

Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2020 1:01 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 27

"For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him!" (John 3:16-17)

How can we not remember last week's lesson, on Matthew 26--where Jesus was "anointed with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume" (for His burial), by Mary (the sister of Martha); where Jesus celebrated the Passover, with his disciples, by instituting what would become known as the "Lord's Supper" (picturing His "atoning" death for the sins of the world); where Judas "went out" and conspired with the high priests to "betray" Jesus; where Peter denied that he would deny Jesus "three times before the rooster crowed"; where "Jesus' soul was deeply grieved" in the Garden of Gethsemane, with His face to the ground, asking if it was possible to "let this cup" pass--but that "His will be done"!; where Judas Iscariot came upon them "with a large crowd with swords and clubs, to betray Jesus with a kiss," and led Him away to be tried (illegally during the night) before Caiaphas, the high priest, and members of the Sanhedrin, charging Him with "blasphemy" for claiming to be "the Christ, the Son of God," and for saying that "one day they would see Him sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven;" where they "spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and mocked Him;" while Peter sat outside in the courtyard and "denied knowing Jesus" to a servant-girl, and others, a total of three times, "until the rooster crowed," just as Jesus had said!

And with that as a background, Matthew records, in chapter 27, the rest of the story--more details of the shameful trial and crucifixion of Jesus! All of which would become the "centerpiece of history"--and the determinant of destiny for all human life!

Jesus is bound and delivered by the chief priests and elders of the people to Pilate, the governor, during the early daybreak hours of the Friday of Passover Week, since Rome reserved the right of execution in all capital cases! Meanwhile, Matthew pauses to tell us how a "remorseful" Judas, realizing that he had "sinned by betraying innocent blood," returned to the temple where he "threw the 30 pieces of silver into the sanctuary" and went away and "hanged himself"! (With the money ultimately used to purchase "Potter's Field, as a burial place for strangers"!)

Pilate, it turns out, could find no fault in Jesus and, after receiving a desperate message from his wife to "have nothing to do with that righteous man" (after "suffering greatly in a dream because of Him"), was "looking for an out"--and so, when hearing that Jesus was a "Galilean and therefore belonged in Herod's jurisdiction, conveniently sent Him to Herod, who also just happened to be in Jerusalem for the Sabbath!

Luke 23:8-11 tells us that Herod was "very glad" to see Jesus, for he "had wanted to for a long time because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him"! (Remember how he had "feared" earlier, when he had heard about His "miracles" in Galilee and thought that He might be John the Baptist (whom Herod had had be-headed) returned from dead! Well, Luke says that he "questioned Jesus at some length, but that Jesus

answered nothing"--and that he with his soldiers, "after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate"!

And so, Pilate was again faced with the same question all of us must ask ourselves! "What do we do with Jesus?" Matthew notes that it was the "custom at the feast" to release "for the people" any one prisoner whom they wanted! And so, Pilate thought he had an answer! Who did the people want released? Jesus, or Barabbas, a "notorious prisoner" (actually an "insurrectionist" and murderer)! And the people, "persuaded by the chief priests and elders," chose Barabbas! And, in answer to Pilate's question about "what then should he do with Jesus," they kept shouting out: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And so, the very political Pilate, after "washing his hands in front of the crowd" and claiming to be "innocent of this Man's blood," released Barabbas and, after having Jesus "scourged, handed Him over to be crucified!" Wow!

You know the rest of the story! But the horrors of it--and the implications of it for all humanity--need to be visualized and understood! And thus, bear repeating!

Matthew 27: 27-31 tells how the soldiers of the Governor took Jesus into the Praetorium (the governor's official residence) and "stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him...and a crown of thorns on His head...and a staff in His right hand; and knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying (with such disdain!) "Hail to the King of the Jews! And spat on Him and beat Him...and led Him off to be crucified!" Wow!

Then, as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene (a city in North Africa) named Simon whom they "pressed into service to bear the cross"! And when they came to a place called Golgotha, they gave Him "wine mixed with gall" to drink, but He was unwilling to drink it! And there He was crucified--Luke says, "with the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left," and Jesus saying: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!" And, Matthew writes, the soldiers "cast lots for His garments...and put a sign above His head, reading "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews!" (How ironic! Because this was not only who He was, and is, but just happens to be the "theme" of the book of Matthew)!

And can you imagine "those passing by, hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads..." and taunting and mocking Him with such words as: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross"! And saying, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!" And "He trusts God! Let God rescue Him!" Can you imagine?

And then, dramatically, three unusual events took place--events reflecting "cosmic significance"! Events, Dr. Constable notes, "depicted in graphic terms how all creation was impacted by Jesus' death on the cross"! First, there was darkness, from noon to 3 p.m., perhaps reflecting God's judgment upon those who rejected His Son! (Matthew Henry contrasts the "extraordinary light" associated with His birth (including the "star of Bethlehem" and the "glory" that shown around the Shepherds) with the "extraordinary darkness" notifying His death!) And it was at that time that Jesus cried out with the words: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Then Matthew records how Jesus "cried out again with a loud voice and yielded His spirit"! John 19:30 reports Him saying, "It is finished!" And Luke 23:46 says that His last words were:

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" (This is a reminder of what Jesus had said earlier, in John 10:18, about being the "Good Shepherd" and how He would "lay down His life for His sheep...that no one would take it from Him but that He would lay it down on His own accord!")

Well, when He yielded up His life, something else dramatically occurred! The veil of the temple, that separated the holy place from the "Holy of Holies" (and into which the High Priest entered with the blood sacrifice once a year on the "Day of Atonement") was torn "from the top to the bottom"--symbolizing the direct access to God, and the termination of the old Mosaic Covenant, and the beginning of the New Covenant! (Hebrews 4:16 would later encourage Jesus' followers to now "come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need!")

But that's not all! Matthew 27:51-52 says the "the earth shook, and the rocks were split, and tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised..." Perhaps another sign of judgment, as well as hope of a resurrection one day for all the saints! (Jeremiah 10:10 says: "But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King! At His wrath the earth quakes! And the nations cannot endure His indignation"! (Might this have any connection with the distress we're experiencing in our world today???)

Well, the reaction of the Centurion, and those with him, to the amazing "things that were happening" is interesting! And his statement that "Truly this was the Son of God!" is the first time, according to Kingsberry (a noted theologian) that Jesus is "correctly and publicly affirmed by humans to be the Son of God"!

Then there're the "women" who had followed Jesus faithfully, whom Dr. Constable notes as being "the last ones at the cross, and the first at the tomb"!

And, speaking of the tomb, how about the role of Joseph of Arimathea, a "rich and prominent member of the Sanhedrin," who had become a "disciple" of Jesus and was waiting for the "kingdom of God" (according to Mark's account), and "gathered up the courage to go before Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus! And how Pilate, "after summoning his centurion to ensure that Jesus was dead," granted Him the body! And how Joseph, along with Nicodemus and "the women" prepared the body for burial and laid it in Joseph's "own tomb, which he had hewn out of a rock. And how they then rolled a large stone across the entrance!

And then there's the "guarding of the tomb thing" (recorded in verses 62-65) giving witness to the falsehood of the later chief priests and elders' claim that "someone stole the body"! It doesn't fly--since they had done everything they could in advance to guard and secure the tomb to make sure that this wouldn't happen! And the disciples were scattered and not of the mindset to spread such a lie! All of which sets the scene for Matthew 28!

David Platt, pastor of McLean Bible, has written that in considering Matthew 27-28, we are "treading on some of the most holy ground in all of Scripture! Christ's death on the cross is the climax of Matthew's Gospel, the point toward which everything has been moving! (Really right from Genesis!) E. Stanley Jones once said: "The cross is the key! If I lose it, I fumble! The universe will not open to me; but with the key in my hand I know I hold the secret!"

Well, I know no better way to end our look at Matthew 27 than to cite the words of the song Luckson read as part of his closing prayer in our small group session last nite! The song is titled "And Can It Be?" with words written by Charles Wesley! Here are the words (and you may want to sing along)!

"And can it be that I should gain, an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou my God shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race!
Tis mercy all, immense and free, for O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold, I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown, thru Christ alone!

(Chorus)
Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou my God shouldst die for me!

Wow!

Lowell