the pavement (somewhat like hopscotch), which they played when the judgment hall was not in use.

So, taking his seat on one of the judgment pavements in the city, Pilate rendered the final sentence condemning Jesus to death. On that pavement, Jesus was scourged the second time, before the cross was placed on Him and He was led away.

Seating himself on the judgment seat, Pilate pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold your King!" Back came the thunderous bellow—their unanimous decision—"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." "Shall I crucify your King?" Just the slightest pause—and then, "We have no king but Caesar!"

It was time for a legal decision, based on the authority of Rome—but Pilate wasn't thinking about authority. He wanted to wash his hands. And calling for a basin of water, he did so before them all. "I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it." Pilate had given his fourth acquittal of Christ. In response came the cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required."—*Luke 23:23-24*.

Then the purple robe was jerked off Christ's back, so He could receive another scourging. As that was done, the wounds from the earlier scourging were torn open again.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified."—*Matthew 27:26*.

This is what Pilate did with Jesus. He had innumerable opportunities to choose the right, but he did not do so. Something told him that another path would be the easier way. And Pilate liked easier paths. But it wasn't really easier. For it cost Pilate his job and his life. And it cost him his soul.

Not long after, a complaint brought an order from the governor of Syria that Pilate appear in Rome before Tiberius, to answer on serious charges. Arriving there, he found his wife's foster father dead, and a new emperor on the throne,—the cruel Caligula. Pilate was stripped of all his honors and fired from his office. Soon after, "wearied with misfortunes," as Eusebius tells us, he committed suicide.

"What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called the Christ?" What will you do with Him? You saw what the rabble and Herod and Pilate did with Him. He let them do it for your sake. — What will you do with Him? Will you accept Him and all that He did for you? Choose Him, just now. It is the best choice you will ever make.

## 10 - *The Journey to Calvary*

**Matthew 27:31-32 Mark 15:20-21;  
Luke 23:25-32; John 19:16-17**

It was the custom of the time for the victim to carry his own cross to the place of execution. This practice was followed in the crucifixion of Jesus.

“Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place which is called, in the Hebrew, Golgotha.”—*John 19:16-17*.

Here they crucified Him between two others who were also to be executed. Plutarch, a first-century Greek historian, wrote this:

“Every kind of wickedness produces its own particular torment; just as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, carries his own cross.”—*Plutarch*.

The cross was borne to the execution by the one who was to suffer on it—perhaps with his arms bound to it with cords. Frequently, the neck of the victim was fastened within the “*patibulum*” (the cross-piece), by two horizontal pieces of wood fastened at the end, where the hands were bound. Ordinarily, the procession was headed by the centurion or proceeded by one who proclaimed the nature of the crime and carried a white, wooden board, on which it was written.

Commonly, also, the procession took the longest road, through the most crowded streets to the place of execution, so as to attract the greatest public attention. Scripture tells us that “the place . . . was nigh to the city” (*Jn 19:20*). But whether they took a short route to it that day or not, we do not know. A pilgrim from Bordeaux who visited Jerusalem in the year 333 specifically mentioned “the little hill of Golgotha (Monticulus Golgotha), where the Lord was crucified.” In its full length, the journey from the praetorium to Golgotha could not have been a long one.

Execution would take place outside the city. Pilate would not dare outrage Jewish feelings by crucifying anyone within the walls of the Holy City. Inadvertently, that fulfilled another aspect of the Old Testament sanctuary types:

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

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“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.”—*Hebrews 13:11-13*.

Was Jesus led along the street which is, to-day, called the *Via Dolorosa*? In the spring of each year, pilgrims carry crosses along that thoroughfare. Are they going down the right street? Do we know of any better one?

In order for it to be the correct route, (1) the fortress Antonia would have had to be where the trial before Pilate was held. But Pilate had a judgment hall at his residence, in the northwest corner of the city. He was hurriedly awakened that morning—and the priests wanted an immediate decision. Very likely, he went downstairs and the trial was held there.

(2) The site of Calvary would have to be, what is now called, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or another point along the same street. But we only have the decision of Constantine’s mother, Helena, regarding the likelihood of that. And she made that decision 295 years after Jesus was crucified.

The Temple was located on the east side of Jerusalem. The fortress Antonia was just north of it in the northeast corner. The palace of Herod, Pilate’s residence, was located in the northwest corner of town. The palace of Asmoneans, Herod’s courtroom that day, was located a few blocks east of Herod’s palace. The high priest’s palace was also not far away.

Plotting all those locations on a map of Jerusalem—reveals that the Antonia was in the far northeast; whereas all the other trial locations were in the western part of the city. It is the belief of the present writer that the fortress Antonia was not the site of Pilate’s two trials—or any other trials of Christ that day. If that is true, then the *Via Dolorosa* would not be the route that Christ was led along to the Golgotha.

To complicate the situation further, we really do not know where Calvary was located. We only have thoughtful guesses. But do we have a better route to traverse? Yes, we do. If you would follow in the steps of Jesus, go to the homes of the sick and infirm and minister to their needs. Find someone who has problems and show him solutions in the Word of God. Bring souls to

Jesus and help them find peace in Him—and you are walking in the footsteps of Christ. When trials and sufferings come upon you, as they will, bear them in the strength of Christ, and you are carrying your cross after Him.

When the one to be crucified left the courtroom, he was often stripped of his clothes. In this condition, as was mentioned above, he was forced to walk through the busiest parts of town, carrying the cross, whipped and mocked all the way. But we are specifically told that, after Christ had been scourged the second time, they “put His own raiment upon Him, and led Him away” (*Matt 27:31*). One of the old classical authorities, Plautus, wrote:

“Patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affigatur cruce—Let him bear the cross through the town, and then let him be nailed to the cross.”—*Plautus*.

The soldiers in charge of the execution formed a bodyguard which accompanied the victim to the place of crucifixion, not only to prevent the victim from escaping but to prevent friends and relatives from attempting a rescue.

The way of the cross must have been thronged. The city was crowded for the festival season of the Passover. While the majority may have reviled the prisoner on the way to the execution, there must have been many who looked on with horror and pity. Those who had known Jesus or had listened to His words (and there were many such in the multitude) must have turned from the scene with pain akin to heartbreak. Although only four soldiers were officially necessary for the actual execution, there must have been a large detachment present to preserve order.

The cross had two primary parts: the upright post (the *stipe*) and the crosspiece (the *patibulum*). It was customary for the condemned to carry his own cross from the gate of the courtroom to the place of crucifixion. However, the weight of the entire cross was over 300 lbs. (136 kg.), so he was required to carry only the crossbar (the *patibulum*), which was about 75 to 125 lbs. (34-57 kg.).

The crossbar, which looked very much like a railroad tie, was placed across the back of his neck, and then tied to his outstretched arms. The victim was then forced to carry it, naked, to the place of crucifixion. In front of him walked a Roman centurion and several soldiers. One of

the soldiers carried a sign (*titulus*), on which the condemned man’s name and crime were written.

The palace gates opened. A strange procession emerged onto the road to Golgotha. Artists trying to portray that scene usually show the Saviour in spotless garments. The true situation was far different. The Prisoner was a miserable sight. For long hours, He had undergone tortures of various kinds. His hair was matted with blood from the thorns. His clothing was ripped and torn. His body was battered and bruised. He had been struck and beaten, first by Jews and then by Romans. A Roman scourging would render the strongest body a wreck for weeks. Jesus was still bleeding from this torture. His body must have been wracked with pain at every step.

A large crowd followed Jesus from the judgment hall to the hill of Golgotha. The news of His condemnation had spread throughout the city—and great numbers of Jews were there for the yearly Passover services. As Jesus passed the gate leading out from Pilate’s courtyard, the large wooden cross, which had been prepared for Barabbas, was laid upon Christ’s bruised and bleeding shoulders. Crosses were also placed on two other men, associates of Barabbas, who had cooperated with him in criminal acts.

But, following all that had happened since midnight, Jesus was suffering and was too weak to lift the cross, much less carry it. He had eaten nothing since the night before, had agonized for hours in the garden, endured the anguish of the betrayal, and had seen His disciples forsake Him. He had undergone six trials: three Jewish and three Roman. He had received four beatings at the hands of the mob. He had received two Roman scourgings. But now, only a short time after the second scourging, Jesus could not bear up the cross placed upon Him, and He fell to the ground.

The severe scourgings—Christ had already received two of them—with the intense pain, and appreciable blood loss probably left Jesus in a preshock state. In addition, the bloody sweat experience of Gethsemane (*hemathidrosis*) had left His skin in a peculiarly sensitive and tender condition. For hours, He had received physical and mental abuse. He had been without food, water, or sleep since the night before. Therefore the actual physical condition by this time—even

before the crucifixion—was quite serious, and perhaps critical. As He lay there on the ground, with the heavy crosspiece on His back (much like an extra-long railroad tie), no one in the vast crowd expressed sympathy. No compassion was to be seen.

Both the Romans and the Jewish leaders were perplexed to know what to do; Jesus obviously could not carry the cross. Just then a sympathizing voice was heard: Simon, who lived in the city of Cyrene in north central Africa, was in town for the Passover. He was just passing the crowd on the street, when he heard voices crying, “Make way for the king of the Jews!” Stopping in astonishment at the scene, he speaks up, expressing sympathy for the Sufferer. His was the only voice expressing compassion for Jesus. The leaders see in this a solution.

The soldiers are told to seize Simon, place the cross on his back, and force him to carry it to Calvary for Christ. Simon was converted, because of the experience, and became an earnest Christian.

What a blessed way to learn to know Christ, by carrying His cross. But we all can learn to know Christ better, as we carry our own crosses in His strength. Just now, you have a cross you are carrying. Carry it in Christ, and you will walk securely.

As the procession gradually wound its way through the streets and out of the city to the hillcock of Calvary, several women began weeping for Jesus. This caught His attention, for Christ always notes our sorrows. Turning, He told them they needed to weep for themselves and their children. Our Saviour was well-aware of the terrible retribution which would come to the nation.

The retribution already seemed to be beginning. On the road from Pilate’s hall to Calvary, the shouts and jeers of the wicked throng were suddenly interrupted. There, by the side of the road, was a dead tree. At its foot lay the lifeless, half-eaten body of Judas. He had hanged himself from a branch, which afterward fell. Dogs were now devouring his body. Quickly, his remains were buried out of sight, but there was now less jeering of Christ. Many wondered what would come next.

It has been estimated that Christ, in His greatly weakened condition, had to walk one

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third of a mile (600 to 650 meters) to the place of crucifixion. And what was ahead? Crucifixion. The most painful and lingering death in the world.

### 11 - The Crucifixion

**Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41;  
Luke 23:26-49; John 19:18-37**

Several brief definitions of Roman terms will help introduce the subject:

First, there is the *Excruciatustus* (Ex-crew-see-as-tus): This is an ancient Latin word for “the pain of the crucified one” (excruciating). Literally, it means “out of the crucified.” The word, excruciating, comes from the word for being crucified.

The *Pax Romana*: For centuries Rome ruled the Western civilized world with a grip that seemingly defied insurrection. It was not only the Roman talent for government that imposed this strict “peace of Rome,” it was the presence of the cross that solidified it daily in the minds of the people: “Rebel, and we will nail you in the most terrible form of death ever invented by man—the cross.”

Today we too can receive peace because of the suffering on the cross by Jesus, our Sacrifice and only Help. Because of the darkness of that experience, and because of the sweet forgiveness and help He offers us right now, our entire future can be changed. The cross itself has no power to save anyone; but the Christ that suffered, bled, and died on it—can save each of us to the uttermost. No matter what you may have done in the past, what you may be now. Come, just now; come to Jesus your Saviour, your Redeemer—your Enabler, your Friend. Come to Jesus, your Creator and your God. He can empower you to obey all that He asks of you in His Word. He can keep you from falling and deliver you into the kingdom.

The *Hemathidrosis*: Medical scientists have now ascertained that the bloody sweat that was wrung from His body in the agony of Gethsemane greatly increased Christ’s sensitiveness to pain in the terrible hours that were to follow on the cross.

The *Flagellum*: The beating that they gave

to Christ in Pilate's judgment hall, till His back was lacerated and quivering, we now know, only intensified the pain of every breath that He took upon the cross as He hung there for hours. But why did He hang there for hours? The priests mocked Him and told Him to come down from the cross. And He was able to do so. He could have called on angels to take Him from the terrible scene. But He did not do that. He remained there, and suffered on—for you and me.

The *Patibulum*: the crosspiece—Christ did not have to go through all this agony, for He had done nothing wrong against God or man. But His concern for us was greater than any thought of Himself. Anguish, pain, lack of sleep, six trials, two scourgings,—and now to carry the cross, or its cross-beam, itself was a very heavy load. He sank beneath that load. He did not have to walk that third of a mile to a cross. Instead, He could have walked out on all of us. But He stayed with it, and went through it—to save us.

The Throwing to the Ground: Now we know that, before the nailing started, they first threw Him down to the ground onto His lacerated back, wet with blood. This would grind dirt into His wounds and itself add greatly to the pain of the cross.

The *Crucifixium*: Not *impalatum* (fastening to a stake), but *crucifixium* (nailing to a cross-beamed post) was to be the lot of our wonderful Lord and Saviour. The crucifixion process was a terrible one.

The Intercarpal, Intertarsal Nailing: Prophecy predicted that not a bone of His body would be broken—yet the hands and feet are filled with bones. We now know that the Romans had learned of a space in each hand and foot where a nail could pass through without breaking a single bone—yet; in the process, it would injure and inflame important nerves, because the nail rested alongside of them. Every movement brought terrible pain as a result.

The *Hypercarbia*: suffocation from excess carbon dioxide.—Because the body was suspended from the arms, the only way a breath could be taken was by lifting the body upward—and that could only be done by having the arms push downward on the nails in the wrists and the legs push downward on the nails in the ankles! This, in turn, brought intense pain to the median nerve in each wrist, as well as to the

peronial and plantar nerves in each ankle. In addition, every time the body was raised to catch another breath, the lacerated back would scrape against the rough wood of the cross, tearing open the dirty wounds all the more and adding to the searing pain.

The *Expiratium*: Christ died of a broken heart. He died of *cardiac rupture*. Our redemption meant that He must be separated from the Father, bear our sin, and die on Calvary. The horror of the separation outweighed the physical suffering. And it slew Him. He endured it all. He endured it to the end—for us.

The *Crurifragium*: *Crurifracture*, or the breaking of the legs, would hasten death because the crucified ones could no longer rise to catch a breath. But Christ received no broken bones; He was already dead.

The Sparring: The infantry spear, thrust suddenly into the side of Jesus to verify death, brought forth blood and water in two distinct streams. Fluid from the serous pleural and pericardial areas flowed out of Jesus, along with blood from His broken heart. All because He loved us too much to let us die the eternal death. He died that we might live with Him forever.

The *Cruciform Death*: In the annals of mankind, there have never been found records of a death more terrible than that of the cross. And yet God's own Son went through all that suffering and agony in order to redeem you from sin, empower you by His grace to obey His Father's laws, and impart to you eternal life at His Second Advent.

Crucifixion is a very ancient form of capital punishment. It was known by the Assyrians and Babylonians of Old Testament times. It was used by the Greeks. When Alexander the Great captured Tyre on his march eastward, he crucified a thousand captured citizens of the city. Alexander introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans learned it from the Carthaginians. Then the Romans perfected the practice—and made it utterly horrible. It was designed to produce slow death with maximum pain.

The objective, of course, was to so intimidate the populace that they would not rebel against the government. This most disgraceful and cruel death was generally reserved for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of

criminals. (Roman citizens were beheaded, not crucified; Paul, for example, was beheaded.)

The Persian form was nailing to a tree. As already mentioned, the Roman method used an upright post (the *stipe*) and a crosspiece (the *patibulum*). There were several shapes of crosses. One of the most common in Palestine in the time of Christ was the low *tau* cross (*crux commissa*). This was a cross that was in the shape of a T. But He may have been crucified on one with an upright post above the T (*crux immissa*, or Latin cross), so the sign could easily be attached above His head. A third, lesser used, type was the X cross (*crux decussata*, or St. Andrew's cross). The descriptions of the cross Christ was crucified on, as given by early writers, agree with the Latin cross (*crux immissa*). The inscription board would most easily be mounted on this one, and the testimony of those who lived nearest the first century is in favor of this type of cross (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and many others).

It is also significant that drink was offered Christ while hanging on the cross, by means of a stalk of the hyssop plant. Such stalks were approximately 20 inches (50 cm.) long, and only the short *tau* cross would fit this picture. The cross, as first used by the Babylonians during the reign of Semiramis, was in the form of a T for Tammuz, one of the names of Nimrod, her son.

In order to prolong the suffering, a horizontal block of wood (*sedile* or *sedulum*) was placed on the upright post. The crucified one could partially rest his body on it. (In later years, a second block—*sppedaneum*—was placed for the feet to partially rest upon.) Of the ancient cross, Renan wrote:

“A piece of wood was fastened to the upright portion of the cross, toward the middle, and passed between the legs of the condemned who rested upon it. Without that, the hands would have been torn and the body would have sunk down. At other times, a small horizontal rest was fixed beneath the feet, and sustained them.”—*The life of Christ*, 364.

Irenaeus, an early Christian writer, said:

“The structure of the cross has five ends or summits, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle on which the crucified person rests.”—*Irenaeus*.

Justin Martyr, another early writer, men-

tioned a projecting end from the middle of the upright post, “like a horn on which the crucified persons are seated.” And Tertullian wrote of “the projecting bar which serves as a seat.” Stroud described the cross as “having a short bar or stake projecting from its middle” (*The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, 35-36).

Cicero, the Roman statesman, called it “the most cruel and most frightful means of execution.” Josephus recoiled from it as “the most pitiable of all forms of death.” This typical Roman death penalty was unknown in the Jewish penal code.

Sometimes criminals had their feet and outstretched arms tied to the cross. Others had their feet nailed to the upright part of the cross and their hands spiked to the crosspiece, care being taken not to injure arteries or sever large blood vessels lest the agonies of the victim be shortened by excessive bleeding. Either method ensured a long, lingering death with the maximum of torture and pain. Reliable historians report cases of crucified persons living for days while enduring all the torments of death from simultaneous hunger, thirst, exposure, fever, and excruciating pain.

The horrors of this type of punishment were held up as a deterrence to hardened criminals.

“All who cared to witness the horrible spectacle were free to do so; the Romans, who thought it necessary to rule by terror, chose, for capital offenses by other than Roman citizens, what Cicero called ‘the most cruel and hideous of tortures.’ The offender’s hands and feet were bound or nailed to the wood; a projecting block supported the backbone or the feet; unless mercifully killed, the victim would linger there for two or three days, suffering the agony of immobility, unable to brush away the insects that fed upon his naked flesh, and slowly losing strength until the heart failed and brought an end.”—*Will Durant, Caesar and Christ*, 572.

The place where Jesus was crucified was called *Calvary* in Latin, and *Golgotha* was Aramaic. (The New Testament Greek word is *Kranion*.) The name means “skull,” and is spoken of as “the place of a skull” in Scripture. Interestingly, enough, we call it “Calvary” because in just one place the King James translators translated *Kranion* by its Latin equivalent (*Lk 23:33*).

Some consider, what the Gospels call, “the place of the skull,” to mean a place of skulls—



where men died and bones were laying around—a place of death. Others think it to be some place near Jerusalem that resembled a skull, the shape of the summit of the hill on which it occurred.

North of Jerusalem is what is known as “Gordon’s Calvary”; seen from the wall of the city, it somewhat resembles a skull with two small caves below the brow, suggesting eyes. While we are told that the place “was nigh to the city,” the exact location can only be a matter of conjecture. Jesus was crucified outside the wall; but, until we can identify the exact location of the north wall in the time of Christ, we may never know with certainty the exact location of Calvary.

The traditional site of Calvary is inside the present north wall, and is covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was begun in A.D. 325, following a visit to Jerusalem by Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. Inside the tottering structure, a fourteen-foot hillock that is called “Calvary” is found rising to the balcony level.

Gordon’s Calvary, which today is more countrified in appearance, was first identified in 1849 by Otto Thenius. Near it are adjacent gardens that would remind one of the description in John 19:41. Perhaps, in the providence of Heaven, it is best that we cannot identify some of those locations. We should venerate God, not places.

According to Mark 15:25, Jesus was crucified at “the third hour,” or nine o’clock in the morning. Two thieves were crucified at the same time, one on either side of Him. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet, that “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

Before being crucified, Jesus was stripped of His outer garments, which probably consisted of a cloak, a sort of shirt, a girdle, and a pair of sandals. The soldiers divided these among themselves, casting lots over them.

“They crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them. And upon My vesture did they cast lots.”—*Matthew 27:35*.

This, too, is a Roman custom; and the record of it is another evidence of the truthfulness of the Biblical account.

The punishment of crucifixion was invented to make death as painful as possible, so the victim will linger according to the power of human

endurance. Here is one description of how it occurred:

First, the upright wood was secured in the ground. Next, the transverse wood (horizontal crosspiece) was placed on the ground. The condemned one was thrown on the ground, on his back. This would grind dirt into his open wounds and bring terrible pain in the hours to come. Then his arms were extended, drawn up, and bound to the crosspiece.

Then a strong, sharp nail was driven—first into the right, then into the left wrist (the *clavi trabales*). The nail was placed in the wrist, between the carpals and the radius, so that it would pierce close to the ulnar nerve and next to the median nerve. This placement would cause intense pain; yet it would result in no bones being broken, nor any major arteries being severed. Note that the nails were driven through the wrists, not the palms. A nail in the palms could not hold up the weight of the man on the cross.

The feet were nailed next, if the sufferer was nailed on the ground to the complete cross; then it was lifted and thrust into a hole. But if he was only nailed to the crosspiece, the crucified one was hauled up by means of ropes (and ladders, if a long cross was used). The horizontal crosspiece was either bound or nailed to the upright. Then the seat-rest, or support, for the body (the *cornu* or *sidle*) was fastened on it. Lastly, the feet were extended. Finally, either one nail was hammered into each foot or a larger piece of iron was put through both feet together.

In some cases, the whole cross was first erected, and then the victim was lifted up to it; after that, the nails were fastened into his arms and feet. But, at other times, the person was nailed to the entire two-piece cross, and it was lifted up by strong men and hurled into a hole prepared for its base. This brought tearing and searing pain to the one hanging on it.

“As soon as Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by strong men and, with great violence it was thrust into the place prepared for it. This caused the most intense agony to the Son of God.”—*Desire of Ages*, 745.

It is said that the use of the cross as an instrument of punishment had its origin in the ancient practice of fastening a criminal “to the tree, which was termed ‘accursed,’ and was later known as ‘the cross.’” The cross was therefore

still spoken of as a “tree” in the days of the apostles. Peter wrote:

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”—1 Peter 2:24.

Then the crucified one would hang in unutterable anguish of suffering, until consciousness at last failed.

What kind of nails were used? A crucified body was found in 1970 in an *ossuary* (bone box) at Giv’at ha-Mivtar, near Jerusalem. The nails used were tapered iron spikes approximately 5-7 inches (13-18 cm.) in length. Each one had a square shaft 3/8 inch (1 cm.) across. In length and squareness of head and shank, they were remarkably similar to railroad spikes; however, the shank was narrower and came to a sharper point.

Another archaeological discovery elsewhere was an iron spike driven through the ankle bone of a 30-year-old man. This was the result of a first-century crucifixion.

Artists usually picture Christ as nailed in the palm of the hand. However, since the whole weight of a man’s body would be upon the hands, a nail placed there would not have the necessary support and would drag through the tendons. So it was customary to drive a nail through the wrist. Between “the bones of the wrist there is a free space bounded by the capitata, the semi-lunar, the triquetral and the hamated bones,” generally known as “*Destot’s space*.”

Historical anatomists tell us that those who were skilled in executions knew exactly where to drive the nail, both for security and for infliction of greater pain. The nail would go right against the large median nerve, which serves all the sensory nerves of the hand; and, when the hand was stretched, the slightest movement would cause the most excruciating pain. The Flemish artists, Rubens and Bandyke, depict the crucifixion in this way. We are told that archaeology confirms it.

When the nailing was completed, and the victim fully placed on the upright cross, the *titulus*, or sign, was placed by the soldiers on the cross with a nail.

“Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus

was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.”—John 19:19-20.

The actual wording of this title in Latin was this: *Jesus Nazarathaeus Rex Ioudaeorum*. This inscription contained the name of the condemned, his place of residence, and the charge on which he was sentenced to be crucified. Matthew declared that the inscription was “set up over His head.” It was doubtlessly nailed to the top of the upright beam of the cross.

The accusation was written in the three leading languages spoken in Palestine, so that all could read it. Aramaic was the dialect of ancient Hebrew used in the first century A.D.; Greek was then the universal tongue of the civilized Western world; and Latin was the official language of the judicial and executive power of the ruling government of Rome. Geikie declares that the three languages were symbolic of “the relation of the cross to all the nationalities of the world.” It was customary to carry this board before the prisoner, and there is no reason for supposing any exception in this instance.

The inscription, as given by Matthew, exactly corresponds with that which Eusebius records as the Latin *titulus* on the cross of one of the early martyrs.

Crucifixions were generally held by the side of the road leading into town. Thousands read that title that day. This act of Pilate, in having the title affixed to the cross of Christ, was a well-established Roman custom. Suetonius, a Roman historian of the first century, describes an execution by order of Domitian as follows: “He exposed the father of the family to the dogs, with this title, ‘A gladiator, impious in speech.’ The victim was the father of a family who had spoken disrespectfully of a fellow gladiator. Dio Cassius, a Greek-Roman historian of the second century A.D., described a crucifixion scene thus: “Having led him through the midst of the court or assembly, with a writing signifying the cause of his death, and afterward crucifying him.” On such occasions, the placard was either carried before the victim or hung around his neck.

It was commonplace for insects to alight upon the open wounds of the sufferers on the cross, or their eyes, ears, and nose. At times, birds of prey would tear at the wounds.

At one point during the crucifixion, as Jesus

hung on the cross, He called down to the disciple John, who was standing close to Mary—and told him to care for her. What thoughtful, tender love was this! Amid the agony of His great suffering, He arranged for His mother to be cared for. She was probably in her 50s at the time. John cared for her the rest of her life; and, after her death (when he was about 62 years of age), John wrote the fourth Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation.

Although scourging could produce considerable blood loss, crucifixion itself caused very little. The major physical cause of death from crucifixion was the interference with normal breathing. The sufferer had such a difficult and painful time in exhaling air, that he eventually stopped trying to do so—and died from asphyxiation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state. Thus it required considerable effort to exhale air. Breathing was shallow and exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic. The onset of muscle cramps, due to fatigue, would hinder respiration even more.

The problem was that adequate exhalation (letting out a breath of air) required lifting the chest from a slump. This could only be done by lifting the entire body—lifting the trunk by pushing up on the feet, flexing the elbows, and pulling down from the shoulders. But, doing this, wrenched down on the nailed wrists and ankles—and produced searing pain. In addition, the wrists had to be rotated, and this brought additional, terrible pain to the nailed wrists. At the same time, lifting the body scraped the torn back against the rough wood. The outstretched arms soon developed muscle cramps and numbness. As a result, each new exhalation caused more pain than before, until the process finally ended in death.

Shock and exhaustion asphyxia were the two common causes of death by crucifixion. But the dehydration and irregular heart beat also contributed to the problem. When the Romans wanted to bring death quickly, they would break the legs. Then the body could no longer be lifted to exhale—and death would come within a few minutes. Death by crucifixion was in every sense “excruciating.” And, as we earlier noted, that is the meaning of the word in the original Latin: *Excruciat*, or “out of the cross.”

There was an alternate way of nailing the feet. In the 1980s, archaeologists found the bones of a crucified man, buried in Palestine. Instead of a nail driven from the front into each ankle, a single extra-long spike was driven from the side through both ankles. In this way, his body was twisted and his knees were flexed. Another way was to cross the legs and place a single spike from the front through both ankles, with the knees flexed. This was done not so much to take the weight off the hands as to permit the victim to raise himself up at times in order to expel air from his lungs.

And then we come to the scene of the final deathwatch on Golgotha. Events have moved toward the inevitable climax with startling rapidity. Jesus had been taken prisoner before dawn on that fatal Friday in the spring of A.D. 31—in late March or early May. Now, even before mid-afternoon of that same day, His mutilated body, stripped of its few poor garments, hung on the cross.

The silence, which seemed strange after the tension and tumult, was broken only by the agonized moaning of suffering men, an occasional call of ridicule directed to the One in the midst, and low weeping by a few women who watched from afar.

Out of sympathy, one among the crowd filled a sponge with the rough wine of the soldiers, and fastened it on the stem (*reed*) of the caper (*hysop*) plant, which is said to grow to the height of two or three feet. The reed, soaked in the potion, was held up to Christ’s lips while on the cross, so He could drink it. But He refused, for He would drink nothing that would cloud His mind.

To Jesus in His agony on the cross, there came one moment of encouragement. It was the words of one of the two thieves crucified with Him. Both thieves had been followers of Barabbas. One became all the more desperate on the cross—even by continuing to rail at Christ; the other’s heart was softened as he thought back over all that had earlier taken place. He had earlier heard of Jesus and His works. And today he had witnessed Christ’s Godlike bearing through all that had happened. At first he had joined in casting aspersions on Christ as his companion did, but soon he stopped. His heart was moved upon by the Spirit of God; and there flooded into

his mind, not only recollections of the words and works of Christ—but also his own great need of forgiveness and peace with God.

Now, turning his head toward his companion in crime, he said, “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” There was no longer anything to fear from man; soon they would be dead. But they must yet face the judgment day of God. Then he added, “And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” The thief has had time to think. And the realization came: Christ is the promised Messiah! In Jesus—bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross—he beholds the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of those who choose to let Him do it.

Turning to Christ, by faith the dying thief casts himself on a dying Saviour. “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!” he said. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the thief has recognized what few grasped that day: that Christ had to die in order to bring salvation to men! One of the deepest truths of all had dawned upon his mind. Quickly, the answer came. Softly, but full of melody and love, the thief heard Christ’s answer, “Verily, I say unto thee, today: Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

Since there are no commas in the Greek New Testament, we must place them where they agree with the surrounding facts. “Paradise” (*paradisos*) is a Persian word for heaven. Christ did not promise that the thief would be with Him in Paradise that day, for Christ did not, Himself, go to heaven that day. He slept in the tomb until Sunday morning, when He came out. After His resurrection and departure from the tomb early Sunday morning, He said, “I am not yet ascended to My Father” (*Jn 20:17*).

So, the point of Christ’s statement was that on this very day—the day of apparent failure, defeat, and death, He had divine authority to be able to say that the thief would be with Him in Paradise!

It is a basic teaching of Christianity that Christ did not rise from the dead until Sunday. To say otherwise would be to spiritualize away the great truth of the resurrection. Surely, at the most discouraging part of His life, the faith of the dying thief must have encouraged the heart of Christ.

Soon afterward, for Christ, the end came. His last words were heard: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” The word, “commend,” in its New Testament sense, means not merely commending. It means to deposit, to commit something to another for safe keeping. He spoke those words for you and for me. How many thousands have whispered them when dying! They were the last words of Polycarp, of John Huss, of Martin Luther, and of Melancthon. And then, there was a loud piercing cry from Christ—and His head fell to His chest. He was dead.

“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.”—*Mark 15:37*.

What was the cause of Jesus’ death? Scientific investigations carried out in recent years by medical specialists in Cologne have attempted to answer the question. In the case of a person suspended by his two hands, the blood sinks very quickly into the lower half of the body. Within as little as fifteen minutes, blood pressure has dropped by 50 percent, and the pulse rate has doubled. Too little blood reaches the heart and fainting ensues. This leads to a speedy orthostatic collapse through insufficient blood circulating to the heart. Death by crucifixion is therefore due to heart failure (coronary insurgency).

It is a well-authenticated fact that victims of crucifixion did not usually die for two days or even longer. On the vertical beam, there was often, as previously mentioned, a small support attached called a *sedile* (seat) or a *cornu* (horn). If the victim hanging there eased his misery from time to time by supporting himself on this, the blood returned to the upper half of his body and the faintness passed. When the torture of the crucified man was finally brought to an end, the *crurifragium* followed: His legs were broken below the knee with blows from a club. That meant that he could no longer ease his weight on the footrests, and heart failure quickly followed.

But Jesus never received this shattering of the legs, or *crurifragium*.

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.”—*John 19:32-33*.

Why, in this case, was *crurifragium* given so quickly to the thieves? Because the Jewish leaders had requested it of Pilate. The day of the crucifixion was “the day before the Sabbath” (*Mk*

15:42; Luke 23:53-54). In addition, according to Scripture, the bodies of those hung on trees were not to remain hanging overnight (see *Deuteronomy 21:23*). But, far more important, the Jewish leaders wanted to get the dead bodies out of sight as quickly as possible.

Why did Jesus die so soon? What was the actual cause of His death? Jesus died of a broken heart. He died from grief because of separation from His Father—and because He bore our sins. He died because He chose to save us, that we might have life.

The fact that both blood and water flowed from His pierced side established the cause of His death: *cardiac rupture*. As early as 1847, Dr. W. Stroud, in his book, *Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, suggested that the blood and water was evidence that Jesus died of a physical rupture of the heart. His heart was broken, but not because of suspension on the cross; for it is well-known that victims of crucifixion survived for more than one day. Origen, who lived in the time when crucifixion was still practiced, tells us that the majority of those who underwent the experience lived through the night and the following day.

Here is how Cunningham Geikie described the whole thing:

“The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the constrained and fixed position of the body, of the outstretched arms which caused acute pain from every twitch or motion, of the back that was lacerated by the knot, and the hands and feet that were pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, and some of these were mutilated while others were violently crushed. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet, speedily set in, and ere long rose in other places where the circulation was checked by the tension of the parts. Intolerable thirst, and ever-increasing pain, resulted.

“The blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, unnaturally swelled the veins and arteries, and caused the most tortures in the brain. The blood could no longer move freely from the lungs. The heart grew more and more depressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief, but there was very little lost.

“The weight of the body itself, resting on the

wooden pin of the upright beam, the burning of sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind which dried up the moisture of the body, made each movement more terrible. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on the painful convulsions, and this numbness, slowly extending through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.”—*Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ, 781-782.*

It was predicted that the Messiah would die from a broken, or ruptured, heart. The fortieth psalm is a Messianic prophecy. In verse 12, speaking of the troubles that would encompass Him in the climax of His death, we are told, “Therefore My heart faileth Me.” The sixty-ninth psalm tells us the thought of Jesus on the cross, in which is a forecast of the cause of His death:

“Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”—*Psalms 69:20-21.*

From the Biblical account of the death of Jesus, it is evident that His sudden death resulted from a ruptured heart. Earnest Renan tells us:

“The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that one might live three or four days in this horrible state upon the instrument of torture. The hemorrhage from the hands quickly stopped, and was not mortal. The true cause of death was the unnatural position of the body, which brought on a frightful disturbance of the circulation, terrible pains of the head and heart, and, at length, rigidity of the limbs. Those who had a strong constitution only died of hunger . . . Everything leads to the belief that the instantaneous rupture of a vessel in the heart brought Him . . . to a sudden death.”—*The Life of Jesus, 367-368.*

Geikie wrote:

“The immediate cause of death appears, beyond question, to have been the rupture of His heart, brought about by mental agony.”—*The Life and Words of Christ, 788.*

Living as He did in such close harmony with the laws of nature, there can be no question but that Jesus had more than a strong physical constitution. Under ordinary circumstances, He should have lived several days on the cross before death came. When Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate for the privilege of burying Jesus, we are told:

“Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.”—*Mark 15:44.*

It was almost an unheard-of-thing for a crucified person to die within two or three days, unless death was hastened by other means. Jesus did not die as the result of crucifixion. But rather, He died very suddenly in the midst of terrible agony of mind and spirit. The death of Christ immediately followed a loud and piercing cry (see Matthew 27:50 and Luke 23:46). He cried out with a loud voice and then bowed His head and died. This suggests a catastrophic terminal event: *cardiac rupture*. Usually, at the time of death, the voice is the first organ to fail. It grows weaker and fainter until it becomes inaudible. The loud and piercing cry of Jesus indicated great physical strength which could suddenly be terminated only by the rupture of the heart.

“The cause now assigned for the death of Christ, namely, RUPTURE OF THE HEART FROM AGONY OF MIND has been proved to be the result.”—*Dr. Wilson Stroud, The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ, 155-156.*

It was separation from the Father that broke the heart of Christ and caused His death. He bore our sins, so that we might come back to God. But, at Calvary, the bearing of those sins brought a separation that killed Him. Our sins have separated between us and our God—and Christ bore the separation that we might return. You and I caused the sufferings and the death of Christ.

Behold the love of God for a world that does not love Him. Oh, my friend, just now as you read this, won't you accept Him as your Saviour? There may never be a better time. God calls us to Himself, but Satan is ever near to whisper that it isn't the “right time.” But how much more time can you count on? At this moment, you know what you should do. And you know that if you wait till that “better time,” it might never come.

Whether you are in the office or the shop, in a car, or at home—just now go to a quiet place, bow your head, and kneel down right where you are—tell God what you've done and ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him that you want to belong to Him from now on. Give Him your will and your plans. Surrender all that you have and are to Him. Tell Him that He shall have the first place in every plan and action for the rest of your life.

## The Day Christ Died

Ask Him to send His Holy Spirit and His angels to guard and protect you from Satan's power and to give you strength to obey His Ten-Commandment Law.

For the sake of His own dear Son, He will do it. He will strengthen you and ennoble you as you come to Him and determine to stay by His side. He will restore to you the years the canker worm has eaten. In place of all the wasted past, He can, and He will, give you a wonderful future in exchange. The more earnest is your cry, the more abundantly will He be able to help you in what is ahead. And as you found Him, so walk with Him. As a little child, coming home to Father, you found the best Friend you will ever have. And as a little child, stay with Him all the way to the end.

## 12 - The Burial

**Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47;  
Luke 23:47-56; John 19:38-42**

At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom (*Matt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45*). That was an astounding event! This was the dividing veil which separated between the first and second apartments within the sacred sanctuary of the Temple complex. Jewish writings tell us that veil was renewed yearly and was a full inch thick! It was so immensely high, wide, and thick, that no earthly power could walk up to it, grab hold of it, and tear it! Yet this veil was torn—*from above*. That is the meaning of the original Greek of the passage: The veil was torn “from above to the bottom.” The hand of God tore that curtain!

The earthly sanctuary service and its shadow ordinances were at an end. No longer need lambs be slain and Passovers be kept; for Christ, our Passover Lamb, had died for mankind.

As Christ's head slumped to His chest, the Roman centurion standing below expressed his faith (*Lk 23:47*). In the days and weeks ahead, many would study the Old Testament Scriptures with a new earnestness and find the prophecies predicting what had taken place. Later, when the apostles began preaching, many would accept Christ as their Saviour and be baptized.

Jesus died at the time of the evening sacri-

fice, which prefigured His death. At the ninth hour He died. That was 3 p.m. The holy Sabbath would begin at 6 p.m.

Jesus had taught His disciples to disregard the non-Biblical theories and rules of the Pharisees, which were generally useless and only made life a burden. But He had always obeyed the teachings of the Bible itself—and that included the keeping of the Bible Sabbath and teaching His followers to do likewise. So, upon His death, His disciples had less than three hours to bury their Master. But, in that time, they succeeded in doing it.

As soon as Jesus died, the supernatural darkness, which had been over the land for three hours since noon, disappeared and Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus immediately went into action. Leaving at once, they probably did not witness the spearing. Although Jesus had died, the other two sufferers were still alive. It was customary for the Romans to leave the corpse on the cross, to be devoured by predatory birds. However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could request the Roman judge to release the body, so they could bury it. But it was not released to them until soldiers confirmed that the person was dead.

The normal pattern was for a soldier to verify this by piercing the body with a sword or lance. Traditionally, this was a spear wound to the heart. Soldiers were taught this. In this particular instance, the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies to remain upon the crosses. The Sabbath was about to begin, and thousands of pilgrims would be in the city this particular weekend. The Jewish elders wanted to hush up what had happened as quickly as possible. So they went to Pilate, to hasten the deaths of the three crucified men and remove them from the cross. Pilate assented, for he also wanted the incident put behind him.

Soldiers were sent, to Golgotha, to hasten the death of the three men. Arriving, they broke the legs of the two; but, when they came to Jesus, they found He was already dead. So they did not need to break His legs. Instead, one soldier pierced His side with an infantry spear. The standard infantry spear was 5 to 6 feet in length (1.5-1.8 in.), and could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on a low cross.

When the spear pierced Jesus' chest, both

blood and water came from the wound. Because the Greek word for "side" ("pierced His side," *Jn 19:34*) is the pleural (chest) cavity, the wound was made through the ribs—not the stomach. The distended and thin-walled right atrium of the heart was pierced, bringing forth much blood. The pleural and pericardium was at the same time pierced, and serous, pleural, and pericardial fluid flowed out.

Joseph and Nicodemus were determined to give Jesus an honored burial that afternoon. Both were Jews of great wealth. They were also members of the Sanhedrin; and, in earlier months, they had stopped efforts by the Jewish leaders to slay Jesus. But they had not been summoned to the Jewish trials which had been held early Friday morning, the 14th day of the first Jewish month (*Abib*, also called *Nisan*).

By Friday morning, they had learned what had happened. Both probably witnessed His crucifixion. As soon as Jesus expired, it was obvious that He was dead. Joseph and Nicodemus agreed that Nicodemus would immediately obtain the spices for the burial and make other needed arrangements while Joseph would go to Pilate and ask for the body of Christ, so they could bury it. Only a close relative or a person of importance could obtain that body.

From Golgotha Hill, Joseph went to the Palace of Herod where Pilate was. Because Pilate knew this influential man, he was quickly admitted into the procurator's presence. This was the first news that Pilate had received of Christ's actual death. Knowing Joseph to be a good man, Pilate was willing to grant permission for him to have the body; but, first, he wanted to check with the centurion for details. After that tumultuous trial—and especially because of the dream of his wife, Claudia—Pilate had a keen interest in this entire matter. A servant was sent to Calvary and hurriedly returned with the centurion. This was the same man who accepted Christ as He was dying, and who afterward said, "This was the Son of God." Imagine the testimony he gave Pilate that afternoon!

Then Pilate called in Joseph and gave him permission to take the body and bury it. Joseph immediately returned to Golgotha and found Nicodemus with everything ready. Tenderly, they brought the body of their Lord down from the cross and laid it in a clean, new sheet. Placing

the expensive spices about it, they wrapped the sheet about, and then carefully carried it to Joseph's own new tomb. It had been hewn out of rock at great expense, and now Jesus was laid in it. Little did Joseph realize that he would receive his tomb back—empty—not long afterward.

Some rolling-stone tombs have been found by archaeologists, so we have evidence that they existed back then. A circular flattish stone was set into a cut-out strip in the rock, and then rolled into place. Only the very wealthy could afford it, but Joseph had such wealth.

Several women believers were present as the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulchre. They wanted to place additional spices in the tomb, but sunset was nearing and they would have to wait until Sunday to do anything more. So the women watched as the stone was rolled across its entrance; and, then everyone left, planning to return Sunday morning.

Soon after, the hours of the Sabbath began—and Jesus' disciples rested. In the tomb on that holy Sabbath, Jesus also rested.

God's great time clock was exactly on schedule. The day that Christ died had ended. And history will never be the same because of it. All the tramp of human armies, all the march of history, all the clash of arms, all the inventions of

mankind—are as nothing in comparison with the importance of the day that Jesus, the Christ, died.

It has been said that the resurrection of Christ was the most important day in human history. No, that day was inevitable. It was the death of Christ which was of supreme importance. Jesus did not have to die. He did so voluntarily to redeem all who would come to Him and be His trusting, obedient children. Because of the death of Christ, you and I can have eternal life. Thank God every day, for the gift of Jesus and what He has done and will do for you and me—if we will but submit to it.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

“Therefore let all . . . know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said . . . Men and brethren, what shall we do?”—*Acts 2:36-37*.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

“And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.”—*Acts 3:19-20*.

“Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this Man?

“They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.

“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law.

“The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”

— *John 18:29-31*



## Chapter Three

# After that Day

## Twelve Key People and Events

Augustus Caesar (30 B.C.-A.D. 14) had been one of the best rulers the Roman Empire would ever have. After him, according to Tacitus, the Roman historian, the empire was ruled successively by “a tyrant, a madman, a fool, and a monster.” The tyrant was Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) who, upon the death of Augustus, ruled from Jesus’ 18th year until six years after His crucifixion. The madman was Caligula Galus (A.D. 37-41), the fool was Claudius (A.D. 41-54), and the monster was Nero (A.D. 54-68). The last three ruled the Roman Empire during nearly all of Peter and Paul’s ministry (both of whom are said to have been martyred about A.D. 65-67).

With that background, it is easier to understand the state of affairs in the empire during the time the young church was beginning to evangelize.

The death of Christ affected all mankind. That event was the hinge of human destiny. Let us now consider what happened to several people—and the entire Jewish nation—in the 40 years that followed the death of Christ.

### 1 - What Happened to the Disciples?

What happened to the disciples in later years? They took Christianity to areas far from Judaea; and, apparently, all but one (John) died a martyr’s death. Our information on those later years is somewhat sketchy.

Andrew is said to have spent his last years in Scythia, north of the Black Sea. But a small book, entitled the Acts of Andrew (apparently written by someone 200 years later, in A.D. 260), says he preached primarily in Macedonia and was martyred at Patras.

Bartholomew (Nathanael) is said to have served as a missionary in India. An ancient Christian writer, known as Venerable Bede, said Nathanael was beheaded by King Astriagis. James, the son of Alpheus, is said to have preached in Persia and then was crucified there.

James, the son of Zebedee, was the first of the disciples to be martyred. Herod Agrippa I ordered him to be slain with the sword (*Acts 12:2*). It is recorded that this occurred in A.D. 44. It is said that, before his death, James was the first Christian missionary to Spain.

John, the “beloved disciple,” apparently died a natural death at a very old age. About the year A.D. 95, John wrote his Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. Thus, he penned more of the New Testament than any other disciple. It is said that John cared for Jesus’ mother while he pastored the church in Ephesus, and that she died there. Tertullian says that John

was taken to Rome and “plunged into boiling oil, unhurt, and then exiled on an island.” That was probably the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation (*Rev 1:9-10*). It is believed that, when he died, his body was returned to Ephesus for burial.

Judas (not Iscariot; he was also called Lebbaeus, “whose surname was Thaddaeus” and “Judas, the son of James”) was said, by the Christian historian, Eusebius, to have gone to King Abgar of Mesopotamia to pray for his healing. After that he was said to have remained there to preach in several cities of Mesopotamia. Another tradition says that he was slain by magicians in the city of Suanir, in Persia. It is said they killed him with clubs and stones.

Judas Iscariot means “Judas of Kerioth,” which was a small town near Hebron. John’s Gospel tells us that this Judas was the son of Simon. He was, of course, the one who betrayed Christ, threw down the coins during the first trial before the Sanhedrin, and then went out and hanged himself next to the road taken by Jesus and the soldiers on the way to Calvary.

Matthew was a tax collector. Normally, a publican charged a Roman tax of 5 percent of the purchase price of normal trade items and up to 12.5 percent on luxury items. But Matthew gave up that lucrative practice when he became a follower of Christ. John Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, said that Matthew spent his last years preaching in Parthia and Ethiopia, and was martyred in the city of Nadabah in A.D. 60.

Philip, the disciple, was not the same as Philip, the evangelist (*Acts 21:8*). Some early writers say he later preached in France, and others that he preached in southern Russia; still others in Asia Minor, or even India. So we do not have clarity on Philip’s later journeys. Polycrates, of Antioch (A.D. 194), wrote that “Philip, one of the twelve apostles, sleeps at Hierapolis.”

Simon Peter (Cephas) later visited Antioch (*Gal 2:11*), Corinth, and possibly Rome. Eusebius wrote that Peter was crucified in Rome, probably during the reign of Nero. But, frankly, there is no real evidence Peter ever went to Rome. Peter appears to have focused his work on trying to reach unbelieving Jews. Simon Zelotes (Simon, the Canaanite), by one set of traditions (the Coptic Church), is said to have preached in Egypt, Africa, Great Britain, and Persia; by an-

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other, that he primarily worked in the British Isles. A third source, Nicephorus, of Constantinople, wrote this: “Simeon born in Cana of Galilee who . . . was surnamed Zelotes, having received the Holy Ghost from above, traveled through Egypt and Africa, then Mauretanea and Libya, preaching the Gospel. And the same doctrine he taught in the Occidental Sea and the Isles, called Britannia.”

Thomas (Didymus) was a twin (both T’hom in Aramaic, and Didymus in Greek, mean “twin”). It is said that Thomas eventually became a missionary in India; he was martyred and buried in Mylapore, now a suburb of Madras.

But now, we will return to the story of what happened in later years to several other key people in the story of Jesus and the apostles:

### 2 - What Happened to Pilate?

The story of what happened to Pilate, after the crucifixion, begins at the time that Christ died. Jesus had taught His followers to sacredly guard the Bible Sabbath. So they faithfully kept it even after He died. They did not learn until later that the Pharisees had no qualms about violating it; another business meeting of the Sanhedrin was held on the day after Christ died. The Jewish leaders recalled that Christ had predicted that He would rise the third day, and they wanted to make certain that did not happen. So they voted, on Sabbath, to immediately send a delegation to Pilate to place a Roman seal over the tomb, so it could not be opened.

Others were studying the Old Testament Scriptures that day, and learned that the prophecies of the coming Messiah found their exact fulfillment in Jesus, the Christ. Prophecies, such as Isaiah 53, were thoughtfully read.

Over at Joseph’s tomb, one hundred Roman soldiers stood guard, determined that no one would open that tomb or even come near it. It was the early morning of the third day after Christ entered Gethsemane, and everything was quiet and dark.

Suddenly, a flash of bright light was seen, and the earth quaked as an angelic being came

to earth. Falling to the ground, the astonished soldiers lay there; and, as they watched, the brilliant form of an angel stood before the tomb. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven." An earthquake marked the moment when Christ laid down His life, and another one occurred when He took it up again. Stepping closer to the tomb, the radiant one rolled the stone aside as though it were a pebble. Then, in a clear, ringing voice, the angel declared "Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee."

Jesus Christ stepped out of the grave, proclaiming, "I am the resurrection and the life." At this, the terrified Roman sentries partly fainted—yet were awake enough to see what had happened.

Fleeing into the city, they told everyone they met about this, the most terrifying experience in their lives. The words could not be kept hidden. They were making their way to Pilate, but the report was quickly carried to the Jewish authorities. Immediately, the Jewish leaders sent word for the guards to report to them immediately. Although fearful of delay in telling Pilate what had happened, yet the guards assented. Soon they were standing before the hurriedly gathered priests.

Trembling with terror, the soldiers told all. Their whitened faces bore mute testimony to the truthfulness of their words. As they spoke, the faces of the priests blanched. They opened their lips, but could not speak. Then the guards turned to go, with the words that they must report to Pilate. "Wait," hoarsely croaked one priest.

Then the Jewish leaders gave them money—and a lying report: "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." How could they know that had happened—if they were asleep? But worse, for the sentries to give such a testimony would mean certain death, for they would be saying they had slept at their post of duty. But the priests assured them that they would intercede with Pilate, on behalf of the guards.

When the guards arrived at the fortress Antonia, Pilate was again aroused. He had been trying somehow to rest. Accustomed to ruses and disguises, he quickly drew the truth from the soldiers. They told him all, including the false report given them by the priests. As they spoke,

Pilate's face drained of blood.

He would never have another peaceful day the rest of his life. He felt that retribution was coming—for Him as well as for others.

In order to save his position, Pilate permitted Jesus to be scourged and crucified. But that fatal decision would cost Pilate his job, his life, his soul.

In order to better understand the situation Pilate found himself in that morning, we will briefly review several earlier events during his procuratorship:

Pilate had frequently offended the Jews. On one occasion, he had his soldiers march into Jerusalem, carrying standards to which images of the emperor were attached. Another time, he put gold-covered shields with images of the emperor in his Jerusalem headquarters, the palace of Herod. In both instances, the Jews protested so vigorously to higher authorities—the second time directly to Tiberius—that Pilate had to remove the idolatrous images.

Also, as mentioned earlier, Pilate used Temple money to improve a water aqueduct system for the city. When the priests incited the people to protest, Pilate replied by sending men into the streets to knife the protestors.

About half a year before the trial of Christ, Pilate dedicated some golden votive shields in his Jerusalem headquarters, the palace of Herod. Unlike the standards, these shields had no images on them whatever, only a bare inscription of dedication. Although this angered the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Pilate refused to remove them. The Jews then wrote to Tiberius, who ordered Pilate to transfer the shields to Caesarea, and warned him against any further provocations against the Jews.

Shortly after receiving that official note, Christ was brought to him for trial. Thus, Pilate knew that he was under current suspicion by the emperor—at the very time when Christ was brought to him for trial.

What happened to Pilate afterward?

Four years after the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, in A.D. 35 when Pilate massacred many of their people who were holding meetings, the Samaritans complained to Vitellius, the legate of Syria. Vitellius was Pilate's immediate supe-

rior, and he ordered Pilate to go to Rome and justify his conduct before the emperor.

While Pilate was journeying there by ship, Vitellius appointed a new procurator, Marcellus, to serve in his place. But, when Pilate arrived in Rome—he discovered that Emperor Tiberius, his only friend at the capital (Tiberius was his wife's stepfather), had recently died (in March, A.D. 37).

The new emperor, Caligula, banished Pilate to Vienne, on the Rhone River, in the south of Gaul (modern France). Not long after, he committed suicide.

### 3 - What Happened to Annas?

Annas was 63 years old when Christ was brought before him for trial. For nearly 20 years, Annas had kept one or another of his relatives in office. Eventually, Annas had all five of his sons made high priest. Annas had a very long life and died at about the time of the great rebellion which broke out in A.D. 66.

### 4 - What Happened to Caiaphas?

Because Caiaphas married one of Annas' daughters, on Annas' recommendation he was made high priest for a time. Becoming high priest in A.D. 18, Caiaphas was high priest throughout the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the early years of the Christian church (*Lk 3:2; Jn 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6*).

After Caiaphas, three more of Annas' sons became high priests. This dynasty of Annas continued on down to just before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Caiaphas retained the office for 18 years, until Lucius Vitellius, legate of Syria, deposed him in A.D. 36. After the death of Christ, Caiaphas was fully hardened and he tried to kill Peter and John (*Acts 4:6-21*). From the best we can tell, most of Annas' sons were alive and suffered through the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 66-70).

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### 5 - What Happened to Herod Antipas?

In the second will of his father, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas had been designated successor to the throne. But, in its final form, he only received rulership of Galilee and Peraea. His official title was "Herod the Tetrarch," but historians generally referred to him as "Herod Antipas"; and New Testament writers usually called him "king," or "Herod."

Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, whose capital was Petra, south of the Dead Sea. But, in A.D. 31, he abandoned her, when he took Herodias, his brother's wife. Five years later, in A.D. 36, King Aretas, the father of Herod's rightful queen—who had to flee to avoid being slain by her adulterous husband,—fought Herod in battle and succeeded in taking territory from him. Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was forced to intervene.

All this made Emperor Tiberius angry. He felt that it was Herod's job to keep the peace and not to anger other rulers, so that they made war against him. The next year Tiberius died (A.D. 37), and the half-mad Caligula ascended the throne (A.D. 37-41). Emperor Caligula decided to make Herod Agrippa (a grandson of Herod the Great) the king of Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria. This lowered Herod Antipas' rank to that of Tetrarch.

Antipas ought to have known enough to be quiet, but he could not withstand the overarching pride and jealousy of his wife, Herodias. She had her way in the slaying of John the Baptist, and now she wanted her way again. She gave Antipas no peace, until he journeyed with her to Rome to ask Caligula to make him king instead of Agrippa. But his brother-in-law, Agrippa, sent letters to Rome, accusing Antipas of treasonable activities. After considering the matter, Caligula banished Antipas to Gaul (modern France). Broken in spirit, Herodias, the killer of John, went with Antipas into banishment. His territory was added to that already controlled by Agrippa.

## 6 - *What Happened to Salome?*

What happened to Herodias' daughter, Salome? She was the young girl, about 18 at the time, who danced before Herod that terrible evening—and, at her mother's demand, asked for the head of John the Baptist on a plate.

Salome eventually married her great-uncle, Philip the tetrarch (who was about 30 years older). After his death, she married one of her cousins, Aristobulus. We have no further historical records about what happened to her thereafter.

## 7 - *What Happened to Agrippa 1?*

Agrippa I ("Herod Agrippa" or "Agrippa" in the New Testament) was the ruler which had his men slay James (the brother of John) with the sword and then imprisoned Peter, intending to kill him also (*Acts 12:1-3*). But an angel was sent to touch Peter—releasing him from his chains—and then leading him out of prison.

Twice in Acts 12, an angel touched men. Not long after the release of Peter, an angel also touched Agrippa during his blasphemous speech at his capital, Caesarea,—immediately causing him intense agony, followed soon after by death. He died in A.D. 44 (*Josephus, Antiquities, 19, 8.2*).

## 8 - *What Happened to Agrippa 11?*

There were two "Agrippas" in New Testament times. Agrippa II was the "Agrippa" who heard Paul. Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I, and was only 17 when his father died. Later, In A.D. 50, he was given a territory to govern: the rulership of the northeast portion of Palestine,

including Galilee and Peraea. It was after that appointment that he and his wife, Bernice, at the time of a courtesy visit to Festus in Caesarea, heard Paul.

Agrippa was convinced of Paul's innocence, and was strongly convicted that he, himself, should become a Christian. Apparently, Agrippa was not as evil as many of the other Palestinian rulers of the time. So, although he heard Paul, he had no jurisdiction over the case. He believed Paul should be freed. From the best we can tell, Agrippa II lived a full life and later died in c.A.D. 93 or c.100.

## 9 - *What Happened to Felix?*

Marcus Antonius Felix was a Roman procurator of Judaea and Samaria from c.A.D. 52 to c.60. He was given that assignment because he was the brother of a close friend of Emperor Claudius. Felix was not qualified for his office, and the Roman historian, Tacitus, said he practiced every kind of cruelty and lust, "wielding the power of a king with all the instincts of a slave" (*History, 5.9*). He suppressed several rebellions of the Jews against his despotic rule.

Eventually, the Apostle Paul was brought before Felix and his Jewish wife, Drusilla. Felix trembled at Paul's words, but was only willing to release him if Paul would pay bribe money. Several years later, accusations against Felix were carried by the Jews to Rome, and he had to journey there to answer serious charges.

## 10 - *What Happened to Drusilla?*

Drusilla was Felix's wife, and she also heard Paul. She was a daughter of King Herod Agrippa I. Born in A.D. 38, she was only 6 years old when her father died. The records indicate that she was a bad woman. She left her husband, King Azizus of Emesa, shortly after marrying him—in order to unite with Felix. While Paul was a prisoner, he spoke to Felix and Drusilla about

righteousness, temperance, and the coming judgment (*Acts 24:24-25*). It is clear that they rejected what he had to say.

In later years, Drusilla and her son (also named Agrippa) were at Pompey when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79. Both died in the rain of ash.

## 11 - *What Happened to Festus?*

Porcius Festus was procurator of Judaea from c.A.D. 60 to c.62. Festus had more integrity than Felix, whom he succeeded in office. He believed Paul to be innocent, but thought he should be tried in Jerusalem—which, if done, would have brought the apostle certain death. When Paul appealed to the emperor, he was sent to Rome.

Festus, already quite elderly when he took office, died soon after Paul's departure.

## 12 - *What Happened to Jerusalem?*

**Matthew 23:33-24:20;**  
**Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6**

Shortly before His death, Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that not one of the gigantic stones of the Temple would remain upon another. He told this to His astonished disciples as they sat on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple area. Tragically, millions of Jews who rejected Christ were to die or be sold into slavery as a result of that later rebellion. Here, briefly, is the story of what happened:

For decades, the Roman rulers had become steadily more brutal. At the same time, the Jewish leaders became more and more hardened and fanatical as, year after year, they persecuted the followers of the One they had crucified. The two elements finally produced a situation of such extreme desperation that it was fanned into open flame.

After the reign of Herod the Great (37-34 B.C.), Archelaus ruled over Judaea as ethnarch (4 B.C.-A.D. 6). He was followed by seven procurators (also called proconsuls): Coponius (A.D. 6-10), Marcus Ambivius (A.D. 10-13), Annius Rufus (A.D. 13-15), Valerius Gratus (A.D. 15-26), Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-35), Marcellus (A.D. 35-38), and Marullus (A.D. 38-44). Agrippa I then ruled Judaea for a short interim (A.D. 44), followed by seven more procurators between A.D. 44-66. These were Cuspius Fadus, Tiberius Alexander, Ventidius Cumanus, Antonius Felix, Porcius Festus, Albinus, Gessius Florus, and Florus. The last of them were the worst.

When Florus was appointed, he seemed to work as hard as he could to push the Jews into open, massive rebellion. According to Josephus, Florus' "plan was to have a war kindled." And that is exactly what happened. (All quotations in this section, unless otherwise credited, are from Josephus' writings.)

Jerusalem was the Roman capital of the country, at those times when single rulers governed all of Palestine (Judaea, Idumaea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peraea). These rulers were Herod the Great, Archelaus, and Agrippa I. But during the rule of the fourteen procurators (A.D. 6-44, 44-66), they only controlled Judaea and Idumaea; and they made Caesarea their capital.

The procurator was only in Jerusalem during important feasts, in case trouble developed. Thus, only a small contingent of Roman soldiers were ordinarily stationed in Jerusalem for 12 years before hostilities began in A.D. 66. So, when the war broke out that year, the Roman leaders were caught off guard—and the Jews quickly took control of the entire city.

But, even though Jerusalem had been taken over by the Jews, the crisis could still have been averted. As Florus approached the city with two cohorts of reinforcements from Caesarea, a delegation of moderate Temple dignitaries went out to meet them, in an effort to stave off war. But Florus told his men to attack the unarmed religious leaders. Historians believe that Florus was goading the Jews into rebellion, in the hope of obtaining Temple treasures for himself.

When his forces unexpectedly attacked the priests in the ensuing panic, the soldiers attempted to storm the fortress of Antonia. The Antonia was located on the north side of the

Temple mount, and passageways connected them both. But as Florus' troops went into Antonia, Jews in the Temple wrecked those passageways, foiling the attempts of the soldiers to enter the Temple precincts.

Florus retired to Caesarea, and the Jews appealed to King Agrippa II for help. (The rule of his predecessor, Agrippa I, had ended in A.D. 44.) Agrippa II was ruler of Galilee, Peraea, and the northeast, and happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. This was the same man who, several years before, had told Paul, "Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian" (*Acts 26:28*). Agrippa told them that the Roman authorities would surely take their side; but that, until a successor should be sent, they should submit to Florus, who was their duly appointed ruler. This so angered the Jews that they threw stones at Agrippa. That marked the turning point.

Furious, Agrippa immediately left town. It was August of A.D. 66. For the next four years, Jerusalem was to know no peace. Ironically, throughout those years, the Jews fought one another harder than they fought the Romans.

The spark that ignited the internecine blaze originated as a suggestion by Eleazar, son of Ananias, the high priest. Against the counsel of all moderates, the Sanhedrin suddenly enacted an embargo on all gifts and sacrifices by foreigners. No longer could any god but the God of the Israelites be worshiped in Jerusalem, and only Jews could render that worship. In addition, no longer could sacrifices to Jehovah be made on behalf of the emperor (a requirement Rome made of every subject nation). Such a decree by the Jews meant certain war with Rome.

In a last effort to avert warfare, the moderates sent an appeal to Agrippa to intervene. In response, he sent 3,000 cavalry to their aid. With these, the moderate priests and other Jews who wanted to avoid war seized the upper city. The more rebellious moved into the lower city and the Temple. Fighting continued for a week, and ended with the Romans being driven from the city by Eleazar's forces. After capturing the Antonia and slaughtering every Roman in it, Eleazar's forces headed for Herod's palace.

At the beginning of this crisis, a contingent of Jews under Menahem marched south and captured the massive fortress of Masada on the east side of the Dead Sea, which Herod the Great

had earlier built. Taking it by surprise, his men plundered it, seizing all the weapons and distributing them. The Jews would hold that fortress until a year after the fall of Jerusalem. Aside from two palaces and 38 towers, it contained massive storehouses of grain and an immense water reservoir.

When Menahem and his men returned to Jerusalem, he arrived just as Eleazar's men were besieging Herod's palace. Immediately, Eleazar relinquished leadership to him. The remnant of Agrippa's troops in the palace pleaded to safely leave. But Menahem was on a killing spree, and slew all but those able to escape into the three towers of the palace. The next day he slew Ananias, the high priest, and the high priest's brother. Within a few days, Menahem was assassinated, and Eleazar, who was Ananias' son, took his place.

But Eleazar quickly revealed himself to be as evil and cruel as Menahem, the one he had eliminated. After being promised freedom if they surrendered, the Roman troops in the towers were murdered as they came out—and this was done on the Sabbath day. Only their general, Metilius, managed to save his life by promising to convert to Judaism.

As soon as news of this massacre reached Florus, over on the coast at Caesarea, he had his soldiers, in one day, slay 20,000 Jews living in and near that city. In reaction, Jews throughout Palestine arose and slew Roman citizens. They raided armories and carried off food and weapons.

At last Cestius Gallus, always slow to do anything, decided to act. Cestius was the legate of Syria, but his indecision and fear at crucial times greatly aided in inflaming the Jews. Marching south at the head of 30,000 troops, he destroyed the coastal city of Joppa with fire and subdued most of Galilee. Then, heading further south toward Jerusalem, he wavered and stopped for three days at Scopus. Deciding to continue on, he arrived at Jerusalem—at the only time he could have taken it and ended the war! He began by waging an assault on the northern portion of the Temple, which failed. Once again he paused, uncertain what to do next.

Unknown to him, inside the city the moderates were working feverishly to hand the city over to him and stop the war.

But, as they were about to do so, “Cestius retired without any reason in the world.” As Josephus explained, he just had his men pack up and walk away from the city. Immediately, hostile Jews from inside the city went after the retreating army—and fell on their rear so violently, that they almost destroyed Cestius’ forces. Only nightfall saved the Roman army. In the panic, Cestius abandoned a large quantity of equipment, siege machines, and weapons. He also lost nearly 6,000 of his troops who were slain.

Jesus had predicted that His followers should leave the land before the destruction of the city—and that they should look for a sign that told them when to go (*Matt 24:15-20*). This was given when the idolatrous standards of Rome were brought before Jerusalem by Cestius, by the holy place. When Cestius and his forces retreated, the Jews rushed out of the gates and chased them for miles.

The entire countryside was temporarily emptied of warriors; all were engaged in the battle taking place north of Jerusalem. Immediately, every Christian left Judaea and fled to Pella, in the land of Peraea, east of the Jordan River. In answer to prayer, God sent help. The flight was not on the Sabbath day, nor was it in the winter (*Matt 24:20*). We are told that no Christian perished in the later destruction of the Jerusalem.

This unexpected victory assured the Jews that they could do the same to any other Roman army which ever appeared over the horizon. “Running and singing,” they returned to the city. It was October of A.D. 66 and the twelfth year of Nero’s reign.

Utter misery lay ahead for them all. The doleful prediction, that not one stone of the Temple would remain upon another, was to be fulfilled. The die was cast; a great war was inevitable. Immediately, a major council was held within the precincts of the Temple. Priests, generals, and administrators were appointed to manage the war throughout the country. Among them was a young 30-year-old man by the name of Flavius Josephus. This was the Josephus who would later become the most important secular Jewish historian of all time. Josephus was given the governorship of Galilee, and entrusted with strengthening the fortifications in the cities of Gamala, Jotapata, Bersabee, Selamis, and

Taricheae. Josephus was a capable leader, and soon raised an army of 100,000 young men. Soon everyone had been assigned old weapons which had been scrapped, and they were busily repairing them. For several months, Josephus’ forces had to contend with a wandering Jewish bandit, John of Gischala. But then John left. He would later enter Jerusalem and become a key player in its closing scenes.

In February of A.D. 67, Nero appointed the only man he considered capable enough to manage what was obviously going to be an immense war: Titus Flavius Vespasian. Vespasian had earlier commanded a legion in Germany and Britain with outstanding success. At this time, he was 58 years old. Vespasian steamrolled through the countryside, taking everything before him.

When he came to Jotapata, he laid the city under siege. Inside this formidable stronghold was an army under the command of Josephus. Next to Jerusalem itself, it was the most impregnable city in the land. For 47 days, siege machines threw stones, darts, and javelins into the city. At the same time, battering rams were hurled against its walls. According to Josephus’ own description (and, being on the receiving end, he should know), these were “vast beams of wood like the masts of ships, with thick pieces of iron at the forepart.” They pounded away, day after day, at the walls of the city.

Then a deserter told Vespasian that the last watch each night had the habit of falling asleep. Vespasian learned that on the very day that his earthen banks had been raised higher than the city walls. Early the next morning, his forces entered the city and slew 40,000 Jews.

But Josephus and 40 men had hid themselves. His associates wanted the group to commit suicide. So Josephus let the others go first. When only he and one other man remained, Josephus talked him into surrendering with him. When brought before Vespasian, he held up his hand and in a solemn voice said, I come to you “as a messenger with great tidings: Thou, O Vespasian, art Caesar and Emperor. Thou and thy son [Titus] with thee.” That sounded pretty good, and it was enough to save Josephus’ life. He was held a prisoner.

Gradually, Vespasian conquered one city after another. A few cities surrendered without a



fight; but, most of the time, large numbers of Jews were either slain or committed suicide when conquered by Roman forces.

When the small town of Gischala was taken, John of Gischala fled with most of his men to Jerusalem. Arriving there, he added to the reign of terror already progressing inside its walls.

By May of A.D. 68, Vespasian had conquered Galilee, Samaria, Peraea, and Transjordan. Then he headed south and captured the fortress of Machaerus. From there Vespasian went to the Qumran community and destroyed it. (That was where the Dead Sea Scrolls had earlier been made and stored.) Then he returned to his headquarters in Caesarea.

Vespasian learned of the maddened fighting that was taking place inside the gates of Jerusalem. But he told his soldiers to stay back, watch, and wait; for, “while their enemies were destroying one another with their own hands, it was best to sit still as spectators.” Perhaps unknown to Vespasian at that time, the fortress of Masada, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, was still held by the Jews. When he did learn about the massacre and takeover, he wisely decided that Jerusalem must be taken first. The conquest of Masada would not be easy, and would be postponed until later.

Consistently, ever since he first arrived in Palestine in A.D. 67, Vespasian had followed the plan of taking control of the countryside—and staying away from Jerusalem. All the while, the internecine fighting within the city continued to rage. But now, the time had finally come to march his troops to Jerusalem. With the exception of Masada, everything else had been mopped up.

Yet before arriving there, on June 9, A.D. 68, Vespasian received word that Nero had committed suicide outside Rome, as mobs from the city were coming to kill him. Immediately, the war in Palestine came to a halt; and, for the next 18 months, there was disorder throughout the empire as various leaders jockeyed for positions of power. Three rulers in a row followed one another as emperors. More time was given to Jerusalem.

Galba ruled for seven months, until January A.D. 69, when he was slain in a Roman marketplace. Ortho took the throne, and then committed suicide three months later. His forces had been defeated by Aulus Vitellius, who in turn was

crushed in a battle near Cremona by the legions of Vespasian.

It was October of A.D. 69, and Vespasian was, at last, the new emperor. He would rule until his death in A.D. 79. The city of Rome went wild with enthusiasm; *Vivat Caesar* was the cry. After gaining the throne, Vespasian remembered Josephus and freed him. Josephus immediately joined Titus as a trusted counselor. It was time for Titus to turn his attention to Jerusalem.

What had happened in Jerusalem during those 18 months? Jesus had told those following Him to the cross to “weep for yourselves and you children” (*Lk 23:28*). Josephus said it differently: “A deep silence and a kind of deadly night had seized upon the city.” The enemy from without the city walls and the enemy within would seemingly work together in a conspiracy to destroy the city and its people.

Those who were not dying at the hands of rival factions in the city were starving to death by the thousands. The war had been in progress three years; and, with the passing of time, there had been a tremendous influx of people into Jerusalem. They had come from all over Palestine. When John of Gischala arrived in the city with his band of fugitives, he was just another problem. Men who “omitted no kind of barbarity” were there to greet him on his arrival. But John soon became one of the leaders in the atrocities.

By the time Titus later arrived at the city to besiege it, “the state of the city was already that of a place doomed to destruction.” Thus spake Josephus, the man who later learned from eyewitnesses exactly what occurred within the doomed city. Against such desperadoes, the high priest rallied the support of the law-abiding citizens; and several armed battles occurred.

Then John of Gischala got an idea. He persuaded his fellow fanatics to let the Idumaens into the city, so they could help destroy the moderates! Messengers were sent, and soon 20,000 Idumaens, in battle array under four commanders, were at the gates of Jerusalem—demanding entrance. The gates were shut, but these men from without acted as if they would try to tear down the walls to get in. Going to the top of the wall, a deputy high priest boldly called down to them, Why “had they come to protect a sink of wicked wretches, the offscouring of the whole

country, and each one deserving ten thousand deaths?" The rage of the Idumaens knew no bounds. They were determined to get in. That night, a powerful storm arose and the wind and rain beat down. In the darkness of the night, John of Gischala's men managed to saw through the bars of one of the gates—and opened it to the horde outside! A reign of terror ensued, as 20,000 maddened men rushed in. The high priest and 8,000 moderates were quickly slain.

When their work of destruction was ended, the Idumaens suddenly left the city. It was as if devils had been sent in to work great destruction, and then depart as quickly as they came. But now Simon Bar Giora arrived at the gates of the city!

Simon Bar Giora was originally from Gerasa (Jerash), one of the cities on the eastern side of Galilee (the district of the Decapolis). An unusually fierce fighter, he had earlier led that successful attack on the rear of Cestius' army. Since then, he had roved across the countryside, pillaging, seizing property, slaying Jews and Romans indiscriminately. When threatened by Roman forces, he quickly retired into the fortress of Masada. "Proclaiming liberty to all those in slavery and getting together a set of wicked men from all quarters," he ere long had a marauding army of 25,000.

To the people of the countryside, disoriented and confused by the warfare, he was as a god to be followed. For he seemed to have a purpose when few Jews knew what to do. When Simon Bar Giora arrived at the gates of Jerusalem with 12,000 men, he also demanded to be admitted. The long 18-month wait, while the emperorship of Rome was still in transition, was nearing its end. It was almost time for Vespasian to depart for Italy and for his son to march to Jerusalem.

Astoundingly, the forces of Simon Bar Giora were permitted to enter the city. One disoriented group within the fated city had somehow decided that Simon's army might eliminate John's! The city was in jeopardy because of John's depredations; in desperation, the gates were opened to Simon's forces. But this was "a remedy that was to prove worse than the disease." Matthias, the high priest, went out to welcome them in. Havoc reigned throughout the city.

By this time, Vespasian had been declared emperor of the Roman Empire. It was October,

A.D. 69. He gave the control of the army into the hand of his son, Titus. The young man had planned battles and fought by the side of his father; and, like him, he was organized, self-controlled, and knew what he was doing.

On May 10, A.D. 70, Titus and his army arrived at Jerusalem. He was 30 years old, and the commander of all the combined Roman forces in the East.

In mercy, abundant time had been given the people of that city. Cestius Gallus had an excellent opportunity to take the city in October of A.D. 67. Instead he walked away. Vespasian was about to lay it under siege a year later, but then he stopped hostilities during the 18 months of political uncertainty. But now the time had come. There would be no more reprieves. The prediction given 36 years earlier was to be fulfilled.

Nearly 40 years before, Jesus wept over the city. The city which rejected Him was to experience all the horrors of famine, disease, and warfare. Yet the greater part of it would be caused by those within the walls of the doomed city.

Jesus had told those following Him to the cross to "weep for yourselves and your children." (*Lk 23:28*). Josephus said it differently: "A deep silence and a kind of deadly night had seized upon the city." The enemy from without the city walls and the enemy within would seemingly work together in a conspiracy to destroy the city and its people. Those who were not dying at the hands of rival factions in the city were starving to death.

The arrival of Titus meant that those in the city could no longer safely leave. Simon's forces, John's army, and all the rest were now locked inside a city from which they could not escape. As Titus made the noose tight (by constructing a second wall around the first, described in more detail below), those inside the city spent their time living with ever-increasing famine and mutual destruction. The sedition in Jerusalem had now taken the form of "a wild beast grown mad." Three factions were preoccupied with destroying one another. It was "a great body torn to pieces.

Eleazar, the one who had started it all, was still alive. He was in charge of one band of some 2,000 Zealots, and was in the inner court of the Temple. John of Gischala had 6,000 men, and he was in the outer court of the Temple. Simon

Bar Giora, by this time, had 10,000 under his command. In addition, he was allied with 5,000 Idumeans who had remained behind when their fellow countrymen left.

While Titus tightened the siege, those inside seemed to agree on nothing, except “to kill those that were innocent; and the Temple was defiled everywhere with murders.” There had been enough food stored in the city to last for years. But, already, large amounts of grain and other foodstuffs had been seized and destroyed by rival parties. Now, as conquest by Titus neared, John and Simon destroyed by fire most of the final reserves of corn and other provisions.

But, now, back to Titus.

When Titus arrived outside the gates of the city, he initially pitched his camp about four miles from the walls. Shortly afterward, he rode around the city to look over the terrain he would have to work with. Suddenly, he and 600 horsemen were suddenly ambushed, and very nearly lost their lives.

The next day, the four legions began arriving, each with over 16,000 men. When Titus arrived outside the gates of the city, he brought with him the fifth, tenth, twelfth, and fifteenth legions of the Roman army, along with a host of auxiliaries. He had an army of 65,000 men at his command. Nevertheless, it took him 139 days to conquer the city.

As Titus began putting the siege machines in place, the warring factions within the city fully came to their senses, and began giving some attention to fighting the forces outside.

As the tenth legion moved into position on the Mount of Olives, Jews from inside the city sallied forth to do battle. The Romans were startled at the maddened frenzy of these men.

The battle had begun—at the very place where it was predicted nearly 40 years before. The city and its Temple would be destroyed.

Outside the outer walls of the city, Titus had his men erected a second wall—to prevent anyone from escaping. Then he set to work to penetrate those outer walls, but it took 25 days to take them. This was done with earthen banks, battering rams, and machines which hurled immense stones, darts, and javelins nearly 500 yards. Towers which were 75-foot tall were constructed and pushed up next to the walls. In this

way, the two outer walls on the south, west, and north sides of the city were taken.

Having secured these, the next step was to penetrate the last wall. This was the one surrounding the fortress of Antonia and the Temple just south of it, and the old city south of that. “The Temple was a fortress that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the Temple.”

It was obvious that the penetration of the Antonia and the Temple would be most difficult. So Titus called all his men back, and spent four days parading the entire enemy forces in all their war equipment around the city. Surely, it must have awed the defenders on the walls, but they gave no indication that they were willing to surrender. Repeatedly, he asked them to surrender. But those within the city would not do so.

Titus then called Josephus to his aid, and asked him to plead with the people. Standing behind protective barriers, so their projectiles could not reach him, Josephus, the former Jewish general of Jotapata, called out to the people in their language, pleading with them to surrender. Josephus pled with them from a position “out of reach of their darts and yet within their hearing.” He told them it was foolish to leave “the city empty of inhabitants and the country a desert; on which account Caesar did now offer them his right hand for their security.” Cries of hatred and showers of darts were the only reply from the walls.

So Josephus approached it another way. He, who had once been a Jewish rabbi and one of their military commanders, knew how to speak so they could understand, whether or not they assented to what he had to say.

He told them that if they were doing right, then God would avenge them—as He had always done in earlier centuries. But He was not helping them because they had done wrong and profanely denied Him by their actions. Josephus told them it was not the Romans they were fighting, but the God of heaven. Surely, he said, if God could slay the army of Sennacherib, He could slay the entire Roman army—if they were in the right. But they were not. They were doing wrong. Josephus said if God could restore the city and Temple to His people as He did in old times through Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, surely He would have done it now if they were right in

what they were doing. But they were not doing right. They were robbing and murdering one another, and had been doing it for four years.

Josephus told them that, just as God helped the king of Babylon burn down the city and the Temple in ancient times, so He would let the forces of Titus do it again—if they did not surrender.

Jeers and curses were all that Josephus received in reply. John and Simon were only the bolder in their determination to resist to the end, and slay all inside the city who refused to help them do so. With the passing of time, “girdles and shoes and the very leather from shields were chewed. Children and young men wandered about the marketplace like shadows, some even searching the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle for something to eat. Terrible methods of torment were invented by robbers to discover where food was hidden . . . and everyone died with his eyes fixed upon the Temple.”

Titus ordered that every tree for miles around be cut down. Crosses were erected, and every Jew caught was crucified in full sight of those in the city. Because many would sneak out at night, in search of weeds to eat, as many as 500 were crucified daily. There were no trees within a 12-mile radius around the city. (Do not, today, try to find olive trees from the time of Christ in Gethsemane; its garden was totally destroyed. Every tree in Bethlehem and Bethany was also cut down.)

Conditions within the city continued to worsen. For years, factions within the city had been warring against one another. They would steal food—and even destroy it. It seemed as if madness reigned everywhere. As predicted over 1,500 years before, people in the siege killed and ate one another (*Deut 28:49-57*).

Seventeen days were then spent in constructing ramps to aid the soldiers in climbing to the top of the walls of Antonia. But John had cleverly dug from beneath and weakened the ground beneath the ramps. At the moment of attack, the base of the ramps gave way—as John’s men set on fire the cross ties from above. So far, Titus was prevented from entering the city.

Yet it was plain that the famine inside the city was worsening. Surely, the end was approaching. Titus decided to throw up four new banks against the walls of Antonia. He knew that,

once that was taken, the rest of the city would inevitably fall to him. In 21 days, the four banks were completed—and the attack was made.

Intense fighting occurred, and the Roman troops succeeded in taking Antonia. It was now nearly the end of July of A.D. 70. But there still remained the Temple and the city beyond.

Then, Titus tried to storm over into the Temple. Fierce fighting took place, but Titus’ men failed to penetrate. They were driven back into Antonia.

Throughout all this time, the daily morning and evening sacrifices had continued to be offered on the great brazen altar in the court of the Temple. But, on August 7, it stopped “for want of men to offer it.”

Looking down upon it from the heights of Olivet, Titus was amazed at the splendor of the Temple, and he determined to spare it. He appealed to the Jews to leave the Temple area and fight with him anywhere else. In this way, he said, the great Temple of the Jews could be saved from possible destruction. But, faithful to his maddened determination to continue destroying everything, John of Gischala laughed him to scorn and replied by setting his artillery on the gates of the sanctuary itself. Titus had little option but to let his soldiers penetrate the walls—and enter this holy place of the Jews.

Titus now set to work demolishing the fortress of Antonia. Everything but the southeast tower was torn down, so he could move his war engines and embankments closer to the outer wall of the Temple court. Earthen banks were raised at various places around the cloistered walls. But, in the process of doing this, too many troops were being slain by those on the walls.

So Titus stopped work on the banks and gave orders to set the outer gates of the Temple complex on fire. This was done, and it appeared that within a short time his men would be able to enter through those gates.

General Titus then issued strict orders that no fire be permitted near the actual Temple building itself. (Keep in mind that the central Temple building was inside an encircling courtyard complex, which, itself, was inside the cloistered outer walls.) At all costs, Titus ordered that the beautiful Temple must be spared.

But a greater than Titus had declared that it

would be destroyed, and that not one stone would be left on another.

By now the outer entrance gates had burned down. But, fortunately, the fire had not spread elsewhere. Titus' men began rushing through the smoldering gates into the courtyard. Inside, they found hundreds of half-crazed people, fighting with insane fury. Angered to feverish intensity by this, the soldiers butchered everyone they found. By now it was dark, but the fighting continued on into the night.

Then, in the excitement, a firebrand was flung by a soldier into one of those porticoes of the outer wall of the courtyard of the Temple. Immediately, the fire in that cedar-lined chamber began spreading to other porticoes along the outer wall.

Josephus described the scene:

"At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders (to do so), being hurried on by a certain divine fury and being lifted up by another soldier, set fire to a [tightly shuttered] golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were about the holy house on the north side of it."

Learning of this, Titus arose and ran to the Temple, shouting orders for the men to put out the flames. The main building was still untouched. Somehow it must be preserved. But the shouting and mayhem continued; and the soldiers drew closer to the main building, housing the first and second apartments of the sanctuary.

Titus well-knew that if the central sanctuary was protected from harm, the fanatics would use it as a fortress and keep fighting. But Titus was determined to save that sanctuary! It was too glorious to be destroyed. But the few soldiers who did try to put out the fire were attacked by the "defenders of the sanctuary."

In response, the soldiers, furious at the fanaticism, ignored the fire surrounding the holy building and fought the Jews.

Meanwhile, Titus entered the holy building with his officers and gazed about them. In the light from the flames outside, the wondrous beauty of it was breathtaking. It contained a first apartment and a second with gold-plated walls, divided by an immense curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet material with embroidered figures of cherubim. The first apartment had three beau-

tiful solid gold furnishings in it. Titus was determined that this building must be saved.

Titus pled with his men. He told them to give their attention to putting out the fire. His centurion, Liberalis, tried to enforce obedience, but all to no effect. The soldiers were becoming as maddened as the Jewish defenders. Gradually, as the fighting continued, the soldiers neared the actual Temple building itself.

And now the soldiers themselves had arrived at the spectacular building. Entering the outer part of the building, in the wild light of the flames the soldiers saw gold glistening all about them. Surely, there must be incalculable riches in here! Angered by the fanatical Jews, and thinking that fire might bring them all some of those riches, one soldier thrust a lighted torch between the hinges of the door leading into the inner sanctuary. Instantly, the building was in flames.

Again, Titus rushed forward, but the smoke and heat were intense. The inner cedar walls of the building were on fire. Nothing could be done to save it. The Temple was burning to the ground!

"The fatal day had come; it was the 10th day of the month of Ab upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon."

One after another, towering sections of the main sanctuary tottered and fell into the flames. As one writer said, "The whole summit of the hill which commanded the city blazed like a volcano." The heat was intense, and everyone was driven back. Soon, there was nothing to do but stand and watch it burn to the ground. For a time, the fighting stopped; and all that could be heard was the crackling of the flames and the periodic crash of more sections into the maelstrom of fire below. The walls and roofs of cedar, the pinnacles, and gate towers—all were a blazing inferno.

The light of the flames could be seen on every face, and reflected off the slopes of nearby Gethsemane. Indeed, thousands of faces were watching it, for both Romans and Jews stood entranced by the sight. From locations all over the lower city, at every building, window, and roof, Jews stared in horrified silence as their Temple was being destroyed.

Soon the fighting in and around the courtyard resumed as projectiles were hurled by Jews at the Romans. They were met with slashing swords. Amid the tempest of the roaring fire, the

crash of buildings, the thunder of falling timbers, the screams of perishing Jews and shouts of running soldiers echoed from the walls, houses, and the slopes of Olivet and reechoed from the surrounding hills. What a catastrophe; what a terrible end!

“And thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar’s approbation . . . 1,300 years, seven months, and 15 days after the laying of its first foundation by King Solomon.”

With the Temple in ashes, the entire city soon fell into the hands of the Romans. Inaccessible battlements were deserted; impregnable towers were forsaken. Yet there still were pockets of resistance. As a result, the lower city was burned—as far as the pool of Siloam. The upper city was also destroyed and, along with everything else, razed to the ground.

It took Titus’ army of 65,000 men 139 days to gain control of the whole city. More than 100,000 Jews died within the city between early May and late July. In August, the Temple was burned to the ground; and, in September, the southern half of the city fell. Over 1 million Jews lost their lives in the siege. Another 97,000 were taken captive to foreign lands. Josephus put the final casualty figures for the siege alone at 1,100,000. Even during the sorting out of slaves, 1,100 died for want of food, either because the Romans did not give them enough or because they refused to eat.

September 2, A.D. 70, saw the end of this, one of the most terrible sieges in history. Titus returned to Rome the following year. His father was still emperor. The city went wild with excitement and a new title was coined for him: “*Imperator Designatus*.” Special coins were minted in honor of what he had done, and the most famous of Roman arches—the Arch of Titus—was erected several years later in his honor. It can be seen in Rome today. On it, in relief, are to be seen pictures of Jews being taken captive to Rome. Utensils from the Temple (including the seven-branched lampstand) are shown. What ultimately happened to those precious Temple furnishings is not known. A later conqueror of Rome probably melted them down.

The city that put the Saviour to death had virtually destroyed itself.

“This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were eager for innovations, a city otherwise of great magnificence

and of mighty fame among all mankind.”

“Sedition destroyed the city, and the Romans destroyed the sedition, which it was a much harder thing to do than to destroy the walls; so that we may justly ascribe our misfortune to our own people, and the just vengeance taken on them by the Romans . . . For this internal sedition did not cease even when the Romans were encamped near their very walls. But although they had grown wiser at the first onset the Romans made upon them, this lasted but a while.

“For they returned to their former madness, and separated one from another, and fought it out and did everything that the besiegers could desire them to do; for they never suffered anything that was worse from the Romans than they made each other suffer.”

One last conquest yet needed to be made: The Jewish forces holed up at the gigantic fortress east of the Dead Sea—Masada.

That immense fortification had been built by Herod about a hundred years earlier. After being captured by Jewish forces in A.D. 66 at the very beginning of the war, *Zealots* later took possession of it during the four-year war.

Who were the Zealots?

Of the Jews, the Zealots had for years been the most determined to throw off the Roman rule. During the time Felix served as procurator of Judaea (A.D. 52-60), the Zealots formed a super-fanatical group, and called themselves the *Sicarii*. The name means “dagger people.” Prior to each Jewish feast, the *Sicarii* would prepare their hit lists. Then, during the feasts, they would quietly circulate among the crowds in Jerusalem. Walking up to Jews known to be Roman sympathizers, they would stab them to death, using daggers concealed in their clothing. As the victim crumpled, the Zealot would draw back into the crowd.

Before the siege, some of the *Sicarii* also fled from Jerusalem and, with their families, fled to Masada.

After Titus’ destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Masada had become a refuge for these and other Zealots fleeing from the Roman armies. So Titus sent Flavius Silva to take it. Under his command, ten thousand legionnaires marched southward, carrying weapons, siege equipment, and supplies through the trackless wastes of the Dead Sea desert to the base of that massive fort. Remains of their camp, a three-mile wall encir-

cling the fortress, and a massive earthen ramp can still be seen today.

Setting high atop a steep mountain, the stones of the walls and buildings of Masada had, for maximum strength, been cut and fitted before being erected. That was the same building technique Herod the Great had used in constructing the Temple. He had started construction on Masada in 37 B.C. Its fairly level summit was half a mile long and 220 yards wide. Herod had here built a winter palace, huge storehouses, and an enormous water reservoir. At the northern end of the fortress, a second palace had been constructed on three levels, with Corinthian columns and mosaic floors. The whole area was surrounded by an 18-foot wall with 38 watchtowers. The weapons that Herod had stockpiled fell into the hands of the Jewish insurrectionists a hundred years later, in A.D. 66. From that wide-spreading fortress mountain, the entire countryside, the “Sea of Lot” (the Arab name for the Dead Sea), and its far side (where the Qumran community and the Dead Sea scrolls were located) could be seen.

Finally, the Roman preparations were completed, and D day had arrived. The Romans marched up their ramp and were met by a rain of darts from within. Then, as Titus had successfully done in penetrating the Temple area, Flavius Silva ordered his men to set fire to the great entrance gate.

On both sides, everyone watched to see what would happen next. At first the wind blew the fire away from the gate, and those inside rejoiced with shouting. Then, suddenly, the wind changed—and blew steadily southward. Soon the gate was blazing.

Immediately, the defenders ran to the top of the mountain and counseled together. They knew their time was limited, and that the next morning the Romans would come up that road—the only entrance to or exit from Masada. At the urging of Eleazar ben Yair, their leader, they agreed on a suicide pact. Two men would slay all the rest, and then one would kill the other. Finally the last one would commit suicide. Lots were distributed to determine the order of the slayings, and the work of self-extermination gradually went forward.

The next morning, the Roman troops cautiously advanced past the burned-out gates on

up the steep entrance path. Yet no defenders were to be seen. They knew a terrible battle was ahead, and the losses would be heavy.

Arriving at the top, they searched; except for one fire in the palace, there was only silence. Josephus said, “There was a terrible solitude on every side and a fire within the palace.” Where could the defenders be? There was only one entrance to the tableland on top of the mountain.

Then a sound was heard, and two older women and five children emerged from an underground cave, and walked toward them. They had hid themselves as the suicide pact was carried out by 960 men, women, and children.

The date was April 15, A.D. 73. The nation of the Jews was gone, and its people were scattered here and there throughout the empire.

In choosing Barabbas over Christ, they rejected God, their ruler, and put themselves outside of His protection. By choosing Barabbas, they chose the one he represented, that is, Satan as their ruler.

“His blood be upon us and upon our children.” How God wanted to spare them! Yet His every effort to recover them had been rejected!

What a warning that is for us today. We, too, can go too far in rejecting God’s provisions for our salvation until His protection is removed from us and we are left to the master that we have chosen.

So it will be with all those in the last days who reject God’s Word and His ways! However, there is one further footnote:

In A.D. 120, Emperor Hadrian had the ruins of the Temple removed and the site sown with salt. Then he erected a temple to Jupiter over, what is today called, the Dome of the Rock—the place where Abraham had nearly sacrificed Isaac and where the altar of the Temple had been located.

Shortly after Hadrian did that, a fanatical Jew, Simon Bar-Kochba (“Son of the Star”), declared himself to be the Messiah. Seeing in him their last hope, the older, reliable leaders gave him their full support. Once again, there was a Jewish rebellion in Palestine.

In A.D. 132, Simon seized Jerusalem. But, in a fierce battle, the Romans retook the city and quashed the rebellion in A.D. 135. In retaliation,

the Romans desecrated the city and the surrounding land. They tortured, slew, and sold Jews into slavery. The site of the Temple was plowed like a field. Henceforth, until a few decades ago (1967), Jerusalem was never again to be under Jewish rule. Yet, even now, that control is limited. It is said that the Jews will not

have truly returned to Jerusalem until they can rebuild the Temple on the Temple mount. —But, as long as the Arab world exists, that will never happen! Muslims venerate the Temple mount as the second most sacred place in Islam, and it would be utter sacrilege to them for a Jewish Temple to be erected there.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed.”

— *Isaiah 53:1-5*



## Chapter Four

# What Others have Said

## Ancient Writers

“World history at the time [of Christ and the early church in the first century] took no notice of Him [Jesus Christ]. For one short moment His appearance stirred men’s minds in Jerusalem; then it became an episode in past history, and people had to concern themselves with what seemed more important things. And yet this was a final and decisive crisis in the history of Israel. It was only when the numbers of His followers made themselves a force to be reckoned with, in terms of world history, that His name began to be mentioned at all.”—*Martin Noth, History of Israel.*

It has been said that “History” is His story, and His story is History. Outside of the Bible there are several secular writers who make mention of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several well-known secular historians and government officials of the first and early second centuries A.D. (Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius), as well as some others (Lucian, the cynic; Celsus; the Babylonian *Talmud*), mentioned Christ and Christians.

In A.D. 114, Tacitus (a Roman writer) wrote that the founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, was put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of the Roman emperor, Tiberius (*Tacitus, Annals, Book XV, chapter 44; written between A.D. 115-117*). Tacitus’ book, *Ab Excessu Divi Augusti*, is commonly known as *The Annals of Tacitus*.

Pliny the Younger (a Roman historian) wrote

a letter to Emperor Trajan on the subject of Christ and Christians. Pliny was the Roman pro-consul of Bithynia and Pontica in A.D. 103-105; and, in his letter to the emperor, Trajan, he was telling him about interesting affairs in the provinces under his jurisdiction. He mentioned the rapid growth of Christians and how they met to sing hymns composed by their leader, Christ. He then asked the emperor for counsel as to what he should do with these people, who appeared quite harmless. That account is found in the tenth book of his collected letters. (*Pliny the Younger, Book X, p. 97; published c.A.D. 110*). Pliny was an extensive writer, and wrote about many subjects, just as his uncle, Pliny the Elder, had done for years previously, before dying in the Vesuvius eruption of A.D. 79., which Pliny the Younger described.

Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117) wrote a letter in reply to Pliny’s inquiry for guidance.

Suetonius, another first-century Roman writer, also spoke of Christ. He was describing a Messianic movement during the reign of Claudius, who was Roman emperor from A.D. 41 to 54 (*Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, para. 25, 16, concerning an event which occurred in A.D. 49*). Suetonius also wrote about events during Nero’s reign, involving Christians (A.D. 54-68).

The Babylonian *Talmud* (a Jewish book of collected writings) makes mention of Jesus Christ. Adolf Deissman, the skeptic historian, acknowledges that Jesus had not been ignored by the pagan authors of His time; He is mentioned in the old Jewish texts; and that, besides the four Gospels and the New Testament, we have many early Christian sources.

Among the early Christian writings which refer to Christ and Christians, we may cite the

church Fathers, the early church manual called the *Didache*, a harmony of the Gospels (the *Diatessaron*) made by Tatian, and many other sources. This would include hymns and letters found among the papyri excavated by archaeologists in Egypt.

In addition, it may be that Josephus wrote a short biography on Jesus (*Antiquities, Book XVIII, chapter III, section 3; written A.D. 90*). However, that particular statement may be spurious. There are enough other historical mentions of Christ and His followers, that we do not need to defend the Josephus quotation.

Additional evidence for the existence of Christians would be the Roman records of their persecution, along with archaeological excavations and inscriptions. This would include the extensive catacombs. Under the rule of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), not only was John placed in boiling oil and then, when unharmed by it, sent to Patmos, but also many leading citizens of Rome were known to have accepted martyrdom rather than deny their faith in Christ.

Flavius Clemens, first cousin to the emperor, and his wife, Domitilla, were slain because they refused to renounce Christ. Another prominent victim was Acilius Glabrio, a member of one of the foremost families of Rome. The first of the famous catacombs, belonging to the family of Domitilla (underground tunnels and caves of the city), was excavated

In order to avoid persecution, these catacombs were dug by Christians during the first, second, and third centuries A.D. In times of crisis, they would go down into the catacombs and live for a time. They also buried their dead in small crypts cut out of the walls of those tunnels. These caves were cut out of the porous tufa rock; and all authorities recognize that the work was entirely done by Christians in those first three centuries. These underground chambers and their connecting labyrinth of passages stretched out for miles beneath the city of Rome. It has been estimated that, if the passages were laid out in a straight line, they would reach more than 500 miles!

Here are some of these authentic written statements:

We will quote, below, two different translations of portions of the statement by Tacitus. The great fire, which is mentioned, occurred in A.D.

64 and destroyed most of the city of Rome. Breaking out in some wooden shops adjoining the Circus Maximus, the conflagration spread and burned for a week. It may have started accidentally, but a rumor began—and was generally believed—that Nero ordered it to be set so he could play (or sing) an aria from an opera of his own composing on the destruction of Troy while the city burned; thus the adage: “Nero fiddled while Rome burned.” At any rate, according to Tacitus, Nero successfully switched the blame to the Christians.

Paul apparently was martyred in Rome the next year (A.D. 65). But retribution came to Nero only three years after that. In A.D. 68, the Roman Senate ordered Nero to be slain. Hearing of this sentence, and learning that the rabble were coming for him, Nero fled from the city. As they approached, he begged a slave to kill him; this was done.

**Tacitus—translation 1:** “But neither by human aid, nor by the costly largesses by which he attempted to propitiate the gods, was the prince [Nero] able to remove from himself the infamy which had attached to him in the opinion of all, for having ordered the conflagration [of Rome]. To suppress this rumor, therefore, Nero caused others to be accused, on whom he inflicted exquisite torments, who were already hated by the people for their crimes and were commonly called Christians.

“This name they received from Christ, their leader, who was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. This destructive superstition, repressed for a while, again broke out and spread not only through Judaea where it originated, but reached this city [Rome] also.”—*Tacitus, Annals, book 15, par. 44.*

**Tacitus—translation 2:** “Consequently, to get rid of the report [that he was responsible for the burning of Rome], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

“Christ, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate; and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hid-

eous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished; or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination when daylight had expired.” —*Tacitus, Annals*.

**Pliny the Younger:** “They met on a certain day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ as a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath not for the purpose of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they were called on to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble, to eat in common a simple meal.” [They were probably reciting the Ten Commandments (*Ex 20:8-11*) together, as part of their worship service.]

“In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country . . .

“Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them . . .

“In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I have asked them whether they were Christians: if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished—for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction . . . Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly . . . They affirmed that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ as a divinity . . .

“After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites.”—*Pliny the Younger, Book X, 97; published c.A. D. 110*.

**Emperor Trajan:** “You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous information ought not to be received in any sort of persecution. It is introducing a very damaging precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age.”—*Emperor Trajan, Letter to Pliny the Younger (also known as Secundus); c.A.D. 110*.

**Suetonius:** “He [Emperor Claudius] banished the Jews from Rome who were continually raising disturbances, Christus being their leader.”—*Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, para. 25. (The expulsion occurred in A.D. 49.)*

**Suetonius:** “[During the life of Emperor Nero] Christians were punished. These were men of a new and magical religion.”—*Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, para. 16. (Nero ruled from A.D. 54-68).]*

[It should be noted here that the Roman writer, Orosius, said that the expulsion by Claudius occurred in the ninth year of his reign, which would be A.D. 49. Thus, a Christian community existed in Rome within 18 years after the crucifixion. This is corroborated by Acts 18:2: “A certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla: because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome.”]

The following two statements may or may not be genuine. Both are questioned because they sound like something a follower of Christ would write rather than something said by a non-Christian. We know that Josephus was not a Christian.

**Publius Lentulus:** “There lives a man of sin-

gular character, whose name is Jesus Christ, in Judaea. The barbarians esteem Him as a prophet, but His own followers adore Him as the immediate offspring of the Immortal God. He is endowed with such unparalleled virtue as to call the dead from their graves, and to heal every kind of disease with a word or touch. This Person is tall and elegantly shaped; His aspect is amiable and reverent; His hair flows into those beautiful shades which no color can match, falling into graceful curves below His ears, agreeably couching upon His shoulders and parting on His head like the head of a Nazarite. His forehead is smooth and large; His cheeks are without spot, save that of a lovely red. His nose is smooth and formed with exquisite symmetry; His beard is thick and of a color suitable to the hair of His head, reaching the middle like a fork. He rebukes with majesty, commands with mildness, and invites with the most tender and persuasive language; His whole address, in deed or word being elegantly graceful and characteristic of so exalted a being. No man has ever seen Him laugh, but many have seen Him weep, and so persuasive are His tears that the multitude could not withhold theirs from joining in sympathy with His. He is very temperate, modest and wise, and in short, whatever this phenomenon may turn out in the end, He seems, at present from His excellent bearing and Divine perfection, in every way surpassing the children of men.”—*Publius Lentulus, Letter to the Roman Senate, c.A.D. 30.*

**Josephus:** “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him, for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him; and the tribe of Christians, so named after Him, are not extinct at this day.”—*Josephus, Antiquities, xviii.*

**Josephus:** In a second statement (in *Antiquities, XX:9, para. 200*), Josephus again speaks of “Jesus who was called Messiah.”

## The Day Christ Died

## Modern Writers

Jesus was a real man who lived, walked, and worked with people. Historical records tell us about His life and His death. There are more pages of original and duplicated manuscripts about this man, His life, and His sayings than can be found in regard to any other person of ancient history. Collections of these manuscripts are to be found scattered throughout the major libraries and historical archives of the world. Scholars who are trained in this field, called New Testament studies, have spent their lifetime in careful analysis of these materials—and the one that these records speak about.

The ages have come and gone, and this one individual stands out from among all others. There was a purity within His life that changed men who came in contact with Him. And it has changed others since then as well. Men discovering Him have gladly lived and laid down their lives for Him. And this often by cruel deaths. But it mattered not because of that which He did within their lives.

This is the secret of His influence: the happiness which He has been able to give people, the forgiveness of sin, the power with which to live clean, obedient lives, and the hope of eternity. This is the secret of what He can do for you. He changes men. He can do for you that which you cannot do for yourself. He can also help you live a self-controlled, pure, happy, and contented life.

Just now, take a few minutes to read what others have said about Him—the most amazing Man in all recorded time. They want to introduce you to the only Man in history who can radically lift you—and change you for the better.

“I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life—the life of Christ.”—*Phillips Brooks.*

“Will Jesus ever be surpassed? Nineteen hundred years have passed, and His equal has not risen. This is not true of the world’s other great ones. Every generation produces geniuses

worthy to be compared with those who have gone before. It can be said of no one man, 'He stands alone; he has no rival; no equal; no superior.' But this is true of Jesus. Nineteen hundred years, instead of diminishing His greatness, have accentuated it."—*Editor, The Los Angeles Times*.

"The life of Christ, the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, has lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of their channel and still governs the ages."—*Jean Paul Richter*.

"The greatest personality in human history is Jesus. We shall never escape from war, but by following His teaching."—*Henry Morgenthau*.

"His character forbids possible classification with men."—*Horace Bushnell*.

"My study of modern history has shown me that there is a moral pivot, and that more and more the best life of the East is revolving around it. That pivot is Jesus Christ."—*A Hindu professor in south India*.

"There is no one else seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ. There is no one else in the field."—*A Barhmo-Samajist*.

"Christ's system of morals and religion, as He left them to us, is the best the world has seen or is likely to see."—*Benjamin Franklin*.

"He is the incomparable Man to whom the universal conscience has decreed the title of Son of God, and that with justice."—*Earnest Renan, French infidel, philosopher, historian, and leading writer of his day*.

"I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. That which He wrought established in my mind His personal authority and renders it proper for me to believe what He asserts."—*Daniel Webster*.

"I do not know in what mood of pessimism I might have stood before you today had it not been that, ere the dew of youth had dried from off me, I made friends with the sinless Son of Man Who is the well-Head of the stream that vitalizes all advancing civilization and Who claims to be the First and the Last, and the Living One Who was dead and is alive for evermore."—*Professor Simpson, M.D., D.Sc., President of the Royal College of Physicians in his final address to the college*.

"Socrates taught for forty years, Plato for fifty,

Aristotle for forty, and Jesus for only three; yet those three years infinitely transcend in influence the combined one hundred and thirty years of the teaching of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, three of the greatest men of all antiquity. Jesus painted no pictures; yet the paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci received their inspiration from Him. Jesus wrote no poetry; but Dante, Milton, and scores of the world's greatest poets were inspired by Him. Jesus composed no music; still Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, and Mendelsohn reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies, and oratorios written in His praise. Thus every sphere of human greatness has been incomparably enriched by the humble carpenter of Nazareth. But His unique contribution to the race of men is the salvation of the soul. Philosophy could not accomplish that—nor art—nor literature—nor music. Only Jesus Christ can break the powers of sin; only He can speak 'powers into the strengthless soul, and life into the dead.' The world admires Christ afar off. Some adopt Him as their example and try to pattern their lives after His. A few open the door of their hearts and invite Him in to be their Saviour.

"Though Christ a thousand times  
"In Bethlehem be born,  
"If He's not born in thee,  
"Thy soul is still forlorn."—*Selected*.

"His birth was contrary to the laws of life. His death was contrary to the laws of death. He had no cornfields or fisheries, but He could spread a table for five thousand and have bread and fish to spare. He walked on no beautiful carpets or velvet rugs, but He walked on the waters of the sea of Galilee and they supported Him.

"Three years He preached His Gospel. He wrote no book, built no church house, had no monetary backing. But, after nineteen hundred years, He is the one central character of Human history, the Pivot around which the events of the ages revolve, and the only Regenerator of the human race."—*Sunday School Times*.

"I believe that Jesus belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world!"—*Mohandas K. Gandhi*.

"The three short years of the public ministry of Jesus have done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the moralizing of all the moralists, and all the philosophizing of all the

philosophers since the world began!"—*Leckey*.

"High up on the cliffs overlooking a noble river, like the Orontes or the Rhine or the Hudson, you will see some great outjutting rock. From century to century, the rock has remained the same with every moment of its flow. So the stream of time and of history, ever changing, flows past the changeless Christ, the Rock of Ages."—*Selected*.

"Thousands upon thousands who have followed Christ through all the pilgrimage of life are on record as saying what John Bunyan said in those beautiful and incomparable words: 'I have lived to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. And His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun.'"—*Selected*.

"He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering. He who is the Water of Life ended His ministry thirsting. Christ hungered as man, and fed the hungry as God. He was weary, and yet He is our rest. He paid tribute, and yet He is the King. He was called a devil, and cast out devils. He prayed, and yet He hears prayer. He wept, and He dries our tears. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and redeems the world. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and is the Good Shepherd. He died, and gave His life, and by dying destroys death."—*The Christian*.

1. The world's Creator (*Jn 1:1-3*)
2. The world's Example (*Matt 16:24*)
3. The world's Teacher (*Matt 7:28-29*)
4. The world's Master (*Jn 13:13*)
5. The world's Saviour (*Lk 19:10*)
6. The world's Lord (*Rom 10:12*)
7. The world's King (*Rev 11:15*)
8. The world's Light (*Jn 8:12*)
9. The world's Life (*Jn 14:6*)
10. The world's love (*Jn 3:16*)

—*Selected*

"Dr. Joseph Parker, on one occasion, referred to the Unitarian conception of Jesus Christ as a great example only, and then went on to say: 'We have been to hear Paderewski play. It was wonderful, superb, magnificent. Then we went home and looked at the piano. We would have sold it to the first man who would have been fool enough to buy it. This is the effect of your great examples

upon us. I want not only a great example, but a great Saviour, one who can deliver me from my weakness and my sins.' To follow a good example in the future will not blot out the black record of the past; we need the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice to accomplish that. To hear Paderewski play will not make us like a Paderewski. Could Paderewski incarnate himself within one, he could play like himself. So the Christian life is not Christ and I, but Christ in me. We need the Christ within to live the Christ life without."—*Moody Monthly*.

"C.K. Lee, a native Christian leader of China was in this country a few years ago. One Sunday he spoke in a modernistic church in California. At the conclusion of the message, a young college student propounded this question, 'Why should we export Christianity to China when you have Confucianism in your country?' 'There are three reasons' was the rejoinder. 'First of all, Confucius was a teacher and Christ is a Saviour. China needs a Saviour more than she needs a teacher. In the second place, Confucius is dead and Christ is alive. China needs a living Saviour. In the third place, Confucius is some day going to stand before Christ to be judged by Him. China needs to know Christ as Saviour before she meets Him as Judge.'"—*Triumphs of Faith*.

"At a fork in the road, the missionary with his Mohammedan friends paused to consider which fork of the road to take. The missionary seized the opportunity . . . seeing a tomb alongside the road (there are often tombs of holy men along roadsides in that country), he said, 'Let us go to the tomb and ask the dead man the direction.'

"The Mohammedans looked at the missionary in amazement, 'Why should we ask a dead man directions when we can go to yonder house with living people in it who can tell us where the road leads?'

"'Exactly!' said the missionary. 'That is why we can ask Jesus Christ what is the way of life—for He is living; Mohammed is dead!'"—*D.G. Barnhouse*.

"A Hindu once wrote: 'It is an interesting thing that though there have been Mohammedans in India for a thousand years you never hear a Hindu say, I wish that you were more like Mohammed. We have known Christianity a quarter of that time, but there is no educated Hindu who would not say to any Christian, 'I wish that

you were more like Christ.’”—*The Glory Christian*.

“Christ is the most unique Person of history. No man can write a history of the human race without giving the foremost place to the penniless teacher of Nazareth.”—*H.G. Wells*.

“We stand and gaze with our eyes fixed upon the farther shore of history, a straightway fills the whole horizon. There stands the Saviour.”—*Dr. Arnold Toynbee*.

“Ten minutes spent in Christ’s presence, even two minutes if it be face to face and heart to heart, will make the whole life different.”—*Henry Drummond*.

“The *Encyclopedia Britannica* uses 20,000 words to tell about Jesus, and never hints that He did not exist. This is more words than the *Britannica* allows for Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Cicero, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte. H.G. Wells blasphemed Jesus, yet he felt compelled to discuss Jesus on ten pages in his *Outline of History* and never questioned that a man named Jesus did live.”—*Selected*.

“‘Jesus’ is a precious name to all believers because it always reminds us that He is the Saviour. It was the name given to Him by God when He came into this world. It teaches us the purpose of His incarnation. It is His human name reminding us that He who is God also became man. Peter made much of this name in the healing of the crippled beggar, and declared that there is no other name sufficient for our salvation.”—*Selected*.

“Said Bertrand Russell, famed philosopher and iconoclast, ‘In this strange and insecure world where no one knows whether he will be alive tomorrow, and where ancient states vanish like morning mists, it is not easy for those who, in youth, were accustomed to ancient solidities to believe that what they are now experiencing is a reality and not a transient nightmare. Very little remains of institutions and ways of life that when I was a child appeared as indestructible as granite.’

“‘Change and decay in all around (we) see,’ but Jesus Christ is ‘the same yesterday, and today, and for ever’ (*Heb 13:8*). Of Him the imperishable Word of God says, ‘Thou remainest’ (*Hebrews 1:11*).”—*Selected*.

“In Christ now meet both East and West

“In Him meet South and North.

“All Christly souls are one in Him,

“Throughout the whole wide earth.”—*John Oxenham*.

“He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity, and only once crossed the boundary of the land—in childhood. He had no wealth or influence, and had neither training nor education in the world’s schools. His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential.

“In infancy He startled a king; in boyhood He puzzled the learned doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all song writers together. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than the doctors have healed broken bodies.

“He is the Star of astronomy, the Rock of geology, the Lion and the Lamb of zoology, the Harmonizer of all discords and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him; Satan could not seduce Him; death could not destroy Him; the grave could not hold Him.

“He was rich yet for our sakes became poor. How poor? Ask Mary. Ask the wise men. He slept in another’s manger; He cruised the lake in another’s boat; He rode on another man’s ass; He was buried in another man’s tomb. He is the ever perfect One, the Chiefest among ten thousand. He is altogether lovely.”—*Selected*.

“Christ’s Last Will and Testament: He left His purse to Judas; His body to Joseph of Arimathea; His mother to John; His clothes to the soldiers; His peace to His disciples; His supper to His followers; Himself as an example and as a servant; His Gospel to the world; His presence always with God’s children!”—*Selected*.

“‘Pharisees, with what would ye reproach Jesus?’

“‘He eateth with publicans and sinners.’

“‘And you, Caiaphas, what have you to say of Him?’

“He is a blasphemer, because He said, ‘Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.’

“‘Pilate, what is your opinion?’

“‘I find no fault in this Man.’

“‘And you, Judas, who have sold your Master for silver—have you some fearful charge to hurl against Him?’

“‘I have sinned, in that I have betrayed Innocent Blood.’

“‘And you, centurions and soldiers, who led Him to the cross, what have you to say against Him?’

“‘Truly this was the Son of God.’

“‘And you, demons?’

“‘He is the Son of God.’

“‘John the Baptist, what think you of Christ?’

“‘Behold the Lamb of God.’

“‘And you, John the Apostle?’

“‘He is the Bright and Morning Star.’

“‘Peter, what do you say of your Master?’

“‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’

“‘And you, Thomas?’

“‘My Lord and my God.’

“‘Paul, you have persecuted Him. What testify you against Him?’

“‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’

“‘Angels of Heaven, what think ye of Jesus?’

“‘Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’

“‘And thou, Father in Heaven, who knowest all things?’

“‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’

“‘Dear reader, what think you of Christ?’”—*Elim Evangel*.

“Was it merely the Son of Joseph and Mary who crossed the world’s horizon nineteen hundred years ago? Was it merely human blood that was spilled at Calvary’s hill for the redemption of sinners? What thinking man can keep from exclaiming, ‘My Lord and my God!’”—*Watchman-Examiner*.

“Two infidels once sat in a railroad train discussing Christ’s wonderful life. One of them said, ‘I think an interesting romance could be written about Him.’ The other replied, ‘And you are just the man to write it. Set forth the correct view of His life and character. Tear down the prevailing

sentiment as to His divineness and paint Him as He was—a man among men.’ The suggestion was acted upon and the romance was written. The man who made the suggestion was Colonel Ingersoll; the author was General Lew Wallace; and the book was *Ben Hur*. In the process of constructing it he found himself facing the unaccountable Man. The more he studied His life and character the more profoundly he was convinced that He was more than a man among men; until at length, like the centurion under the cross, he was constrained to cry, ‘Verily, this was the Son of God.’”—*D.J. Burrell*.

“A few years ago a group of distinguished historians amused themselves by writing a book called *If, or History Rewritten*. Among these historians were Van Loon, Maurois, Belloc, Chesterton, and Ludwig. Some of the ‘ifs’ which they discussed were these: if Lee had not lost the Battle of Gettysburg; if the Moors in Spain had won; if the Dutch had kept New Amsterdam; if Louis XVI had an atom of firmness; if Booth had missed Lincoln; if Napoleon had escaped to America, the attempt to reconstruct the past on the ground of these hypotheses and to imagine what might have been was indeed an interesting intellectual enterprise. But there are no ‘ifs’ in history.

“The greatest fact of history is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; and therefore the greatest ‘if’—the greatest possible imagination—would be ‘if Christ had not come.’ Such an ‘if’ is almost too staggering for our minds. It is like imagining the world without a sky. Try to think of your own life without Christ. ‘If I had not come . . . (Jn 15:22).’”—*Selected*.

“A number of prominent literary men were assembled in a clubroom in London one day a number of years ago. The conversation veered to a discussion of some of the illustrious figures of the past, and one of the company suddenly asked, ‘Gentlemen, what would we do if Milton were to enter this room?’

“‘Ah,’ replied one of the circle, ‘we would give him such an ovation as might compensate for the tardy recognition accorded him by the men of his day.’

“‘And if Shakespeare entered?’ asked another.

“‘We would arise and crown him master of song’ was the answer.

“‘And if Jesus Christ were to enter?’ asked



another.

“‘I think,’ said Charles Lamb amid an intense silence, ‘we would all fall on our faces.’”—*King’s Business*.

“A father reading his Sunday paper and wishing not to be disturbed by his little girl, cut up a map of the world, gave it to her, and told her to put it together. After awhile she returned with it and every piece was in its place. The father was very much surprised and said, ‘Why, how did you do it, darling? You don’t know anything about geography?’ The little one replied, ‘There was a picture of Jesus on the other side, and I knew when I had Jesus in the right place, the whole world would be all right.’”—*Eight Bells, Haven of Rest*.

“I find the name of Jesus Christ written on top of every page of human history.”—*George Bancroft*.

“Christ is the great central fact of the world’s history. All lines of history converge upon Him. All the great purposes of God culminate in Him.”—*Charles Spurgeon*.

*As we conclude this study:*

The cry down through the ages is for someone who can change men’s hearts and give him powers to live right and to put away his sins. The guilt that conscience speaks of cannot be denied. Man was made by God to live morally right, and he can never be happy until he does.

But only that power which made man can change him and restore to him the precious thought that he is as clean as a baby in the sight of heaven. Read the story for yourself; it is found in the Bible—in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and in other books.

Jesus Christ lived and died in order to forgive your past sins and enable you by His grace—instead of returning to them—to live in obedience to the will and laws of God. Jesus Christ lived and died to enable you to obey the Ten Commandments. He alone can save you from sin and empower you to live in harmony with the rules and standards given in the Holy Scripture.

Is this what you really want for your life?—A changed life in Christ; a happy, obedient life in Christ? Are you tired of trying and failing? Do you want a clean conscience and a pure life? I believe that you do. Let me explain, for a moment, how it can be yours. Just now, wherever

you may be, bow your head and tell Him this.

Surrender to Him your desires and your plans. Give Him all that is left of your life, and ask Him to take it and use it—for the remainder of your years on earth. If necessary, find a quiet place alone where you can do this. Shut the door on the world. Take the time alone with Him to get the job done right. Don’t leave until it’s done.

You went in poor and worn-out. You will come out wealthy and with a purpose and peace you have not experienced in years. Now you have all Heaven on your side. In the moment-by-moment strength of living in contact with Christ, you can face life and conquer it. For you are no longer trying to do it alone.

And then—equally important—for the remainder of your life, you must dedicate time every day to God. Unless you read His Inspired Word and pray to Him every day, you will return to your old ways and the shattered life of earlier years. And, amazingly, within a few days or weeks you will have forgotten your Best Friend entirely. And when will be the next time that you will decide to come back?

You dare not take that chance. Cling to Him every day. Start each morning with Him. Walk with Him all day long. You cannot have peace and the power unless you spend time with Him every day. And tell others what you have found. Pray with them—everyone you know, everyone you meet—whether they know Him already or not. Resist temptation and resist sin. It will try to assert itself and come back. Don’t be surprised at this. But have nothing to do with it. And be careful of the old worldly friends. Now is the time to choose real Christians for your close friends. But let Jesus be the closest of them all. The people we like to be with are the ones we become like. Choose the best. It will mean a lot in the coming years.

And then go to church. Find one that keeps all ten of the Commandments—and by faith in Jesus Christ. Over the years, I have discovered that, better than most, Seventh-day Adventists try to maintain this balance of obedience to the Bible through the enabling grace of Jesus Christ.

God bless you—and write me as you have an opportunity. We have dozens of other tracts about Jesus and Bible beliefs that you will like. Just ask for “tracts about Jesus” when you write. I want to hear from you. We’re not out of the world yet, and we need to work together for mutual strength and service for the Master. Stay

close to Jesus every day. You will find that there is great strength in, by faith, keeping the eye fixed

upon Him.

May God bless you every day.

“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

“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.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was He stricken.

“And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief. When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

—*Isaiah 53:6-12.*

## **THE WHOLE AMAZING STORY —**

**What was the historical, political world into which Christ was born?** Who was Herod the Great? Why we know that the census at Christ's birth was historical. **Why is Bethlehem called Ephrathah?** What were animal shelters in Bethlehem like? The location and geographical setting of Nazareth. **Facts about the nearby Roman city where Christ may have worked.** What happened in the world during Christ's childhood and youth?

What did the Temple look like? **The probable timing of events from the upper room to the burial.** Why Roman soldiers were probably in the group which arrested Jesus.

**A detailed description of the arrest and trials.** Four reasons why the arrest of Jesus was illegal. **All about Annas, Caiaphas, Herod Antipas, and Pilate.** What happened at each of the six trials? Five reasons why the first two Jewish trials were illegal. **Twenty-four reasons why the third Jewish trial was illegal.**

**Where the trial before Pilate must have been held.** Why it dis-

proves the Via Dolorosa and Ecce Homo Gate theories. **Why Pilate was already under suspicion by the emperor.** Eleven reasons **why the trial before Pilate was illegal.** What was the "pavement," and where was it?

**A detailed description of the journey to Calvary and the crucifixion.** Spiritual applications. Twenty Greek or Hebrew words used to describe aspects of the crucifixion. **What were the medical aspects of a crucifixion and the medical cause of Christ's death?** What the piercing did, physically, to Christ's body.

**What happened in later years to each of the disciples?** What happened afterward to the Roman rulers mentioned in John and Acts? **A detailed description of the cause, siege, and destruction of Jerusalem.** Simon Bar-Kochba's later rebellion.

**A treasure chest of what ancient and modern writers have said about Jesus Christ.**

*The  
Day Christ  
Died*