

# LUKE

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## Chapter Twenty Three

### Luke 23:1-3

*Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. (2) And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." (3) So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "It is as **you say.**"*

The trial now moves into the Roman phase. The prophecy by Jesus is now being fulfilled:

- *Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."*
- *Luke 18:32 "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,*

The “whole body of them” is the Sanhedrin. Pilate was officially called “prefect” and had the authority to have someone in his province sentenced to death. Of course it is primarily the Jewish leaders who are the power behind this:

- *Acts 3:13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.*
- *Acts 13:27-28 "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. (28) "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed.*

There were no formal prosecutors so charges against someone could be brought by private citizens. There also was no criminal code for someone who was not a Roman citizen to be tried in the provinces. It was then up to the prefect to make whatever decisions he wished to make regarding charges against a non-Roman citizen. The Jewish leaders brought three charges against Jesus and the reader of this book would know that they were all false. The charges were:

1. This **first charge** was a general accusation that Jesus was teaching false doctrines to mislead the Jewish citizens. Of course this charge is false because Jesus was teaching the way of God to His people. However the Jewish leaders viewed His teachings as false because He was leading them away from the leaven of the Jewish leaders who saw such as taking away their authority. Similarly Pharaoh accused Moses of turning away his people and King Ahab identified Elijah as a trouble maker:
  - *Exo 5:4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!"*
  - *1Ki 18:17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"*

2. The **second charge** was blatantly false as they accused Jesus of forbidding the people to pay taxes to Rome. Luke reports this interaction in 20:20-26. The people also would know that His parents enrolled for the census that was the basis for determining the taxes.
3. The **third charge** was that Jesus claimed to be the Christ and Pilate accepted this title to be a king. Although some people thought that He was the promised Messiah, Jesus never claimed such an identity with a political leader. He would be King and Christ but in a very different manner than thought by the people. Rome had no direct threat from Him as being the Christ although theologically it is a correct charge.

Since Pilate understood the title Christ to be king, he asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews. The reply of Jesus may be understood to mean "What does this look like to you?" Jesus would not admit to a charge of a crime against Rome because He was not under Pilate's authority.

### **Luke 23:4-7**

*Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." (5) But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place." (6) When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. (7) And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.*

We will see that Pilate states the innocence of Jesus three times as recorded by Luke (23:4, 14, 22). Pilate was an evil man (13:1) but he was not polluted with the evil malevolence of His accusers. Pilate saw that the followers of Jesus did not put up an armed resistance and he saw a man who was not belligerent or acting in any malevolent fashion so he declared Him innocent. The Jewish leaders insist that Jesus has stirred up the people but their real concern is that His teaching is a threat to their status and control over the people. They do recall the beginning and end of His ministry correctly as it began in Galilee (4:14) and now has come to Jerusalem. Of course it also will go to all the earth through His disciples. It was not unusual for a governor to seek advice from others regarding a decision he was called to make. Learning that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate decided to get the opinion of Herod regarding this man. Herod was a Roman ally so Pilate knew he could be relied upon to judge if Jesus was dangerous to Rome. Indeed Jesus did belong to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. His father was Herod the Great who had been declared King of the Jews. However the emperor Augustus did not give that title to Herod Antipas when his father died and divided the area among the brothers.

### **Luke 23:8-11**

*Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. (9) And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. (11) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.*

Luke is the only gospel writer to report the appearance of Jesus before Herod who had been introduced as the tetrarch of Galilee (3:1). Although he had been refused to be given the title of

King of the Jews, he now was before the real King of the Jews! Luke has previously reported that Herod had wanted to see Jesus:

*Luke 9:7-9 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, (8) and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. (9) Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.*

We might think that Herod had good motives in wanting to see Jesus but Luke reports that the reason for his wanting to see Jesus was so that he could see some sign performed by Jesus much like wanting to see a magician. The Pharisees had warned Jesus that Herod had wanted to kill Him (Luke 13:31 *Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You."*) This background makes us think that things will not go well for Jesus except for the divine plan. Although Herod questioned Jesus for a long time, He refused to speak and Herod could take no action over someone who said nothing. Herod then did not get to see some sign and he also did not get to hear any of the clever teaching of Jesus. The silence of Jesus reflects the hardness of Herod as we know from Paul: *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* (1 Cor 2:14) Jesus knew that Herod could not understand the truth that could come from His mouth.

The Jewish leaders were playing the role of prosecutor as they continually stood there accusing Jesus heatedly. Herod was no doubt furious that Jesus refused to give him a sign or even to answer his questions so he joined with his soldiers in treating Jesus with contempt and mocking Him. Usually the mocking would involve some physical violence against the defendant. Afterwards they dressed Jesus in shining clothes to send Him back to Pilate. The robe's appearance can be translated shining or glorious and probably are part of the mocking of Jesus as Herod also found Him guiltless (23:15). Such a treatment would have communicated to Pilate that this man was just a deluded peasant who should only be treated with ridicule.

### **Luke 23:12-17**

*Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other. (13) Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, (14) and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. (15) "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. (16) "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him." (17) [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]*

Neither Luke nor history inform us as to why there was animosity between Herod and Pilate but now they are friends. Their friendship could be because Pilate asked for Herod's assistance and they both agreed upon the innocence of Jesus. However they both are in history for executing an innocent person sent from God: Herod for the execution of John the Baptist and Pilate for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate seems to attempt to take control of the situation by calling together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people. The people seemed to be on the side of Jesus but now

they appear to be on the side of the chief priests and rulers. He then tries to summarize what happened regarding his examination that showed no guilt regarding the charges they brought against Jesus. He also states that Herod came to the same conclusion so he would just punish Him and release Him. The punishment he had in mind would probably be flogging. Verse 17 does not appear in the oldest manuscripts and seems to have been added by someone during copying. It was something that was usually done during the festival and seems modeled after:

- Matt 27:15 *Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted.*
- Mark 15:6 *Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested.*

### **Luke 23:18-23**

*But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" (19) (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) (20) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, (21) but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" (22) And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him." (23) But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.*

But all of them cried out against this statement of Pilate. The crowds who had followed Jesus are now in agreement with the Jewish leaders against Jesus. It is ironic that they want Jesus to be crucified and the man who was actually guilty to be set free. Jesus was innocent of the crime of insurrection and Barabbas was guilty of that crime and also of murder. Luke also reports elsewhere that such action against God was foreordained:

*Acts 4:27-28 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*

Pilate tried again to release Jesus but the people would not listen to him. John fills in some details of how Pilate treated Jesus prior to handing Him over for crucifixion:

*John 19:1-5 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. (2) And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; (3) and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. (4) Pilate came out again and \*said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." (5) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate \*said to them, "Behold, the Man!"*

Even after seeing how Jesus had been horribly treated they all still called for His crucifixion.

This crowd action demonstrates how mob rule can bring about actions that would not have been accepted under different conditions. They keep calling out for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate tries a third time to bring some order and reason to the occasion by asking them to specify the evil that He has done. He states again that he has found no reason to sentence Him to death and states again that he will punish Him and then release Him. However Pilate reveals that he is not a great leader and the people became very insistent that Jesus be crucified. Their shouts were probably

heard far away and Pilate's ruling was being overturned by the unruly group of people. The chief priests and elders caused the crowds to do their bidding: *But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.* (Matt 27:20)

### **Luke 23:24-26**

*And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. (25) And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will. (26) When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.*

Pilate then shows that he is actually a pawn to those he is supposed to rule and he changes his mind and pronounced the sentence demanded by the people. He released the guilty man and turned the innocent man over to be crucified. Of course it is the will of God that rules: *saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."* (Luke 22:42) Matthew, Mark, and John fill in some details regarding these exchanges and the treatment of Jesus:

- *Matt 27:24-31 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." (25) And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" (26) Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. (27) Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. (28) They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. (29) And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (30) They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. (31) After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. (32) As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.*
- *Mark 15:15-21 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. (16) The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they \*called together the whole Roman cohort. (17) They \*dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; (18) and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (19) They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. (20) After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they \*led Him out to crucify Him. (21) They \*pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.*
- *John 19:6-16 So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate \*said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." (7) The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." (8) Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; (9) and he entered into the Praetorium*

again and \*said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. (10) So Pilate \*said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" (11) Jesus answered, "*You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.*" (12) As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." (13) Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. (14) Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he \*said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" (15) So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate \*said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (16) So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

Note that John states that this judgment of Jesus took place the day of preparation for the Passover that would have been Wednesday on our calendars.

The condemned man usually carried the crossbeam to the crucifixion site but apparently the total treatment of Jesus had weakened Him so much that He was not able to carry it further. Cyrene is a port in North Africa.

#### **Luke 23:27-31**

*And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. (28) But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. (29) "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' (30) "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.' (31) "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*

Only Luke reports that a large number of people and women were mourning and lamenting His situation. It seems that a large number of people changed their minds about what should be done to Jesus after calling for His crucifixion. Jesus tells them to not weep for Him but to weep for themselves and their children for Jerusalem will soon be destroyed. In the days of the destruction of Jerusalem the women there who are pregnant will be particularly saddened since they and their infants will be killed. The destruction will be so horrible that the people there will wish that the mountains would fall on them so that they could be destroyed quickly rather than during a horrible siege of the city. In the last verse this proverb could be interpreted several different ways. It primarily seems to refer to the treatment of Jesus by the Jewish rulers. What they are currently doing refers to the crucifixion of Jesus while He is living on earth and the dry tree could then refer to what will happen to them after they reject Jesus and His apostles.

#### **Luke 23:32-34**

*Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. (33) When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. (34) But Jesus was saying, "Father,*

*forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

Luke makes it clear that only the other two men being crucified were criminals. Matthew and Mark identify them as robbers or rebels as some translations state:

- Matt 27:38 *At that time two robbers \*were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.*
- Mark 15:27 *They \*crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.*

Luke uses the Greek equivalent translated as Skull rather than the Aramaic name Golgotha. The place of execution had to be outside of the city by Roman and Jewish law: *"Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him.* (Lev 24:14) Crucifixion was the most humiliating and tortuous method of execution available and it was done in a region that was easily visible by the most people possible so as to act as a deterrent to others who may be tempted to do the same crime.

Some people have thought that verse 34a should not be in the material since the Jews did not repent: *"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.* (Luke 17:3) However the sentence is typical of what Jesus taught His disciples concerning forgiving their enemies and those who abuse them (6:27-28; 11:4). Also some interpreters understand the word "them" to be the Roman soldiers who are carrying out the execution. It could also include the criminals, especially the one who will taunt Jesus (verse 39). In the next portion of that verse, the "they" is certainly the Roman soldiers as they divide His garments among themselves. Those being crucified were stripped of their clothes to enhance the public humiliation. The soldiers may have left a loin cloth on Jesus out of respect for the Jewish consciences concerning nakedness. Certainly they could not know the Jewish Law and the Prophets and they probably did not know of the mission of Jesus. Surely they would not have known all the implications of what they were doing. Also one of the centurions later proclaimed that Jesus was innocent (verse 47). However it is also true that even the Jewish religious leaders did not know the extent of what they had done. So we just take this forgiving nature of Jesus an action that models His teaching to His disciples.

### **Luke 23:35-37**

*And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." (36) The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, (37) and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"*

It was usual for people to be staring and mocking those being crucified but it is still sad to think about all those people looking on this horrible scene. We know from experience that people flock to car wrecks and other such scenes. Probably none of those present know the true significance of what is happening as they do not know that the Christ must suffer:

- Luke 9:22 *saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."*
- Luke 17:25 *"But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

- Luke 24:7 saying that *the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*"
- Luke 24:26 *"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"*
- Luke 24:46 and He said to them, *"Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,*

The Jewish rulers sneered at Him as they remembered that He indeed did save others as they know that He exorcized demons, healed a woman from hemorrhages, brings a daughter back to life, and healed a man born blind. All of those were saved by faith. They said that if He was really the Messiah He should be able to save Himself. They also did not understand that He must die in order to save people from their sins. Luke uses the title "Christ of God, His Chosen One" rather than "king of Israel as used by Matthew (27:42) and Mark (15:32). The soldiers also mocked Him and offered Him some sour wine that was usually called a woman's wine as it was not viewed as intoxicating. It was made from water, egg, and vinegar. They also mocked Him by saying that if He were really the King of the Jews, He could save Himself. The mocking by the rulers and the soldiers both involved the statement about Him saving Himself if He was really the Messiah.

### **Luke 23:38-43**

*Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (39) One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" (40) But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? (41) "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (42) And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (43) And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

Pilate placed the *titulus* over His cross:

*John 19:19-22 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." (20) Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. (21) So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" (22) Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

Of course the Jews were offended at this title but Pilate refused to change it. This inscription explains why one of the criminals accused Him of being the Christ but unable to save Himself from such a fate. That the inscription was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek meant that almost anyone coming by the scene would be able to read it. The criminal rebuking Jesus must have understood the meaning of Christ and so was probably a Jew. Matthew and Mark report that both criminals insult Jesus:

- Matt 27:44 The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.
- Mark 15:32 "Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.



The second criminal was somehow convinced that Jesus was innocent. His statement certainly seems to be an answer to the intercessory prayer by Jesus for forgiveness of those who do not know what they are doing. The Father has revealed to this man that Jesus will have a kingdom for otherwise there is no way for him to know this. Thus it seems that this person was given faith by the Father and Jesus recognizes it as He proclaims that he will join Him today in Paradise.

This address of Jesus by His personal name is a rare occurrence in the writings of Luke. Unlike the other prisoner, this one does not ask for earthly removal of his situation but of heavenly assistance. Jesus tells him that he will be with Him in Paradise today. Salvation is a present reality that may have its fulfillment later and, since this criminal is about to die, his fulfillment will indeed be today. Only Jesus can let someone into Paradise: *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'* (Rev 2:7) Paradise then is not some temporary place of rest but a permanent place for God's people with Jesus. This is the place where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God: *"But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD."* (Luke 22:69) Scripture only uses this word three times with Paul stating that he was there at one point to be taught:

2Cor 12:3-4 *And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- (4) was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*

#### **Luke 23:44-47**

*It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, (45) because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. (46) And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last. (47) Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."*

Luke states that darkness was over the whole land, which does not mean the entire earth but the surrounding area. The sixth hour is noon and it occurs before Jesus dies so it is indicative that Jesus is still in the grip of Satan: *"While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."* (Luke 22:53) The tearing of the temple veil was a significant occurrence as it was as thick as a hand, had a length of 40 cubits and a width of 20 cubits. It separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place where only the high priest could enter each year (Exod 26:31-33). The passive voice indicates that this event was done by God. The tearing of it indicates that God has opened His Most Holy Place to others through the blood of Jesus: *Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,*<sup>20</sup> *by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,* (Heb 10:19-20) We are also told by Matthew (27:45) and Mark (15:33) that this darkness lasted three hours. Luke links the tearing of the veil with the darkness to mean that God is behind both of these events. Matthew reports some other supernatural events occurred at this time:

*Matt 27:52-54 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; (53) and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. (54) Now the centurion, and those who were with*

*him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

But Matthew and Mark also inform us that at this hour the Father separated Himself from His Son for the first time:

- Mark 15:34-37 *At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (35) When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." (36) Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." (37) And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.*
- Matt 27:46-50 *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?" (47) And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." (48) Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. (49) But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." (50) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.*

At this time, Jesus took our sin upon Himself although He never sinned: *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.* (Heb 4:15) The Father could not look upon sin. This would have been the most awful time of the total crucifixion for Jesus since He had never suffered such a separation. The statement by one of the centurions also seems to be an answer to the prayer by Jesus for them to be forgiven for he praises God and declares the innocence of Jesus.

### **Luke 23:48-49**

*And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts. (49) And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.*

The crowd that had demanded the crucifixion of Jesus (v 23) now returns to the scene and beat their breasts, which is a sign of sorrow and even could be of repentance. Matthew and Mark name the women:

- Matt 27:55-56 *Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. (56) Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.*
- Mark 15:40-41 *There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. (41) When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.*

### **Luke 23:50-53**

*And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (51) (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; (52) this man went to Pilate and asked*

*for the body of Jesus. (53) And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.*

Luke is careful to give the credentials of the man who offered to bury the body of Jesus. Matthew and Mark also report on this event:

- *Matt 27:57-60 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. (58) This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. (59) And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.*
- *Mark 15:42-47 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, (43) Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. (44) Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. (45) And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. (46) Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. (47) Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.*

We remember that Joses was a son of Mary and a brother of Jesus: *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.* (Mark 6:3) Joseph was a member of the Council but had not agreed with them on what to do with Jesus. People who had been crucified were usually not given a decent burial. It was very dishonorable to be denied a proper burial and so criminals sentenced to death were usually further dishonored by not allowing a burial. Some were left to rot on the cross and others were given a dishonorable burial. The Jews thought that allowing a criminal's body to hang on a tree overnight defiled the land (Deut 21:22-23) and perhaps this was a reason Joseph gave Pilate for allowing him to bury the body properly. Since Pilate would have known Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council, he probably would not have suspected him of some sort of collusion with supporters of Jesus.

People can still see such tombs in the area, which usually have more than one chamber with a special area set aside for the initial care of the body. We are not told who helped Joseph take the body down from the cross and carry it into the tomb for such a process would have required him to have help. Also the rolling of the cover stone would have required assistance. John indicates that Nicodemus helped with the body:

*John 19:39-42 Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. (40) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. (41) Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the*

*garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. (42) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

The Jews who could afford a tomb practiced secondary burial with the body first being placed on a low bench in the tomb to allow the body to decompose. Joseph wrapped the body in linen wrappings with spices because His clothing had already been taken away and naked burial was deemed disgraceful. After decomposition was complete, the bones were gathered and placed in an ossuary box and the smaller box placed in an appropriate place in the tomb so it could be used by other people.

This completed all that could be done before dusk when all labor would have to cease.

### **Luke 23:54-56**

*It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. (55) Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. (56) Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*

We understand the preparation day to be before the Passover Sabbath that would have been on Friday (Nisan 15). There also was a regular Sabbath day on the next day and such has confused many people over the years. As stated above by Mark (15:47), Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching so they would know where the body was placed. They would have then returned to their homes to prepare the spices and perfumes needed to treat the body. Probably the main reason for Luke stating that they returned home because of a Sabbath was to explain why they did not return until Sunday morning. They stayed away three nights (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) and three days (Thursday before dusk, Friday and Saturday). Remember that any part of a day is considered a day by the Jews so the time before Thursday dusk counts as a day. The resurrection was before dawn on Sunday so it does not count as a day. Thus they acted in fulfillment of the prophecy by Jesus:

*Matt 12:40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

If the crucifixion were on Friday it would not be possible for His prophecy to be fulfilled.