



Matthew 27

Matthew 27
Tape #8027
By Chuck Smith

As you're holding your place there on the twenty-seventh chapter, turn to Acts chapter 2, verse 22 and 23. As Peter is addressing the multitude who had gathered there in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples and he was explaining to them the phenomena that they were observing. He said, "You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was proved to be of God among you by the miracles and the wonders and the signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22,23):

Now as Peter talks about the death of Jesus Christ, he declares that it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In other words, the crucifixion was planned by God. The purpose was the redemption of man and the revelation to man of God's love. It is interesting that whenever in the scripture God wants to prove His love for you, He always points to the cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "For a righteous man one may die: yet peradventure for a good man some may even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:7,8). So whenever God wants to prove His love, He always just points to the cross. And that is the proof of God's love, in giving His only begotten Son to die for your sin and for my sin. And therein God proves His love for us.

So as we have come to the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew, and Matthew now records for us the events of the trial and the crucifixion of Jesus, we do so with the realization that this was all a part of God's eternal plan, His determinate counsel and foreknowledge. He knew all about this when He sent His Son into the world. He sent Him to die for our sins, to prove His love for you and for me. So keep that as a background as we look at chapter twenty-seven.

When the morning was come (27:1),

The night before, of course, Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane after He had had the passover supper with the disciples. The Jewish day begins at sundown, so this is the day of the passover, and He is brought unto Pilate. "When the morning was come,"

all of the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death (27:1):

They have plotted, they have planned, they had orchestrated the events of this day, the purpose was to bring Him to Pilate in order that He might be condemned to death by crucifixion. You see, they could have taken Him out and stoned Him, they did that to others. When Stephen was before the council and he said things that provoked them, they dragged him out and stoned him to death. But they brought Him to Pilate because they were wanting to see Him suffer the death of crucifixion. They wanted to see Him tortured, they wanted to see Him really suffering. And that is why they brought Him to Pilate in order that they might get the Roman sentence of execution which was execution by crucifixion.

And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor (27:2).

It is interesting that the Bible critics, who never seem to give up, for a long time were criticizing the biblical account of the life of Jesus and especially the events of the crucifixion. They said there was no record of Pontius Pilate ever existing as the Roman governor. No historic evidence was ever discovered and thus, it was just a story that was made up, and with the fictitious governor Pontius Pilate. And this biblical criticism was taught in many of the schools for a long time until, as they were doing some archaeological digging in the port city of Caesarea, they found a tablet that had the name Pontius Pilate and some of the facts concerning his time of governing and suddenly, the critics were once again proved to be wrong and the

Bible right. And that is now in the British Museum, the archaeological evidence of the existence of Pontius Pilate, governor.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him [that is, Jesus], when he saw that he was condemned (27:3),

Now there are those who have ascribed to Judas sort of altruistic motives for betraying Jesus, they say that Judas was anxious to get the program of the kingdom going, that Judas was tired of waiting for Jesus to establish the kingdom and he was trying to force the hand of Jesus by betraying Him and turning Him over to the Jews in a private kind of a setting, because they feared the public arrest would create a tumult. So that Judas had sort of, kind of pure motives in that he was just trying to hasten and force Jesus to set up the kingdom. You never know what's in the heart of a man, I think that that's a very generous kind of a consideration concerning Judas, I do think that the scripture more or less points out that the man was greedy, and he was thieving from the common purse which he had charge of and I question whether or not those were the true motives of Judas. But it does here show that he probably was surprised at the fact that Jesus was condemned. "And when he saw that He was condemned,"

He repented himself, and he brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders (27:3),

Trying to undo the wrong that he had done. The problem with that is it just can't be done. Once you have made that decision to sin, once you've committed the act, you can't undo it. That's the difficulty of it. And he's trying to undo what he had done. He brought the thirty pieces of silver back to the chief priests and the elders.

And he said, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood (27:4).

Notice his testimony concerning Jesus, he testifies to the fact that Jesus was innocent. Now if anybody should know, it would be Judas, he was one of the disciples and had been with Him for three years. Had watched Him under every kind of circumstance. And after three years of close relationship, he declares that He was innocent.

And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that (27:4).

In other words, that's your problem. It doesn't concern us. And so,

He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and he departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field is called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they, the children of Israel did value; And they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me (27:5-10).

Basic problem with this is that this particular prophecy was not written by Jeremiah but by Zechariah. Jeremiah does make mention of the potter's house in Jeremiah chapter eleven and also in chapter twelve. But this particular prophecy is found in the book of Zechariah chapter eleven, and let's turn to it because it is a very remarkable prophecy, Zechariah chapter eleven, beginning with verse twelve, "And I said unto them, If you think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord (Zechariah 11:12,13). Fascinating prophecy. Here is the fulfillment. He threw the thirty pieces of silver down in the house of the Lord. Because of a legal technicality, they could not return it to the temple treasury because it had been used to buy blood, and thus they determined that they would buy a potter's field to bury strangers in.

It is interesting to me that the price for which Jesus was sold was used to buy a potter's field. The potter's field was next to the potter's house and it was covered with little shards of pottery that had not endured the firing process. Many times as the pots or the vessels were put into the kiln to be fired, they would crack, they would be useless and thus the potter would just toss them out in the field and the pots would break and the field becoming filled with these shards of broken pottery that you couldn't really plant anything, it was sort of worthless and thus, its only practical use was that for a burial ground, to bury poor people or strangers in. Broken pottery, field of broken pottery, purchased by the price of the blood of Jesus.

And I think of the broken lives, the Bible speaks of us as being earthen vessels, clay pots, a bunch of crackpots, worthless, but yet redeemed and purchased by Jesus Christ. And usefulness brought out of it. And to me it becomes a very beautiful picture.

There is another type in the Old Testament of Jesus and that is Joseph. And you remember that Joseph was sold by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver. Thirty pieces of silver is mentioned also in the law and it was the price that you had to pay if your ox gored a slave of your neighbors. And you knew that your ox was prone to be mean and he gored the slave of a neighbor, you had to purchase or give the neighbor the price of the slave which was thirty pieces of silver; "the price," he said, "a goodly price that I was priced of them." Thrown down in the temple, used to buy a potter's field.

Now why does Matthew say Jeremiah instead of Zechariah? Probably it was a mistake that crept in by one of the copyists. Because we do not have what are known as the original autographs. We do not have the gospel of Matthew that was scribed by Matthew. We have copies of copies of copies. And so over a period of time, as it was being copied, the error could have crept in. and it was ascribed to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. And thus, was probably a copyist error. Because surely the prophecy that Matthew is making reference to is the one in Zechariah because those two in Jeremiah of the potter's house really do not relate to this particular event.

Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Are you the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest (27:11).

Or you said it, or it's the way of affirmative, yes I am. The acknowledgment that He was the King of the Jews.

And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Don't you hear all the things that they are witnessing against you? And he answered him never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly (27:12-14).

In Isaiah chapter fifty-three, the prophecy concerning Jesus, in verse seven he said, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: [so here He is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that though He is being oppressed and afflicted, He doesn't open His mouth] he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). So in the face of all these false accusations, these wild kind of claims that were being stated against Jesus, He remained silent, insomuch that Pilate even marvelled that He didn't seek to defend Himself against the wild and spurious charges.

Now at that feast [that is, the feast of passover] the governor was accustomed [it was a tradition, it was a custom] to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would (27:15).

Pilate is savvy. He knows what's going on. He knows that the religious rulers are worried about Jesus because Jesus has the ear of the popular, of the crowd. He is popular among the people and the people are turning away from the formal religion to listen to Jesus who has been condemning the formal religionists. He has been condemning their hypocrisy and the fact that it was all outward display and outward show, and there wasn't anything really genuine. And He was condemning them and Pilate could see through all of these accusations and he was endeavoring to set Jesus free. And he sought by this to make it so obvious that surely the people would ask for the release of Jesus. So he chose a notorious criminal whose name was Barabbas who was a danger to society, he was a murderer, a notorious murderer and he said, It's the custom to release a prisoner unto you at this feast,

Who will ye that I release unto you? Jesus or Barabbas (27:17)?

Figuring that the people would surely say don't set Barabbas free in our society again. That guy is dangerous killer.

But the chief priests had prompted the people to ask for the release of Barabbas (27:20).

What a contrast! Jesus who went around doing good, healing all manner of sicknesses, preaching a gospel of love, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, all marks of the Messiah, raising those that are dead, and the people are asked their choice. You want a man who takes others' lives or a man who gives life? And the people made that horrible choice. Barabbas, release unto us Barabbas.

There are things that trouble me about man, about Adam. Here he was in the garden of Eden, all of these

wonderful fruit trees. And of all the trees that are in the garden you may freely eat, God said, except the one there in the midst of the garden. You're not to eat of that for "in the day that you eat of it, you'll die, you will surely die." Tree of death. Now we know also that in the garden of Eden there was another tree that was the tree of life. For after Adam ate of the first tree, the forbidden fruit, God put the cherubim to guard the garden to keep Adam from coming back and eating of the tree of life and live forever in this sinful state. So in reality, he had the choice in the garden, the tree of death or the tree of life. Remarkably, he chose to eat of the tree of death. Hard to understand, here the people are given a choice: Jesus or Barabbas. They chose Barabbas. But lest we be quick to judge them, it should be noted that God today gives man a choice—a choice between life and death. And so many people are choosing the path that leads to death, rather than the path of life in Jesus Christ. So lest you be quick to judge Adam and to judge that crowd that were saying "release unto Barabbas", unless you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are with that crowd. You are following their same pattern. You are choosing death over life.

Pilate then asked the question, [when they said release unto us Barabbas, he said], What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah (27:22)?

A question that Pilate was wrestling with and one that you must wrestle with. He was not just asking for himself, that is a question that every man must face. You have to determine yourself what you are going to do with Jesus who is called the Messiah. Even as Pilate had to face that question, so you must face that question. Pilate tried to avoid it, you can't avoid it. Each of us are making our decisions concerning Jesus Christ. To receive or to reject. To believe or not to believe. To confess or to deny. And the thing is, not to believe is just that, it is not to believe. You see, if you don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then you've already made your commitment. Not to confess is to deny, not to receive Him is to reject Him. You can't be on the fence. Jesus said, "He that is not for Me is against Me." You can't be neutral concerning Jesus Christ. You can't take a no vote position. You've already determined one way or the other, not to be for Him is to be against Him. Not to receive Him is to reject Him.

They all said to him, Let him be crucified. Pilate asked, Why, what evil has he done? But they just cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified (27:22,23).

Pilate had received a warning from his wife to have nothing to do with that just man. Remember Judas said, I've betrayed innocent blood. Now Pilate's wife said,

Have nothing to do with that just man, I've suffered many things this day in a dream because of him (27:19).

There is an interesting legend, a story, whether or not there be any truth to it is something that can't really be proved, but the story is that Pilate's little son was sick and dying and Pilate's wife brought him to Jesus and Jesus healed him. And it's a beautiful legend but whether or not it be true is problematical but at least it is something to consider. It may be that she did have an encounter with Jesus which prompted her message to Pilate. Pilate is in the midst, he's being torn. On the one side, his wife and his conscience, what he knew to be right. And on the other side, the crowd, the pressure of the crowd, pushing him to do what he knew was wrong. How often the crowd's pressure is more than we can handle. The peer pressure or the pressure of the group. And how many people have gotten into bad situations because they didn't have the strength to stand up against the pressure of the crowd. It's a horrible thing. Crowd pressure. I'm shocked so many times when I read of a person who is contemplating suicide, who is standing out on a balcony six, seven stories up. And the negotiators are there trying to talk the person out of jumping, and down below the crowd assembles to see the drama and the crowd begins to cry, Jump, go ahead and jump! And this happens over and over again. The crowd. And unfortunately, people so often foolishly listen to the crowd rather than to the voice of God's Spirit that is speaking to their heart. We read in one of the gospels, and the voice of the people prevailed. The crowd prevailed. Here we are told, the governor said, "Why, what evil has he done? But they just cried all the more, Let him be crucified."

And when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but only a tumult was rising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it (27:24).

He tried to exonerate himself from the guilt. You can't. If you're not for Him, you're against Him.

Pilate's guilty, he had the power to release Jesus but he listened to the crowd. It's interesting that,

They responded, His blood be upon us, and our children (27:25).

What a horrible thing. I'm sure they didn't realize what they were saying. Surely it happened. You read the *Wars of the Jews* by Josephus and the horrible siege of Jerusalem and the tremendous horrible carnage, bloodshed when the Roman troops came and besieged Jerusalem and took Jerusalem in 70 A.D. under Titus, and the blood of the Jews that filled the streets of Jerusalem, over a million Jews slaughtered in that holocaust.

But it is interesting that in the fifth chapter of Acts, when the disciples, Peter and John are brought before the council, they said to them, "Did we not strictly command you that you should not teach in the name of Jesus? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and you intend to bring this man's blood on us" (Acts 5:28). Interesting. They said, "His blood be upon us and our children." It's amazing how people turn when they begin to realize the consequences of what was said. You intend to bring His, of course. You're guilty. You said His blood be upon you and your children.

So Pilate then released Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified (27:26).

It's interesting to me that the gospel mentions here in the briefest of terms the scourging of Jesus. It is interesting to me that no details are really given. You go to Jerusalem today and they have the church of the flagellation. The place, the spot where they say Jesus was actually scourged. But yet none of the gospel writers really elaborate on the scourging of Jesus. They don't go into the details of the scourging of Jesus. We know from history what the scourging entailed. It entailed the prisoner being tied to a post with his back in a bent over position so that the back is taut. And that the scourge that was used was a leather whip with little bits of lead and glass imbedded in the whip designed to, as it was pulled off, to rip off little chunks of flesh. We know from history that it was an extremely cruel device and we know that it was generally used as sort of a third degree kind of a torture to force and elicit confessions from prisoners.

When Paul in the book of Acts had made some statements to the assembled multitudes that sort of created a riot condition, as the Roman soldiers brought him into the palace there for his own protection, the Roman centurion, as he was walking by, said, Scourge him, find out what he said. And as they were preparing to scourge Paul to elicit from Paul what he said--find out what he said, give him the third degree, scourge him--Paul asked the question, Is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who has not been accused of anything? And he said, Are you a Roman citizen? Paul said, Yup. So the fellow ran and told the centurion, Did you know this fellow's a Roman citizen? He said, No. Came back to interrogate Paul, said, Are you a Roman citizen? Paul said, Yes I am. He said, I bought my citizenship. It cost quite a bit, what about you? He said, I was free born. And thus, he was spared the scourging.

But Jesus was scourged. The purpose was to elicit confessions. But so little is said. Yet when Isaiah was prophesying concerning Jesus, the Son of God, in chapter fifty-three, verse five, he said, "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." It was prophesied that He would be scourged. "With His stripes we are healed." And yet it is interesting, so little is mentioned of it by the gospel writers. Just almost as a passing thought, "They scourged Him, and then delivered Him to be crucified."

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and they gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and they put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed their knees before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit on him, and they took the reed, and they began to beat him on the head (27:27-30).

Again, Isaiah chapter fifty, verse six declares, "I gave my back to the smiters [the scourging], and my cheeks to them that plucked out the hair: I hid not my face from the shame and from the spitting." You see, as Peter said, "this was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God wrote about it over five hundred years before it took place. And now it is happening, just as was prophesied in the scriptures. "His back to the smiters, His cheeks to those that were just pulling out chunks of His beard. And I hid not My face from the shame and spitting." When they were through with Jesus, according to the prophesy of Isaiah,

chapter fifty-two, His face was so marred, beating Him on the face with the reed that they had put in His hand, the stick, buffeting Him, putting a sack over His head, hitting Him, pulling out His beard by the chunks, the Bible says His face was so marred you could not recognize Him as a human being. Isaiah said, "When we see Him, there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. But He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:2,5). Lamentations chapter three, verse thirty said, "He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach."

And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put on his own raiment, and they led him away to crucify him (27:31).

In Psalm 69:7, it said, "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face." "Thou has known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach has 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" (Psalm 69:19-20), as the psalmist was prophesying of our Savior.

And when they were come unto a place that was called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink that was mingled with gall: and when he had tasted it, he would not drink (27:33,34).

This was sort of an anesthesia, the purpose was to numb the patient or the prisoner so that he would not feel so keenly the pain of crucifixion. They offered it to Jesus but He did not take it. Again in Psalm 69:21, where we were just reading of the reproach and all, the psalmist said, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Interesting, isn't it?

And 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. And sitting down they watched him there (27:35,36);

Psalm 22:18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." And thus that prophecy was fulfilled.

And they set up over his head his accusation that was written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads (27:37-39),

So those that were passing by, just yelling at Him, cursing at Him, shaking their heads. Again in Psalm twenty-two, verse seven, "All they that see me laughed me to scorn, they shoot out the lip and they shake their heads." Here they are, fulfilling Psalm twenty-two as they wag their heads as they yelled the taunts at Him as He is hanging there on the cross.

And they were saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and rebuilds it in three days, save yourself. If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, that I am the Son of God (27:40-43).

Back in Psalm twenty-two, verse eight, it tells about the taunts in which they would say, "He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him now, seeing he delighted in him." Interesting that all of these events, even the words that were spoken, were all prophesied 500, 600, 700, 1,000 years before the event took place. But it all proves what Peter declared, that this was happening as the result of the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," God was seeking to prove His love for you in redeeming man from their sin at such an awful cost. The reproach, the shame that His Son endured in order to deliver us from our sins, in order to prove to you God's wonderful love.

Then there were two thieves, crucified with him (27:44),

One on the right, the other on the left, Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors;" Again, the prophecy fulfilled in the fact that there were two thieves.

Now from the sixth hour [that is noon] there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour (27:45).

Or three o'clock in the afternoon. An unexplainable darkness except that in Amos chapter eight, verse

nine, the Lord said, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in a clear day: And I will turn your feasts [it was the feast of passover, I will turn it] into mourning, and all of your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all the loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, [yes, it was the only begotten Son of God] and the end thereof as a bitter day" (Amos 8:9,10). So the darkness over the land at noon prophesied by Amos.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (27:46)?

This plaintiff cry from the cross. Just about the time that He expired. These last sayings of Jesus came one after another, as God is now laying on Him our sins. In Psalm twenty-two, we read these words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring" (Psalm 22:1)? This twenty-second Psalm is a remarkable passage of scripture because in it is a very vivid and accurate description of death by crucifixion. At a period of man's history when crucifixion was really unknown as a means of putting a person to death. And yet the things that happened when a person is crucified are described, such as the body going out of joint, as the muscles give way and the body begins to go out of joint, the pull of the gravity and the excruciating pain that comes as your body begins to slip its joints. The tremendous thirst that takes place as the body is dehydrating, as it hangs there on the cross. And this description of death by crucifixion begins with, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why are thou so far from helping me, and the words of my roaring?" The psalmist went on to say, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season [as it became dark], and am not silent. [But then, the answer to the question, Why hast thou forsaken me?] But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel (Psalm 22:2,3).

Because of the holiness of God, when God laid upon His Son the iniquities of us all, His Son was forsaken by the Father. Again, turning to Isaiah chapter fifty-three, "All of us like sheep have gone astray; we turn every one of us to our own ways; and God laid on him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). He took your sin, He took all of your sin, all of your iniquity, He bore the punishment for your sins. He accepted the responsibility for your sins. As Isaiah fifty-three again cries out, "For the transgressions of my people was he slain" (Isaiah 53:8). For your transgressions, He died. God laid on Him, "God made him," the scripture said, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God through him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Now we know that the effect of sin and the horrible effect of sin is that of separation from God. That's the result of sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Spiritually die. It's a separation from God. When Adam sinned, he died spiritually, he was separated from God. God said, Adam, where art thou? The sin caused the breach, the separation. The prophet Isaiah said, "God's hand is not short, that He cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear: But your sins have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:1,2). And when God laid on Him the sins, your sins, my sins, the sins of the world, the Father turned His back upon the Son and thus, the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that cry, we understand a little better the prayer in the garden the night before, when He was in great agony and as it was, sweating great drops of blood falling to the ground as He prayed, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." This cup of bitterness that He was to drink as He took all of the horrible sins of mankind upon Himself. Bore the reproach, bore the shame and bore our sins. That He might be able to grant His forgiveness of sins, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, though he despised the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). The joy of being able to say to that thief, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." The joy of being able to say to you, You're forgiven. I take the responsibility of your guilt, you're forgiven. You're clean. There's nothing against you. The joy of being able to grant the forgiveness of our sins. "He endured the cross though He despised the shame."

When He cried, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? The Roman soldiers, not understanding the Hebrew language, when He cried Eli, they thought that He was calling for Elijah. They thought that maybe He had gone into a delirium at this point. Calling for Elijah and thinking that He was in a delirium.

One of those that were standing by, ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a

reed, and gave it to him to drink (27:48).

And in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink, He said.

But the rest of them said, No, let him alone, let's see if Elijah will come and save him. And Jesus then, when he had cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost (27:49-50).

Now this is a way of describing death, physical death in the Bible, he yielded up the ghost or he yielded up his spirit. That is the separation of a man's spirit from his body. You see, the Bible teaches the real you is the spirit. The body is not the real you, the body is just a tent in which you live. One day, you're going to move out of the tent. Your spirit is going to be separated from your body. And they will say, Well he's dead, there's no more brain activity, no more brain waves. EEG is flat. Separation of a man's consciousness or spirit from his body, a definition for death. And thus, with Jesus, He gave up the spirit, that is, there was a separation of the spirit from the body, now only the body is hanging there limp on the cross. The spirit has departed. And as that happened,

Behold, the veil of the temple was rent [or torn] in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were ripped (27:51);

The veil in the temple, they say, was eighteen inches thick, woven cloth. To tear something like that would be a physical impossibility. It is interesting to me that it was ripped from the top to the bottom, as though God was ripping the veil of the temple. Now the purpose for the veil in the temple was to keep man from coming to God. Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond the veil. No one else was allowed into this holy of holies, the place of God's presence, the place of the Shekinah of God, the presence of God. It was forbidden by man to go in. Only the high priest could go in and that only one day in the year, the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. And that only after many sacrifices and even then, when he went in, he had a rope tied around his ankle. There were bells on the bottom of his robe. As he went in to stand before God for the sins of the people and the nation for the year, they would listen to the bells on his robe as he was there ministering. If the bells went silent, they knew that he was smitten dead in the presence of God and they would take him, pull him out by the rope. They wouldn't go in to get him because the veil signify there's a separation between God and man, because of man's sinfulness he cannot approach the holy God.

The significance of the veil being torn is that through Jesus Christ, we have access to God. Amazing, He made access unto God. "Wherefore let us come boldly through Jesus Christ, to that throne of mercy that we might find grace" (Hebrews 4:16). And God is demonstrating the door is now open, the way has been made for you and for me. Sinful man to be able to come into the presence of God through Jesus Christ and the blood of the covenant by which He gave Himself for our sins. And in Christ now we have access unto the Father, O glorious, blessed privilege that is ours made possible through Jesus Christ. The veil of the temple, I love it, ripped from the top to the bottom.

Here in verses fifty-two and fifty-three, we have an interesting statement that is really out of place because this happened after His resurrection but Matthew threw it in here.

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And they came out of the graves after his resurrection (27:53),

So this event took place not at the crucifixion but after the resurrection.

and they went into the holy city, and appeared unto many (27:53).

The graves were opened. Now Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter four that "He who has ascended into heaven, [that is Jesus] is the same one who also first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth. And when he ascended, he led the captives from their captivity" (Ephesians 4:8,9). The Bible teaches that before the death and resurrection of Jesus, all men who died went into Sheol, the grave, the place of incarceration for disembodied spirits.

And we do read in Luke sixteen concerning the parable, which was not a parable, the story. "There was a certain rich man. And I think we're wrong in calling it a parable, a certain rich man fared sumptuously every day: the poor man Lazarus being laid at his gate, and the poor man died, carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment, seeing Abraham afar off, Lazarus there being comforted, said, Father Abraham, I pray that you'll send Lazarus that he might take and put his finger in water, and touch my tongue; for I am tormented in this heat. Abraham said, Son,

remember you in your lifetime had the good things, Lazarus the evil: now he is comforted, while you're tormented. And beside this, there is this gulf that is fixed: and it's impossible for those that are on this side to come over there; or those that are on that side to come over here. Then I pray thee, if he can't come to me, send him back, let him warn my brothers; so that they don't come to this awesome place. Abraham said, They have the law and the prophets; If they won't believe them, they wouldn't believe, even if one came back from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

So Jesus teaches that this place, Hades, Sheol, was actually in two compartments. One with people of faith being comforted by Abraham. In Hebrews it tells that these men of faith all died in faith, not having received the promise. But seeing afar off, they embraced it, they held to it, and they claim they were just strangers and pilgrims, but again he said, they all died in faith not receiving the promise, God having reserved a better thing for us that they without us could not be made perfect. Jesus came to set at liberty those who were in prison. To open the prison doors, to those that are bound and to set the captives free. So when Jesus died, He went into Sheol, where Abraham was comforting those saints of the Old Testament, assuring them that God's word is true and God would keep His word, for "Abraham believed God, it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Galatians 3:6), and he was assuring them of God's promises that would be kept. And when Jesus came, He preached to those souls that were in prison. And when He rose from the dead, He led the captives from their captivity. And thus, the graves of many were open and the saints were seen, some of them even walking in the streets of Jerusalem, after His resurrection from the dead.

Now when the centurion, and those that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things which were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. And many women were there beholding afar off, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, and ministering unto him (27:54,55):

Now when Jesus traveled, there was a company of perhaps fifty to a hundred people that traveled with Him--His disciples that He had called to be apostles, other disciples were there, many others, plus with a group that large, you have to have food, and you have to have a lot of things, someone to sew up your robe if you rip it or whatever, and so there were many women who had come from Galilee that traveled with the company. They prepared the food and they were travelling along with them, ministering unto the needs. And it does give us,

Mary Magdalene [we know of her], and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children (27:56).

This Mary, the mother of James and Joses who were the sons of Alphaeus, these are not James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This Mary is said to be the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and thus this James is often referred to as James the less because he was shorter than James, the brother of John.

When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was one of Jesus' disciples: He went to Pilate, and he begged for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And Mary Magdalene, and that other Mary, were sitting over against the sepulchre (27:57-61).

They followed the procession, they watched as Jesus was bound in the linen. They saw Him as He was laid in the tomb and they were there in the shadows watching the events as the stone was rolled over the door of the sepulchre. It is interesting that as Jesus dismissed His spirit, going back just a bit, in John He said, "I'm the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and I am known of mine. And as the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14). He gave up the ghost. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, I have the power to take it up again. And this commandment I received of my Father" (John 10:17,18). And so we find Him laying down His life. In a few days we find Him taking it up again.

But this entombment by Joseph of Arimathaea, we're told he was a rich man. And we read in Isaiah 53:9, "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, and neither was any deceit in his mouth."

Now the next day, that followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate, They said, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again (27:62,63).

Interesting they remembered that but the disciples didn't. Isn't that interesting? They remembered that but the disciples had forgotten it. After He rose then they remembered it says that He said, After three days I'll rise. But the disciples had forgotten, but they remembered and said to Pilate,

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead: so that the last error will be worse than the first (27:64).

Interesting they admit that it was an error. The first error would be their putting Him to death.

Pilate said unto them (27:65),

and I love this, Pilate's sick of these guys, he said,

You have a guard: make it as sure as you can (27:65).

I love that. But no matter how many guards they put there, they can't keep Jesus in the grave. Make it as sure as you can.

So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting up a guard (27:66).

They did their best but it wasn't good enough as we'll find out in the next chapter, as we go on into chapter twenty-eight.

Father, we thank You again that Jesus Christ has made the way whereby we can come, come to your throne of mercy to find grace, that Jesus Christ our Lord has opened up the door, the door to heaven's gate. When He died on the cross to redeem all the lost, He prepared a way that leads to His abode. It's a way marked by blood but it leads us safely home. Lord, how blessed we are. What a wonderful Savior is Jesus, our Jesus. Lord, we are so thankful, we're so grateful that You were willing to bear the shame, the mockery, the jeering, the scorn, the suffering, that You might forgive us our sins, that You might make us children of God, that You might adopt us into the family of God, giving us all of the privileges of being children of God. Thank you Lord for washing and cleansing us from our guilt. May we never, never forget what You've done for us. Just keep us Lord near the cross and may we ever glory in what You wrought for us when You gave Your life as a ransom for all. In Jesus' Name, Father, Amen