

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1 THE GARDEN

2 THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

3 THE EMPTY TOMB

1 THE GARDEN

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. **“Abba, Father,”* he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Mark 14:32-36

*a term of endearment similar to daddy or papa.

In the intimate language that only a son could have with his dear father, Jesus cried out, *Abba—Daddy, please find another way.* But then he submitted his will to his heavenly Father and prayed, *Your will be done.*

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.”

Mark 14:43,44

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

John 18:4,5

HE SPOKE

“**I am** {he},” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)

John 18:5

The word {he} does not appear in the original Greek text. Jesus answered the question with an emphatic “**I AM!**” As we have seen, *I AM* is God’s name, meaning *the One who exists by his own power.* And it wasn’t just anyone saying it; it was God himself. The effect is worth noting.

When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

John 18:6

They didn't simply drop to the ground; they drew back and fell down. Jesus *blew them off their feet* with a mini-burst of his majesty. After the stunned group had gotten up and dusted themselves off...

Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

John 18:7

You can almost sense the crowd's respect and fear. Jesus had unsettled the mob. This was not shaping up to be a typical arrest. Their wall of confidence cracked even more when Jesus revealed that he knew the agreed-upon sign of betrayal.

... Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Luke 22:48

Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Mark 14:45

The other eleven disciples were galvanized into action. Simon Peter had a weapon...

With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Matthew 26:51

But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Luke 22:51

What can you say? Even in the midst of all the tension, Jesus was thinking of others; he healed the High Priest's servant. It was a short-sighted effort on Peter's part anyway—zeal without knowledge. On a human level, the disciples were greatly outnumbered. You can't help admiring Peter's efforts. At least he tried! But obviously Peter was better with nets than swords. When you aim at the head and get an ear, it tells you something.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Then Jesus asked a question—an uncomfortable question.

*"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place **that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.**"*

Matthew 26:55,56

God's questions always expose a person's true thoughts, and if the rabble had taken a moment to think, they would have realized the inconsistency of their actions. But they were so fixated in their determination to do away with Christ, even another encounter with the miraculous power of this man didn't deter them the least bit. Not even Jesus' words about them fulfilling the solemn predictions of the prophets would restrain them from carrying out their murderous intentions.

Fearing for their lives, the disciples fled into the night.

Then everyone deserted him and fled. Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him.

Mark 14:50; John 18:12

One can hardly read this without feeling some sense of incongruity. Jesus was only one individual. The detachment sent to arrest him would have numbered between 300 and 600 soldiers. In addition, there were Jewish officials, priests and servants. It was an overkill for sure, but you can't help wondering if deep down inside they felt a poverty of power.

IN COURT

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.

Mark 14:53

Temple courts were not held at night. The fact that the Sanhedrin, consisting of seventy-one men, could be assembled so quickly tells you something about the plot. Their willingness to convene in the middle of the night reveals even more. What they were doing was strictly illegal according to their own law. Even for those not familiar with the judicial system of that day, the irregularities of the trial are painfully obvious. No matter. Forget the rules. They wanted Jesus dead.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

Mark 14:55-61

The question was black and white: "Are you or are you not the PROMISED MESSIAH from Heaven?"

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. *Mark 14:62-64*

The High Priest, Caiaphas, knew exactly what Jesus had said. Jesus was claiming to be equal with God Almighty. For a mere man to claim to be *God's Eternal Son* was sacrilege. But Jesus wasn't a mere man—he was the Eternal Word of God, and THE PROMISED DELIVERER about whom all the prophets had written! However, neither Caiaphas nor the other Jewish leaders believed him. So they condemned Him to die. But there was a problem. The Sanhedrin did not have the authority to pass a death sentence; only the Romans could do that.

2 THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

Because night courts were illegal, the Sanhedrin met again just after sunrise to go through the legal motions of trying Jesus. He must have been exhausted. He hadn't slept all night, and they had given him a severe beating just to make sure he knew who was in control.

Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate.

Luke 23:1

PONTIUS PILATE

Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, had all the authority of imperial Rome behind him. Since in most cases the Jewish courts could not impose the death penalty, they needed Roman sanction. Pilate was their man. The temple leaders knew he was weak-kneed, so a little persuading was in order.

And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." Luke 23:2

Jesus had never prohibited his followers from paying taxes. In fact, Jesus had said quite the opposite. This was a deliberate lie. But with so many legalities having already been ignored, who was keeping track? On the other hand, it was true that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah!

So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Luke 23:3

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

John 18:36

Jesus' reign began in the heart. He had no political ambitions.

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

John 18:37,38

People still ask the same question today. But Pilate was in no mood for listening; he didn't even wait for the answer.

With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

John 18:38

Pilate mistrusted the priests. As Roman governor, he knew he was hated by the Jews, and he had good reason to believe that the priests did not have Caesar's best interests in mind. The Sanhedrin must have some other motive for wanting Jesus dead.

Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Luke 23:4-7

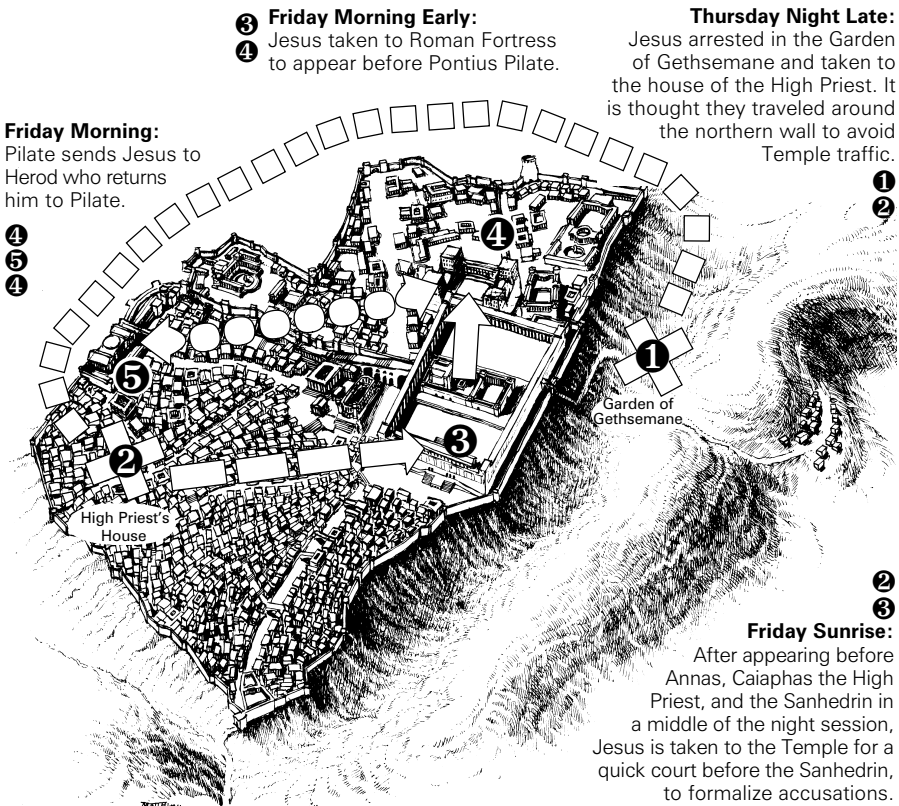
Pilate had the authority to hear Jesus' case, but the situation was getting uncomfortable. Jesus was being accused of inciting the people to insurrection. How would he explain to his superiors in Rome if Jesus did provoke a riot? It would be easier to dump the whole sorry mess in Herod's lap. Besides, Herod was no friend of his, so Pilate passed the buck.

HEROD ANTIPAS

Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great. As a puppet of Rome, he had been given jurisdiction over Jesus' home province of Galilee. He had come to Jerusalem for the yearly Passover festivities.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.

Luke 23:8,9



SILENT

Jesus knew that Herod had no interest in determining the truth. He only wished to be entertained by a miracle, showing his flagrant disrespect for Jesus' character. Jesus didn't indulge Herod. Instead, he remained quiet.

The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Luke 23:10-12

CRUCIFY HIM!

Since his arrest, Jesus had been in five court sessions: three Jewish, and two Roman. This sixth trial would be his last. By this time, word had spread throughout the city. No longer were the High Priest and Sanhedrin the only ones accusing Jesus. They had been joined by a fickle multitude who only a few days before had shouted "*Hosanna*," but now vehemently roared "*Crucify him!*" Pilate was in a dilemma. The more he dealt with Jesus, the more convinced he was that there was something uncommon about this man!

*Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will **punish** him and then **release** him."*

Luke 23:13-16

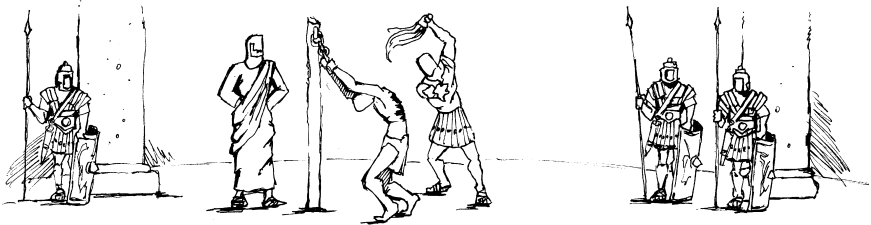
Neither Herod nor Pilate could find Jesus guilty of anything deserving the death penalty. Indeed, it seemed no one could accuse him of any crime. Pilate offered a weak-kneed compromise. It had two parts:

1. He would whip Jesus:

This was no ordinary beating. The whip was comprised of a stick with leather thongs affixed to one end. Each thong had butterfly-shaped slivers of bone or metal attached to it. The condemned man would have his arms bound and tied above

his head to a pole which fully exposed his back to the scourge. As the whip came down, the bone and metal would sink into the flesh. Pulling the whip away virtually stripped the flesh off the back. This type of beating was so severe that often the victim died.

By law a scourging could only be given to a convicted prisoner. Pilate himself had just said that Jesus was innocent. Because a Roman flogging was such a horrible ordeal, it can be assumed that Pilate hoped the whipping would appease Jesus' accusers so that they would accept his next offer.



2. He would release Jesus:

It was the local Roman custom to release one convicted criminal at the Passover as a gesture of goodwill. Pilate suggested that Jesus be released—after he had been beaten. The crowd was unanimous in their response:

With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! ... Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

Luke 23:18,20-22

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

John 19:1

700 years before this time, the prophet Isaiah had written of the Messiah's willing sufferings:



I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

Isaiah 50:6

The soldiers were not satisfied with the cruelty of a flogging. They decided to add a little jest.

The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. *John 19:2,3*

Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. *Mark 15:19*

Humiliation was not part of Pilate's sentence. A purple robe was normally worn by royalty. The thorns were a cruel parody of an imperial crown. This was mockery at its worst. Once again, seven centuries before, the prophet Isaiah had written:



He was despised and rejected by men, ... and we esteemed him not. *Isaiah 53:3*

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" *John 19:4,5*

Deep in his heart, Pilate must have known that he was setting aside all justice. No doubt he had hopes that this lacerated, thorn-crowned, bleeding man might evoke some pity.

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." *John 19:6*

Pilate knew very well that they could do no such thing. The Jewish courts could not impose the death sentence.

THE SON OF GOD

*The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because **he claimed to be the Son of God.**"*

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus ... *John 19:7-9*

Pilate had just heard that Jesus was from Galilee, thus the reason for having sent him to Herod. Now, again, he was asking Jesus where he was from. No doubt he was feeling a little nervous about someone who claimed to be the Son of

God who had come down from Heaven! The Greeks believed the gods came down from Mount Olympus to fraternize with man. Perhaps Pilate was wondering if Jesus fit that category. Certainly this was no ordinary criminal. Just the way he handled himself in court demonstrated a peace and confidence that was disconcerting. *Jesus, where are you really from?*



... Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above..."

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week...

John 19:9-14

The *Day of Preparation* was when the Passover lamb was killed.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

John 19:14,15

This was Israel's final rejection of Jesus as their King. They had chosen the Roman Caesar in place of the One sent from God.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).¹ Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

John 19:16-18

CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion was a Roman form of capital punishment used only for slaves and criminals of the lowest order. It was a common method of execution, and secular history records hundreds being crucified at once. Research has indicated that there were several different forms:



Standing tree: The victim was simply backed up to a tree and tacked on to it, in whatever shape the branches flowed. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, records the Roman soldiers entertaining themselves by crucifying captives in unusual positions.²



I-shaped: A simple post in the ground. Hands were nailed over the head.



X-shaped: Basically two logs planted at angles. The body was splayed out with the hands and feet fixed at four corners.



T-shaped: A pole with a cross bar on the top. This was probably the most common, next to the tree. The arms were stretched out along the bar.



t-shaped: Usually reserved for criminals of some notoriety. A certificate disclosing one's crime would be tacked to the topmost part of the cross. This was probably the type on which Jesus was crucified.

The victim was usually stretched out naked. Hands and feet were held in place by nails driven through the wrist and ankle bones.

1000 years earlier, God had instructed the Prophet David to write a complete Psalm about the way Jesus would die. The Scripture prophesies Christ as saying...



... they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. Psalm 22:16,17

This was written long before the Romans had come to power, and about 800 years before the Romans adopted crucifixion as one of their official forms of capital punishment.

To this day crucifixion is considered to be the most brutal form of execution. Death was slow. Sometimes it took days. Ultimately,

one died of asphyxiation. Hanging on out-stretched arms, the pressure on the diaphragm made it impossible for one to breathe. One could inhale only by lifting oneself up, by pulling on the arms and pushing with the feet to allow room for the diaphragm to work. Of course, this pulling and pushing was done against the excruciating restraint of the nails. Death came when exhaustion and shock left one unable to lift the body.

The nails and tormented gasping for air were not the only sources of anguish. One also suffered from thirst and exposure. People came to stare and, in Jesus' case, to mock.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

John 19:19-22

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with



the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

“Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

John 19:23-24

Gambling was a distraction from a gory task. As the soldiers sat beneath Jesus’ cross, perhaps rolling dice in a helmet, they had no way of knowing they were fulfilling an ancient prophecy.



This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, “They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” So this is what the soldiers did.

John 19:24 compare Psalm 22:18

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”

Luke 23:35

Ten centuries earlier, God had said through King David that THE PROMISED DELIVERER would be mocked.



But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

Psalm 22:6,7

Even the words of the ridicule were foretold by the prophet David.



“He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”

Psalm 22:8

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:36,37,39-43

Jesus assured the thief that as soon as they both died, their spirits would meet each other in Paradise. Jesus could say this because he knew that this man was trusting in Him to deliver him from the consequences of sin—from eternal punishment.

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour ... *Luke 23:44*

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" *Mark 15:34*

Once again, a 1000 years before, God had prophesied through King David that The Messiah would say just those words.



"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" *Psalms 22:1*

It wasn't without reason that Jesus cried this out loud. We will look at its meaning in a following chapter.

The significance of Jesus' final moments on the cross cannot be emphasized enough. The Scripture says ...

Jesus called out with a loud voice, ... "It is finished ... Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. "When he had said this, he breathed his last ... he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. *Luke 23:46 and John 19:30*

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. *Mark 15:38*

Jesus was dead. But had Satan and his demons triumphed over God? That was the real question. There were some questions that needed to be answered. Why had the temple curtain torn—from top to bottom? And why had Jesus shouted *It is finished!* with such intensity?

THE TORN CURTAIN

Remember, the Temple was a permanent replica of the original Tabernacle. The curtain in question separated the Holy Place from the sacred Holy of Holies. It was no small matter for this veil to be torn.

First of all, the Scripture says that the curtain shielded the Most Holy Place from man's view. To look behind the curtain was to die. God had told Moses centuries before ...

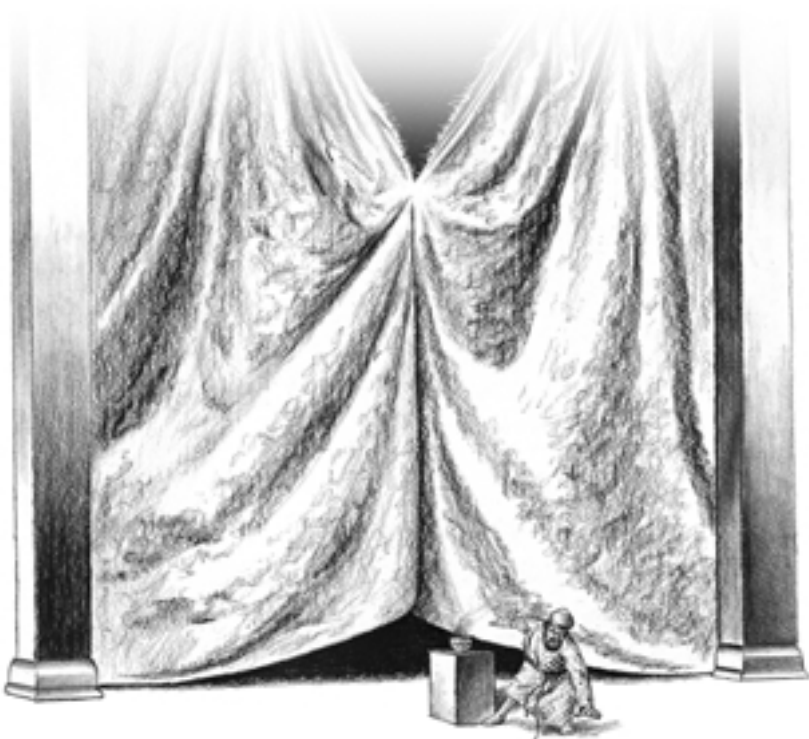
“Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.” *Leviticus 16:2*

Second, to tear the curtain in any way would have been a monumental task. It is said that the curtain was sixty feet in height (18 m) and thirty feet in width (9 m), being the thickness of a man’s hand—about four inches (10 cm).³

Third, to be torn from the top to the bottom could only mean one thing: God had rent the curtain, not man.

By Jewish reckoning, Jesus died at the ninth hour which would have been 3:00 p.m. The temple would have been full of priests performing their sacred duties. This was the time of the evening sacrifice, when a lamb was killed. It was also the Passover. News of the torn curtain could not have been concealed. Too many people were present, and the event was too staggering to be forgotten.

The significance of this whole incident will be explained shortly.



THE SHOUT OF VICTORY!

The phrase “It is finished” is translated from a single Greek word *tetelestai*. *Tetelestai* had many different usages, but the following three have significance to the story:⁴

1. *Tetelestai* was used by a servant reporting to his or her master upon completing a task: “The job you gave me is finished.”
2. *Tetelestai* was also a familiar term in Greek commercial life. It signified the completion of a transaction when a debt was paid in full. When the final payment was made, one could say “*tetelestai*,” that is, “The debt is finished.” Ancient receipts for taxes have been found with *tetelestai*—paid in full—written across them.
3. The selection of a lamb for sacrifice in the temple was always an important time. The flock would be searched and, upon finding an unblemished lamb, one would say *tetelestai*—the job was finished.

Quite literally Jesus shouted: “The work you gave me is completed, the debt is paid, the sacrificial lamb is found.” It says, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*It is finished.*”

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” *Luke 23:47*

It is noteworthy that it was the centurion, an officer in charge of 100 soldiers, who immediately commented on Jesus’ cry. Surely he, a military man, knew the difference between a gasp of defeat and a shout of victory.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. *John 19:31*

BREAK THE LEGS

It was Passover week and this day was the climax, when the lamb was to be killed. The chief priests wanted this crucifixion business over and done with, so as not to contaminate the feast. They asked that Jesus’ legs be broken. This would mean that the one being crucified could no longer lift himself up to

breathe, resulting in quick asphyxiation, unless the shock of his bones being broken killed him first.

*The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, **they did not break his legs.** Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.*

John 19:32-34

A Roman soldier trained in the art of killing thrust a spear into Jesus' heart. To bungle a public execution was unthinkable. The soldier knew exactly *where* to thrust that instrument of death to make sure not a wisp of life could linger. The Scripture says water and blood flowed out. Medical experts tell us that such an event was a sure sign that death had already occurred. Jesus was definitely dead.

*The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. **These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled:** "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."*

John 19:35-37



3 THE EMPTY TOMB

FRIDAY: LATE AFTERNOON

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 19:38-42

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Luke 23:55,56

Though Joseph and Nicodemus were part of the Sanhedrin, it seems they were secret followers of Jesus. According to their traditional custom, they wrapped Jesus in long burial cloths, intermingled with seventy-five pounds (34 kg) of aromatic spices and laid him in a tomb. A large wheel-like stone, possibly weighing as much as two tons (1.8 tonne), was rolled across the front of the sepulcher. The women watched and then went home to prepare additional spices for the final burial. It was now Friday night.

SATURDAY

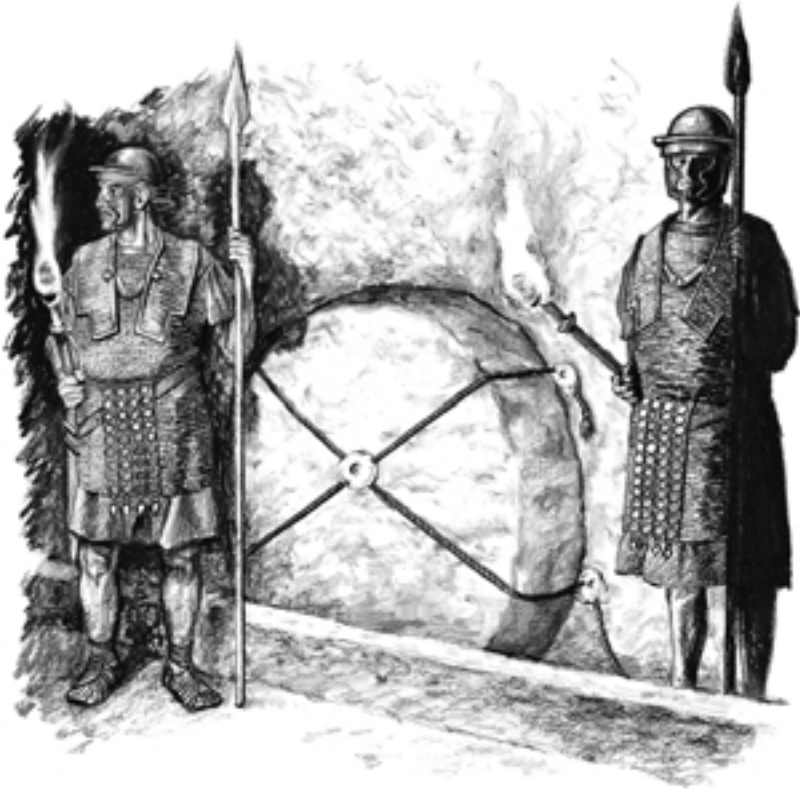
The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Matthew 27:62-66

This was no rag-tag band of soldiery that was sent to guard the tomb. A Roman guard consisted of four to sixteen men, each man trained to protect six feet of ground. Together they were capable of defending themselves against an entire battalion.⁵

Pilate instructed the chief priests and Pharisees to seal the tomb. Ropes would have been stretched across the large stone door and fixed in place with moist clay. The clay would then be imprinted with a signet ring. Any tampering with the rock would be immediately apparent.



SUNDAY

The guard was set in place on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. On Sunday while it was still dark...

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

Matthew 28:2-4

It took only a glance for these rough and rugged soldiers to know they were no match for this one angel. The last phrase in the above passage is a first century way of saying they passed out from fear! What a shock! Who would have dreamed that the tomb could be empty. Jesus had obviously come back to life. Impossible!

IN THE MEANTIME...

... Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. *Mark 16:1-4*

Mary Magdalene apparently turned away in shock and dismay at the initial sight of the open tomb. She probably assumed the obvious—Jesus' body had been vandalized. Sobbing, she turned and ran to tell the disciples. But Mary and Salome pushed forward and entered the tomb.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."

"But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Mark 16:5-7

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." *Matthew 28:8-10*

HE HAS RISEN

Reading the record,⁶ you can sense the confusion and excitement of the early morning news. For those who had seen Jesus die, the report from the elated women was met with a great deal of skepticism. Initially ...

... they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. *Luke 24:11*

Peter ran to check out the tomb. John ran too, passing Peter on the way, but then waited outside the entrance.

Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. John 20:6,7

This was not the scene of a plundered grave. The long strips of cloth used to shroud the body were still wrapped as though around a corpse, but they were collapsed—empty! The body had passed right through them. The head napkin was folded too, as if someone had tidied up before leaving. The Scripture says Peter saw, but John saw and believed. For John there was no doubt that Jesus was alive! But Peter's head was spinning. He needed time to think.

It still must have been early morning when Mary Magdalene returned and...

... stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

John 20:11-13

The tomb was located in a garden, so perhaps she supposed these angels were gardeners. Mary was so distressed that she did not think to identify the men. We must remember that Mary was grieving intensely and that the entire conversation was carried on through her sobbing.

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

John 20:14-16

If one can say a name in such a way that it brings back all the memories of every previous encounter with a loved one, then Jesus did just that. Mary recognized the voice immediately.



*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!”
(which means Teacher).*

John 20:16

Now she had a different reason to weep. She must have flung her arms around him, perhaps embracing his feet in keeping with the custom of that day.

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them...”

*Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news:
“I have seen the Lord!”*

John 20:17,18

THE GUARDS

While all this was happening, the guards were hunting down the chief priests. There was no way they were going back to face Pilate.

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples

came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Matthew 28:11-15

It took an immense sum of money to persuade these proud soldiers to say that they had been sleeping. But it wasn't true. Once again you can see the hand of Satan behind it all, rushing around doing damage control. After all, he is the *father of lies*. It was an anemic effort to save face. No doubt, Satan realized that he was defeated. Jesus, THE ANOINTED ONE, had crushed Satan's head, just as God had promised way back in the Garden of Eden.

ALIVE

Jesus had come back to life! He was truly alive—physically! For three days his body had laid lifeless in the tomb, separated from his spirit. But then in a dramatic demonstration of supernatural power, Jesus had been resurrected with a new body.

Jesus had foretold his own death during his ministry.

"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again..."




John 10:17,18

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Jesus' death had not been an ordinary one. For mankind, death is a consequence of sin—of breaking God's law. But Jesus had kept the ten commands perfectly. He was sinless, so he did not need to die. According to *the law of sin and death*, Jesus could have lived forever. So why did he die? Satan hadn't killed Jesus against His will; nor had the Jews or the Romans. Jesus had chosen to die, willingly. But why? The next chapter will answer that question.

The events of that early morn were just a beginning. Over the next forty days, Jesus appeared to many of those who knew him best. But before we leave the resurrection day, there is one more account that must be shared.

72 HOURS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

* Jewish Friday		<p>THU Disciples prepare Passover Passover Supper Walk to Garden of Gethsemane Jesus arrested in Garden; disciples flee</p>
	<p>FRI 1st Trial — before Chief Priest's father-in-law, Annas 2nd Trial — before Chief Priest and Sanhedrin 3rd Trial — before Sanhedrin (to make it legal) 6:30 am 4th Trial — before Pilate 5th Trial — before Herod (Jesus mocked) 6th Trial — before Pilate (Jesus scourged) 9:00 am Crucifixion NOON 3:00 pm Jesus cries, "It is finished;" Temple curtain torn Legs of two thieves broken; Jesus' side pierced Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus' body for burial Jesus buried in tomb</p>	
Jewish Saturday		<p>SAT</p> <p>Roman guard requested and placed at tomb Tomb sealed</p>
Jewish Sunday		<p>SUN Earthquake - stone rolled away by angels; guards flee Women go to tomb Jesus appears to Mary and Salome Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene Jesus appears to Peter</p>

*Jewish days begin at sundown, continue through the night into the next day until the following sundown.

