

Teen Bible Study Notes: Friday, February 15, 2019

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The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ – Lecture #26

Book and Chapter – Matthew – Chapter 27 (verses 1 – 46)

MATTHEW 27

The first nine verses of **Matthew 27** – present three difficulties, according to skeptics.

(1) The first concerns the death of Judas. Matthew says Judas died by hanging himself. But in **Acts 1:18**, Peter says Judas died from a fall.

(2) Matthew’s and Peter’s accounts also differ as to how the 30 pieces of silver were used. Matthew says the chief priest bought the potter’s field, while Peter indicates Judas bought the field.

(3) The third “difficulty” is that Matthew 27:9 purports to be a quotation from Jeremiah. But you can search the 52 chapters of Jeremiah’s book and you will not find it. So the critics say Matthew made a mistake.

Jesus Handed Over to Pontius Pilate

V1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death.

V2 And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Pontius Pilate – was **governor** of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea from A.D. 26-36. Because the Jews did not have authority to execute Jesus (**see John 18:31**), they brought Him to Pilate. The Romans did not allow the Jews to impose capital punishment. These Jewish leaders had no interest in a just trial, they simply wanted Jesus executed.

Judas Hangs Himself

V3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

V4 Saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*”

V5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Question: How does one explain the apparent contradiction between this verse [Matthew 27:5] and Acts 1:18? Did Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, hang himself or just swell up and burst open?

Answer: Acts 1:18 “(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity [*reward of unrighteousness*]; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails [*intestines*] gushed out.”

We should first understand that God had His Word recorded in such a way that it could be misunderstood. Through one of the prophets we find that the Bible is written “...here a little, and there a little.” (**Isaiah 28:10**).

Isaiah 28:10 “For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

Each part is true, but the whole truth about a particular subject may not be found in any one verse or chapter. This is one reason Paul said that the Word of God must be rightly divided (**II Timothy 2:15**).

II Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word or truth.”

Contradiction? No. By putting the two accounts of Judas’ death **together**, we get a clearer idea of what happened. Both events are true. But both events did not happen at the same time. He hung himself and then fell.

Matthew wrote that Judas “hanged himself” (**Matthew 27:5**). **Luke** [*in the **Book of Acts***] explained what happened **later** – AFTER Judas’ body began to decompose. The corpse slipped from the rope and burst when it fell.

Additional Note: *Another possible explanation is as follows – Judas hanged himself on a tree, only to have the rope or branch break. If the tree was over a rocky precipice, the account in **Acts** can be correlated with this account. This information is not given, but the details that are recorded are enough to show the manner of his suicide.*

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V6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.”

V7 And they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in.

Originally this plot of ground was known as *the potter's field*, a place where potter's dug for clay. Consequently, it was full of holes, which would have made it easy to bury people. It was purchased as a cemetery for strangers who died in Jerusalem.

V8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

V9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "*And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of him who was priced*, whom they of the children of Israel priced,

V10 *And gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me.*"

Matthew's and Peter's accounts also differ as to how the 30 pieces of silver were used.

Matthew says the chief priests bought the potter's field, while Peter indicates Judas bought the field.

When the two accounts are put together we can conclude that when Judas saw Jesus condemned to death, he felt remorse over his treachery. He returned the 30 pieces of silver to the priests and then committed suicide in a potter's field. The chief priests used the money to buy this field in Judas' name to bury strangers [aliens] in.

Biblical passages add to each other's meaning; they do not detract from or contradict other scriptures.

Matthew 27:9 – claims to be a quotation from Jeremiah. A thorough study of the book of Jeremiah reveals no such prophecy. Did Matthew make a mistake?

No he did not. Please notice carefully what this verse says: "Then was fulfilled that which was **spoken** by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, '*And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of him who was pierced...*'" Jeremiah spoke these words. If he wrote them, they are not included in the book of Jeremiah.

The fact that a similar prophecy is found in the book of Zechariah (**Zechariah 11:12-13**) has led some to believe that the word "Jeremiah" in **Matthew 27:9** should be "Zechariah." In all authoritative texts, however, the original Greek word is "Jeremiah."

Zechariah 11:12-13: V12 "Then I said to them, 'If it is agreeable to you, give *me* my wages; and if not, refrain.' So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.

V13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter" – that princely price set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter."

The simple explanation, then, is that Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, and Zechariah, writing at a later time, was inspired to record it. God's Word does not contradict itself (**John 10:35**).

John 10:35 "...and the Scripture cannot be broken.)"

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Jesus Faces Pilate

V11 Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” So Jesus said to him, “*It is as you say.*”

V12 And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

V13 Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?”

V14 And He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Taking the Place of Barabbas

V15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.

V16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

Barabbas – was *notorious* because he was an insurrectionist and a murderer (**Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19, 25**).

Mark 15:7 “And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion.”

V17 Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

Evidently Pilate assumed the Jews would choose Jesus to be released over a murderer like Barabbas. As, Jesus had only gone about doing good.

V18 For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him.

V19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”

Only Matthew records this incident concerning Pilate’s wife.

V20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

V21 The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They said, “Barabbas!”

V22 Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” *They* all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!”

V23 Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!”

V24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult [*an uproar*] was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.”

Pilate did not want to condemn an innocent man. Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent and vainly attempted to **wash his hands** of **shedding innocent blood**. But he caved to the pressure of the multitudes – as there was an uproar among the people.

V25 And all the people answered and said, “His blood *be* on us and on our children.”

His blood be upon us – the destruction of Jerusalem was one of the results of this (**Matthew 23:32-39**).

V26 Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.”

When he had scourged Jesus – Scourging was a common life-threatening punishment in the time of Christ, but in our modern times we have difficulty imagining such cruelty.

The victim was stripped to the waist, bent over and tied to a post, and then beaten with flagellum – a multi-lashed whip made of leather thongs weighted down with broken shards of bone and sharp jagged pieces of metal. In a Roman scourging, called the “halfway death,” the victim was beaten until just short of dying from the multiple wounds.

Christ suffered this merciless beating, which tore open His flesh, disfigured Him, and caused Him to bleed from dozens of open gashes and cuts. Even some of his ribs were exposed.

He was so brutally beaten that He became unrecognizable. Notice: **Isaiah 52:14** “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”

Evidently this was an attempt by Pilate to punish Jesus so severely that the people would have pity and say, “It is enough; release Him.” But rather the chief priests and officers anticipating an outburst of pity from the crowd, cried out, saying, “Crucify *Him*, crucify *Him*?”

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

V27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him.

The Praetorium – was the official residence of the governor when he was in Jerusalem. It was originally built as a palace for Herod the Great.

V28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.

V29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed [*scepter*] in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

The soldiers mocked Jesus for claiming to be a king. Notice the references to the *robe*, the *crown*, the *reed [or scepter]*, and that they bowed before Him.

Robe – made Him a caricature of a royal conqueror.

Crown of thorns – was a mockery of a kingly crown.

Reed [or scepter] – was a symbol of a ruler's power.

Bowed the knee before Him – in a sarcastic manner.

V30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.

V31 Then when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

Crucified – Crucifixion was considered by the Romans to be the cruelest and most painful form of execution. This punishment was reserved for the worst criminals. Roman citizens were not crucified.

Not only were spikes driven into the hands and feet and the body suspended from these open wounds, and a peg on which the victim sat, but breathing was also agonizingly difficult. Victims would often struggle on their crosses [*stakes*] for two or three days enduring thirst, agonizing suffering, exhaustion, loss of blood, and exposure – finally dying from muscle fatigue and suffocation.

The King on a Stake

V32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, Him they compelled to bear His cross.

Most victims were allowed to recover, but Jesus was not. Like a criminal, he was forced to carry His own stake, but he was so weakened by His terrible chastisement that He fell under its weight after only a short distance.

Compelled – is the same verb used in **Matthew 5:41** – which refers to the Roman government's right of impressment – the right of the Roman arm to demand labor from a person. The scourging obviously left Jesus weak and unable to carry His cross, so a Roman guard ordered Simon to carry it.

Question: Was Jesus nailed to a cross or a stake?

Answer: The Romans, the ones who crucified Christ, are known to have used instruments of various shapes. Some were just upright timbers, others has crosspieces attached either at the top or just a little below the top.

The word “cross” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *stauros*. The study of word origins shows that *stauros* simply means **stake** or **pole**. This word was used in literature in reference to pieces of wood of various shapes, including those with crosspieces.

There is no description in the Bible of the specific *stauros* on which Christ died. If it were important for us to know its shape, God would have provided us with additional information. The important thing is Christ’s sacrifice for us – and what He is doing now – not the exact shape of the wood on which He died. But, the mere fact that the traditional cross figures so prominently in pagan religious custom ought to give us pause for thought.

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V33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull.

V34 They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink.

Sour wine mixed with gall – would have dulled Jesus’ pain and consciousness. Jesus refused it; He wanted to drink His cup of suffering fully aware of all that was happening.

Psalm 69:21 “They also gave me gall for My food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

V35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: “*They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*”

In ***casting lots*** for Jesus’ ***garments*** – the soldiers fulfilled – **Psalm 22:18.**

Psalm 22:16-18: V16 “...The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me, they pierced My hands and My feet;

V17 They can count all My bones, they look *and* stare at Me.

V18 They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”

V36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

Perhaps the soldiers *kept watch* to prevent anyone from trying to rescue Jesus.

V37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Some think that the four accounts of what was written on Jesus' cross contradict. What was actually written on Christ's cross?

Matthew's account says, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (**Matthew 27:37**).

Mark wrote: "And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS" (**Mark 15:26**).

Luke states: "And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (**Luke 23:38**).

John's Gospel account says, "Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS" (**John 19:19**).

The Bible shows that "Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross"...and it was written in "Hebrew, Greek *and* Latin."

John 19:19-20: V19 "Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

V20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin."

The Bible does not say that any one of the four titles was the only title written on the cross.

Obviously, the answer to this supposed contradiction lies in the fact that the title on the cross was written in three languages. Each Gospel writer quoted from one of these, or else each combined portions of what was written in two of the three languages. There is no discrepancy.

Putting all the Gospel accounts together, the message was – "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

V38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

Two robbers were crucified with Him – this is in fulfillment of – **Isaiah 53:12** "...and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

V39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads

Psalm 22:7 – predicted the insults that would be directed at the Messiah.

Psalm 22:7 “All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*

V8 ‘He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him, let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’”

These prophecies in Isaiah and in the Psalms were written hundreds of years in advance. They vividly describe the suffering the coming Messiah – our Savior – was to experience!

V40 And saying, “You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Jesus actual words were: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (**John 2:19**). In three days, Jesus rose from the dead, thereby fulfilling this prophecy.

V41 Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders said,

V42 “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

V43 He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

V44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

Jesus would not come down from the Cross because He was obediently following God’s plan for Him. His obedience would lead to His exaltation as King over all (**Philippians 2:8-11**).

Philippians 2:8-11: V8 “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

V9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

V10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

V11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus Dies on the Stake

V45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

John 19:14 appears to disagree with Matthew 27:45. John describes events *before* the crucifixion and says they took place about the “sixth hour.” **Matthew** agrees with **Mark 15:33** and **Luke 23:44** when he says darkness covered the land *after* the crucifixion from the sixth to the ninth hours. **Is there disagreement as to when the crucifixion occurred?**

The Jewish state was then under Roman control. John used the Roman reckoning of time – counting from midnight. To John, the “sixth hour” was six o’clock in the morning. But according to the Jews’ reckoning of time, which the other Gospel writers used, this was the *first hour* of the day. The sixth hour, to them, was noon, Roman time. The crucifixion occurred between these times. The four versions do not contradict; they add to each other.

Question: What was the hour of Christ’s crucifixion?

Answer: This can be confusing because of the different methods of reckoning time used by the Jews and the Romans during that period of history. But, there is no real problem once we have the key.

The Jews began the numbering of the 12 hours of night from sunset; the 12 hours of day were numbered from sunrise. The Romans began their count from midnight and again from noon, the way we commonly do today. Of the four gospel accounts, only the book of John uses the Roman reckoning.

In modern terms, Jesus was crucified about 9 am. To the Romans this was nine hours from midnight. To the Jews it was three hours from sunrise, hence it is called the “third hour” in **Mark 15:25**.

Mark 15:25 “Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.”

Darkness covered the land at about 12 noon (to the Romans, 12 hours from midnight; to the Jews, six hours from sunrise – **Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44; Matthew 27:45**. **The darkness lasted until 3 pm** (three hours from noon in Roman reckoning; nine hours from sunrise to the Jews).

John 19:14 – also mentions the “sixth hour.” This is the Roman reckoning and here refers to the time around sunrise. This, of course, was about three hours before the crucifixion.

John 19:14 “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’”

So, there is no contradiction. Each gospel account adds to the others when we understand how they were written. (**See – Isaiah 28:9-13**).

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There was darkness over all the land – This was not due to an eclipse of the sun. This was a supernatural occurrence.

V46 Now about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*”

FORSAKEN!

Thick, black clouds swept across the Jerusalem sky. The Jews, preparing for the Passover service, groped around in the gathering gloom and wondered where the light had gone. It was not yet 3 o’clock in the afternoon!

In the murky darkness, on a hill just outside the city, the ultimate High Priest was about to perform the most meaningful sacrifice of all. And for the first time in His life, Jesus experienced what it was like to be alone.

Only several hours before, as the mob came to arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had told His disciples, “...do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (**Matthew 26:53.**)

Now, it seemed, Jesus was no longer able to count on that help. At the end of His human life, when the pain and anguish reached their peak, Jesus Christ could not rely on the strength that had seen Him through the trials of the previous 33½ years. Why, in His greatest hour of need, was He left alone? The answer should sober all of us.

Why cut off?

When Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, ‘*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*’” (**Matthew 27:46**), He was not merely mouthing empty, emotional words. He knew that, hanging there on a stake, He was now totally alone, totally cut off from His heavenly Father. That is the condition most of the world finds itself in today! And most of the world is totally unaware of it.

This condition is brought about by sin. Isaiah was inspired to make it plain:

Isaiah 59:1-2: V1 “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

V2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear.”

When sin is present in our lives, it drives a wedge between us and God. Sin and God are totally incompatible. The two just cannot exist together. Therefore, unless the penalty of our sin –

death – is paid, we cannot ever regain the contact with God that is necessary for eternal life. And that, of course, is where Jesus Christ enters the picture.

As the Creator of all mankind, His life was worth more than the sum total of humanity. His death paid the penalty for every sin committed on this planet. But in paying this penalty, He had to take all these sins on His shoulders:

II Corinthians 5:21 “For He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

And again:

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

As the clouds overhead darkened and the pain in His body became almost unbearable, Jesus Christ knew He bore the sins of the world. And He knew He was bearing them alone.

Earlier when he had been in mental agony, His Father had sent an angel to strengthen and encourage Him (**Luke 22:43**). Time after time in the humiliation of His scourging, Jesus had drawn on the strength of His Father. The burden of responsibility – knowing that to fail in His mission would mean the oblivion of mankind – weighed heavily on His mind, and He constantly renewed His resolve through prayer to God in heaven.

Now, in the hour of Christ’s greatest need, there was nothing. Even if He were forced to abandon his own beloved Son, God the Father was not willing to compromise with sin.

That is the way it had always been:

Deuteronomy 31:17-18: V17 “Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God *is* not among us?’

V18 And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.”

Micah 3:4 “Then they will cry to the LORD, but He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, because they have been evil in their deeds.”

God, therefore, was left with no alternative. If Jesus had become “sin” for us, then God had to forsake Him. He would have to face the final minutes alone.

Jesus, at last, could really comprehend what it meant to be cut off from God. He had come to this sick earth not just to give His life for all mankind, but also to experience human existence. By doing so, He would be able to intercede to the Father on our behalf with far more meaning and fervor.

Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet without sin.*”

And so it was, on that fateful spring day, Jesus Christ knew what it was like to be completely alone in the world.

As He hung there in torment, the words penned by King David became vivid in His mind.

Psalm 22:1-2: V1 “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?*

V22 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.”

Read all of **Psalm 22** and try to put yourself in Christ’s position. Try to imagine being cut off from the strength and encouragement we in God’s Church can have from the Eternal.

God doesn’t compromise

This episode at the very end of Jesus’ earthly life contains several important lessons we need to consider carefully.

It should reinforce in our minds that sin – any transgression of God’s Spiritual law – will result in an estrangement from our heavenly Father. The fact that even Jesus Christ Himself had to experience that separation shows without a shadow of a doubt that God will not compromise with sin. And every time we sin we become responsible for the brutal torture and suffering Christ had to endure. This knowledge should move us to live the most perfect lives we can.

This episode should also increase our faith. God says he does not compromise with sin, and we can believe what God has written in his word. Not only should that encourage us, it should also make us aware that God means business when he emphasizes the punishment intended for those who willingly persist in wrongdoing.

Christ died for our sins. His suffering, especially His mental agony when He knew He was totally alone in the ordeal, should make us consider what will happen to us if we refuse to repent of transgressing God’s law. There can be no reasoning around the situation. God did not compromise with His Son, nor will He when it comes to the rest of humanity.