



The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Twenty Three

VII. Luke 22:1-23:56 - The Suffering and Death of Jesus (continues/concludes)

VII.b Luke 22:39-23:56 - The arrest and trial (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Three

We have Jesus before Pilate and Herod. Pilate finding nothing wrong with Jesus then questions the religious leaders and the crowd, who insist that Pilate release an insurrectionist but crucify Jesus.

Jesus undertakes the journey to the place called The Skull, where he is crucified between two criminals and we have a dialogue between them. We then have a brief account of the supernatural occurrences at the time of Jesus death, his subsequent burial in a tomb and the witnesses that saw it.

VII.b.vi Luke 23:1-5 - Jesus before Pilate

Since only Rome possessed authority to impose capital punishment: <<Pilate said, Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law. But we have no right to execute anyone, the Jews objected>> (John 18:31), the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate, see comments on v.1. The charges are now recast from religious blasphemy to political ones (v.2).

The Jewish religious leaders lacked the final authority to impose the death penalty and the charge of blasphemy was insufficient for a death sentence under Roman rule. So Jesus was sent to the Roman governor Pilate for trial.

¹ Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate.

Luke 23:1

The whole assembly rose. The assembly is the Sanhedrin. Due to the impotence of their own court, the Jews took Jesus to Pilate, not charged with blasphemy as they were trying to convict him of, because Rome would have no interest in this domestic charge, but with a completely fictitious charge of disaffection against Cæsar. This is something the Jews themselves would have been even more guilty of, and proud to be so, and they should have seen this as a virtue in Jesus and not as a crime at all!

Off to Pilate. Pilate was the governor of Judæa. Normally, the seat of the Roman government in Judæa was Cæsarea and not Jerusalem. However, Pilate was in Jerusalem at Passover to prevent rebellious activities. In the past, Pilate had certainly witnessed disturbances in Jerusalem, some of which were of his own making. He ultimately lost his position as Governor by mishandling a disturbance in Samaria and was returned to Rome in disgrace. He was subsequently lost to history. Pilate's willingness to execute Jesus is credited in the Gospels to his desire to maintain public calm rather than to follow the dictates of justice. Jewish sources considered Pilate's reign (AD26-36) to have been quite harsh, charging him with greed and cruelty as confirmed in Luke 13:1 <<Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galilæans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices>>. As examples of his disregard for Jewish religion, Josephus mentions Pilate bringing pagan Roman legionary standards into Jerusalem and appropriating temple funds to build an aqueduct (Jewish Antiquities 18.55-62; Philo, Embassy to Gaius 299-306). An inscription found at Cæsarea indicates that Pilate dedicated a structure there to the imperial cult of Tiberius.

Cæsarea was a city with a large Greek-speaking population. Originally a small harbour town known as Strato's Tower, it was rebuilt by Herod the Great in magnificent Hellenistic style, with a greatly improved harbour. In Jesus' day it was the seat of the Roman government of Judæa. Excavations have yielded significant finds, including the Herodian port and theatre, an amphitheatre shaped like a hippodrome for horse races, a palace built on a promontory out into the sea, frequently identified as Herod's palace and a great raised aqueduct. Herod built a temple to Augustus here and an inscription found in the theatre mentions Pontius Pilate's dedication to a Tiberium, that is, a sacred site devoted to the emperor Tiberius. Tense relations existed between the mixed Jewish and Gentile inhabitants, and one cause of the First Jewish Revolt (AD66-73), was the Gentile desecration of the Jewish synagogue in Cæsarea.



Herod's Palace in Cæsarea

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

Luke 23:2

They **began to accuse** or bring charges against **him** as they did against Paul before Felix in Acts Chapter 24 and Festus in Acts Chapter 25. The religious grounds of Jesus' condemnation would be of little interest to Rome, so the Sanhedrin changed them to political ones.

The first charge **subverting our nation** involves seducing the nation away from loyalty to Rome.

The second, which opposes payment of taxes or tribute to Cæsar is clearly false, as we saw in Luke 20:22-26 <<Is it right for us to pay taxes to Cæsar or not? He saw through their duplicity and said to them, Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it? Cæsar's, they replied. He said to them, Then give to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's>>.

The third is that he claims to be Christ, a king, which he confirms in a dialogue with Pilate in v.3, and in John 18:33-37 <<Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? Is that your own idea, Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me? Am I a Jew? Pilate replied. It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done? Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place. You are a king, then! said Pilate. Jesus answered, You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me>>. This new charge focuses on insurrection: Jesus' claims to kingship would be a direct challenge to Cæsar, and would be punishable with death by crucifixion for all non-Roman citizens.

³ So Pilate asked Jesus, Are you the king of the Jews? Yes, it is as you say, Jesus replied.

Luke 23:3

Ignoring the first two charges: the first was too ambiguous and the second false, Pilate focuses on the third and asks: are you the King of the Jews? Jesus' answered it is as you say, which is affirmative and repeats his earlier reply. It is a Greek expression that deflects responsibility back on the one asking the question.

Although he was the Christ and therefore a king, he did not come in opposition to Cæsar or any other civil authority. In fact, when his followers sought to make him their earthly king by force, he declined and withdrew from them: <<Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself>> (John 6:15). His kingship was in opposition to the Pharisees and scribes incorrect understanding of God's law, with the sole aim of bringing the people of Israel back to God and into his spiritual kingdom; he had little or no interest in their civil affairs. He did stir up the people but it was not anything factious or seditious but to everything that was virtuous and praiseworthy.

⁴ Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no basis for a charge against this man.

⁵ But they insisted, He stirs up the people all over Judæa by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.

Luke 23:4-5

These verses are unique to Luke and emphasise Jesus' innocence. Pilate's verdict I find no basis for a charge let alone guilt is repeated in vv.14-16 and v.22. The crucifixion of Jesus (vv.23-24) does not alter Pilate's official verdict that Jesus was innocent.

But they, the chief priests and crowds, continue to insist that Jesus is guilty of fermenting revolution all over Judæa.

VII.b.vii Luke 23:6-16 - Jesus before Herod Antipas

This account is found only in Luke and is confirmed in Acts 4:27-28 <<Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen>>. Luke recounts this incident to reveal that both Pilate and Herod Antipas found Jesus innocent (v.15).

By sending Jesus to Herod, Pilate was unknowingly fulfilling scripture as Luke explains later in Acts 4:26 <<The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One>>, **which includes the words of David from Psalm 2:2, this being expressly fulfilled through Herod and Pontius Pilate.**

⁶ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilæan. ⁷ When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Luke 23:6-7

Herod Antipas was the ruler over the region where Jesus ministered and was sanctioned by Rome to do so. He was only 17 years old when his father Herod the Great died. The kingdom was divided among three of Herod's sons: Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Philip I. Herod Antipas was made tetrarch, the ruler of a fourth part of a kingdom of Galilee and Perea, and had a long rule (4BC-AD39).

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.

Luke 23:8

Herod was greatly pleased, not because he still wanted to kill Jesus, as recorded in Luke 13:31 <<At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you>>. Instead, he returns him back to Pilate as he too finds nothing against Jesus. Like everyone else, he had hoped Jesus would perform some miracle. Jesus had spoken of people like him: <<This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah>> (Luke 11:29b).

⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.

Luke 23:9

Jesus gave him no answer. Jesus' silence fulfils Isaiah 53:7 <<He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth>>, and places the responsibility for his death squarely on his accusers.

¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:10-11

Herod and his soldiers dressed Jesus in an elegant robe to mock his claim to kingship. This is also noted in Mark 15:17-20 <<They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, Hail, king of the Jews! Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him>>.

¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends – before this they had been enemies. ¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.

Luke 23:12-14

Examined implies a legal examination, such as you would expect in a formal trial.

Found no basis for your charges. For the second time Pilate acknowledges Jesus' innocence. Normally, he would have been immediately exonerated and freed from custody.

¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.

Luke 23:15

Neither has Herod. Both Pilate and Herod agreed that Jesus was innocent.

¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.

Luke 23:16

Despite his innocence, Pilate was still prepared to have Jesus punished with a severe flogging in order to appease the Jewish leaders.

{{Verse 17 does not appear in early manuscripts and is omitted from the NIV translation. It is included here for completeness but will not be commented upon}}

{{¹⁷ Now he was obligated to release someone for them at the festival (ISV)}}

VII.b.viii Luke 23:18-25 - Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified

Pilate continues to seek Jesus' release by a custom of releasing at the Passover a prisoner chosen by the people. When the people choose Barabbas instead of Jesus, Pilate delivered him to them to be crucified.

¹⁸ With one voice they cried out, Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!

Luke 23:18

With one voice they cried out. 'They' refers to the chief priests, the rulers and the crowd of ordinary people, who have been stirred up by them.

Away with this man! Release Barabbas assumes that the readers know of the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover, as confirmed in Matthew 27:15 <<Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd>>, in Mark 15:6 <<Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested>>, and in John 18:39a <<But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover>>.

Away with this man essentially means crucify him, which is confirmed in v.21 and in John 19:15 <<But they shouted, Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him! Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asked. We have no king but Cæsar, the chief priests answered>>, in Acts 21:36 <<The crowd that followed kept shouting, Away with him!>>, and in Acts 22:22 <<The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!>>.

Barabbas means son of the father. Ironically, the people wanted Barabbas released rather than the true Son of the Father, i.e. Jesus. The word translated robber sometimes means insurrectionist but the meaning robber is much more common in the NT. Each Gospel contributes something to the picture of Barabbas as a notorious criminal who had committed multiple crimes including robbery, insurrection and murder. He may have belonged to one of the rural guerrilla bands that victimised the wealthy upper class of Israel, as well as the Romans and were therefore popular with the common people. Perhaps he was viewed as a sort of Robin Hood figure.

¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder).

²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹ But they kept shouting, Crucify him! Crucify him!

²² For the third time he spoke to them: Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.

Luke 23:19-22

For the third time Pilate affirms Jesus' innocence: Why, what crime has this man committed or evil has he done? (v.4 and vv.14-15).

The last recourse for Pilate is to declare that Jesus has not received any accusation worthy of death, as it is written in Psalm 38:20-21 <<Those who repay my good with evil slander me when I pursue what is good. O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God>>, in Isaiah 53:9 <<He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth>>, and in Acts 3:13b <<You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go>>. While Pilate might have attempted to make the Jewish authorities solely responsible for the death of Jesus, it remains a fact that it occurred under his jurisdiction.

Therefore Pilate seeks to appease the crowd by beating Jesus and then releasing him, see v.16.

²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed.

Luke 23:23

But with loud shouts the crowd's animosity becomes so great that only Jesus' crucifixion will satisfy them. In John 19:15b, we find that the chief priests themselves cry out: <<We have no king but Cæsar>>, which is itself blasphemous and worthy of punishment under the very law that they were falsely proclaiming against Jesus.

I still find it amazing that we can go from Hosanna to 'crucify him' in less than a week!

²⁴ **So Pilate decided to grant their demand.**

Luke 23:24

Pilate does not declare Jesus guilty, how could he? Nevertheless, he **grants** the desire of Jesus' opponents.

The chief priests, by lying to the authorities and by orchestrating mob rule, have their wish confirmed but at what price? The words of Isaiah again ring true in their ears: <<So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter>> (**Isaiah 59:14**).

²⁵ **He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.**

Luke 23:25

Luke emphasises that choosing Barabbas involved releasing one guilty of **insurrection and murder** and condemning Jesus, whom Luke will later call: <<the Holy and Righteous One>> (Acts 3:14), who: <<went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil>> (Acts 10:38).

He **surrendered Jesus to their will** thus fulfilling what Jesus said would happen: <<Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men>> (Luke 9:44), <<He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him>> (Luke 18:32), and: <<'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again'>> (Luke 24:7).

Pilate acquiesced to the wishes of the bloodthirsty crowd and condemned Jesus to crucifixion, which was the Roman means of executing criminals convicted of high treason, insurrection or murder. Although Luke and John do not mention it, prior to crucifixion the prisoner was first scourged: <<Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified>> (Mark 15:15). The words: <<Therefore, I will punish him and then release him>> (v.16), and: <<Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged>> (John 19:1), do call attention to the lighter flogging Jesus received after being detained and questioned by Pilate, but omit this scourging, a punishment which in and of itself could cause death.

A more in-depth look at Roman flogging shows it was an horrifically cruel punishment. Those condemned to it were tied to a post and beaten with a leather whip that was interwoven with pieces of bone and metal, which tore through skin and tissue often exposing bones and intestines. In many cases, the flogging itself was fatal. The Romans scourged Jesus nearly to death so that he would not remain alive on the Cross after sundown.

Jesus was beaten both before being sentenced and after being sentenced to death. Some interpreters think the first beating is the same as the severe scourging that Jesus received in Matthew 27:26 and Mark 15:15. However, it seems unlikely that Pilate would have administered so violent and severe a punishment to someone who had not yet been condemned to death and whom Pilate was still trying to release. It seems more likely, therefore, that this flogging was what the Romans called fustigation, the lightest form of flogging administered for minor crimes. Thus John 19:1 and Luke 23:16 use the verbs *mastigoō* and *paideuō* respectively to refer to this lighter flogging, whereas Matthew 27:26 and Mark 15:15 use a different word *phragelloō* or scourged to refer to the much more severe beating that Jesus received after Pilate pronounced the sentence of death.

The Roman *verberatio* was the most horrible kind of beating and was only administered in connection with capital punishments including crucifixion. It would often be the cause of death, negating the need to crucify the prisoner, although they were sometimes nailed to the cross after death and put on public display as a deterrent to others.

VII.b.ix Luke 23:26-43 - The crucifixion

Jesus is led out to be crucified and Simon of Cyrene carries his cross for at least part of the journey. Luke alone records Jesus' following lament over the fate of Jerusalem (vv.27-31). The crucifixion is described succinctly and the account concludes with the story of the repentant thief (vv.39-43).

²⁶ As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Luke 23:26

They, that is the Roman soldiers, seized Simon from Cyrene. No doubt it was a privilege for him to serve in this way, even though he would not have seen it in that light at the time.



Cyrene was the capital city of Cyrene, sometimes called Cyrenaica, a Roman province in Libya on the north coast of Africa, which had a large Jewish population. Simon was likely a Jew who had travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover. According to Mark 15:21, Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. The mention of them leads many to conclude that they were believers known in the early church at the time that Mark wrote his Gospel.

According to both Jewish and Roman custom, Jesus had to be taken outside the city walls to be crucified. It was the morning of Nisan 15. As allowed by Roman law, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' cross the patibulum or crossbeam. Jesus was severely weakened from the scourging and loss of blood, and was therefore unable to carry his cross, at least for the full journey, which would have weighed 30 to 40 pounds or 13-19kgs. The skin and muscles of his back would have been severely lacerated, and he could have suffered severe injury to his internal organs. The most common Greek word for cross is stauros. It originally designated a sharpened pole, which, before the NT, became associated with various penal means of suspending bodies, both before and after death. This included those employing a crux or cross-shaped device for crucifixion.

Crucifixion was the final public deterrent to warn people not to rebel against Rome. It was probably the cruellest and most agonising form of execution ever invented. Sometimes, victims would take several days to die and their bodies were left for days as a warning to others.

²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰ Then

'they will say to the mountains, Fall on us!
and to the hills Cover us!'

³¹ For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?

Luke 23:27-31

The sympathetic sound as the women mourned and wailed leads Jesus to quote from the prophet Hosea (10:8).

Once again Jesus has attracted a crowd. They appear to be made up of: disciples, mainly women but only John out of the twelve (John 19:26-27); sympathetic mourners; curious onlookers; and those who had reviled Jesus. We have a similar crowd of people in society today. Followers of Jesus should do all they can to attract the mourners and the curious to the Gospel, and to pray for those who oppose Jesus.

The time will come. Jesus spoke similar words during his prophecy of the destruction of the Temple in AD70: <<The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side>> (Luke 19:43), in his end times prophecies in Luke 21:6 <<As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down>>, and in Luke 21:22-24 <<For this is the time of punishment in fulfilment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the

sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled>>.

Blessed are the barren. In war time, mothers are often the most vulnerable or are most impacted, thus what was normally a blessing would now present a great difficulty. In such times, the reproach of childlessness will be a blessing; thus it is the reverse of their expectations as Elizabeth states when she hears she will have her first child in her old age: <<The Lord has done this for me, she said. In these days he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people>> (Luke 1:25).

Fall on us is a plea to be put out of their misery. Similar accounts are seen in Isaiah 2:19 <<Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the Lord and the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth>>, and in Revelation 6:16 <<They called to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!>>.

Green, dry. If God did not spare his innocent son, i.e. green wood, how much worse will it be when he allows the Romans to unleash his wrath on a sinful nation, i.e. dry wood or Israel? The prophet writes of the southern forest, i.e. the land of Judah: <<Say to the southern forest: 'Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it>> (Ezekiel 20:47). Matthew 3:10 and 7:19 both reveal that the axe is at the root of the trees that do not produce the good fruit.

It is commendable that they weep for Jesus. However, he says they should not weep for him but for themselves instead, and particularly for their children's generation, on whom God's wrath would initially come upon through the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD70.

We, too, should not lament the death of Jesus but rejoice with thanksgiving, for his suffering and death won a great victory for God over his enemies; providing us with the only means of our reconciliation with God. We should instead lament our own sins and sinful nature that required his death in the first place.

³² **Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.**

Luke 23:32

Two other criminals fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12, and is confirmed in Luke 22:37 that Jesus, in his death would be: <<numbered with the transgressors>>.

The Cross, with a criminal on either side, is highly symbolic. Originally, according to Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32, both criminals were critical and condemning of Jesus, but through the grace of God and the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, one of them comes to repentance and is rewarded by being promised a place in paradise with our Lord. For one, the Cross was the savour of life unto life; for the other, it was an offence and became a symbol of death unto death!

³³ **When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.**

Luke 23:33

I seem to recall John and James asking for this prominent position!

In the Latin Vulgate, **the Skull** is called Calvariæ, a transliteration of the Aramaic word for skull, from which we get Calvary.



The traditional site for Golgotha

The Place of a Skull is translated from the Aramaic *Gulgulta* or *Golgotha*. It may have been given this name because it was a place of execution or because the area had a number of tombs or possibly because the site in some way resembled a skull.

They crucified him. All the Gospels have a similar brief statement of this horrific event.

Crucifixion was widely practiced by the Romans and the early Jewish historian Josephus mentions thousands of people being crucified in 1st Century Palestine, mostly during rebellions against Rome. There are stories of Roman soldiers cruelly playing with different postures for crucified victims (Jewish War 5.449-551) although the use of nails and a crossbar appear to have been common.

Modern medical explanations for the cause of death on a cross have focused on either asphyxiation or shock. Crucifixion was widely believed to be the worst form of execution due to the excruciating pain and public shame. Hanging suspended by one's arms eventually caused great difficulty in breathing, which could be alleviated only by pushing up with one's feet to take the weight off the arms. But that motion itself would cause severe pain in the feet, arms, legs and back causing the exhausted victim to slump down again only to be nearly unable to breathe once more. Eventually, the victim would succumb to suffocation if he had not already died as a result of the cumulative effect of the physical trauma inflicted on him. The process of death could take hours or even days.

Jesus' hands were nailed above the wrist on the horizontal beam and his feet were placed with one above the other and then nailed to the vertical beam.

Crucifixion was looked upon with horror by the Jews. It was considered the same as hanging, for which Mosaic Law enunciated the principle: <<anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse>> (Deuteronomy 21:23). This is confirmed in Galatians 3:13b, where Paul quotes: <<Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree>>.

If Jesus had been put to death by order of the Sanhedrin then he would have been stoned, which is the OT sanction for blasphemy.

The criminals are also called robbers as previously discussed.

³⁴ **Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.**

Luke 23:34

Father forgive them. Jesus fulfils his own teaching about loving one's enemies: <<But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back>> (Luke 6:35b). This highlights the fact that his death was providing the very basis upon which those who crucified him could be forgiven: <<For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors>> (Isaiah 53:12b). Jesus thus provides an example for all believers who would follow him, e.g. Stephen: <<Then he fell on his knees and cried out, Lord, do not hold this sin against them>> (Acts 7:60a). Peter writes: <<To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed>> (1 Peter 2:21-24).

For they do not know what they are doing does not absolve either the Jews or the Romans of their responsibility in Jesus' death. However, it does show that they did not fully understand the horrible evil that they were perpetrating in crucifying the Holy and Righteous One, who was both the true Messiah and the Son of God. Peter said: <<You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you>> (Acts 3:14).

They divided up his clothes by casting lots is a clear reference to Psalm 22:18 <<They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing>>. Casting lots was sometimes used in the OT to discover God's will but here it is a form of gambling by the Roman guards.

Samson is described by some as a type of Christ, which I personally do not share. However, it is interesting that they both prayed to God at the point of their death. A key difference is that Samson prayed for vengeance against his enemies, whereas Jesus prayed for forgiveness for his.

³⁵ **The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.**

Luke 23:35

The people stood watching the rulers even sneered. Luke contrasts the behaviour of the Jewish crowds, also seen in v.48 and the Sanhedrin. The highest levels of Israel's establishment seek one more opportunity to insult Jesus. They do not address Jesus directly, but turn to one another as they mock him.

For he saved others let him save himself is reflected by David in these words: <<All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him>> (Psalm 22:7-8). This is the first of three similar taunts. The others are in v37 and v.39. He saved others in terms of physical healing, by turning them away from their wicked and corrupt ways, and by offering eternal salvation for all who would place their trust in him. This would have extended to those who were sneering at him had they only had a change of heart.

The Christ of God comes from Peter's God-given confession at Cæsarea Philippi that confirms Jesus is God's unique Son, i.e. the fulfilment of the OT promise of a divine son as the anointed king. When Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, he was acknowledging him as the divinely anointed leader and Messiah who was expected by many to liberate the Jewish people from the oppressive yoke of Rome.

Chosen One echo's words on the Mount of Transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36, where the Father confirms Jesus is the chosen one and commands that we should listen to him. His ancestor David was also one chosen by God: <<The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king" >> (1 Samuel 16:1). He then chose Solomon to be his own son: <<He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father'>> (1 Chronicles 28:6), although this verse also has messianic overtones.

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar

Luke 23:36

Offered him wine vinegar. This wine vinegar was the ordinary wine soldiers drank. The gesture is best interpreted as seeking to prolong Jesus' suffering by quenching his thirst, although some hope it was their intention to reduce his suffering.

³⁷ and said, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the Jews.

Luke 23:37-38

There was a written notice. It was customary for the charge against an executed person to be displayed prominently as a warning to others.

The inscription of the charge against him was written on a placard above Jesus' head as a deterrent against any who would dare rise up against Rome and so that all could see why he was so shamefully executed.

It read: 'The King of the Jews' and was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. With this inscription Pilate justified his actions; Jesus was crucified as a political rebel but the note also provoked the Jewish authorities.

Aramaic was the language most widely understood by the Jewish population of Palestine, Latin was the official language of the Roman occupying force and Greek was the international language of the empire, understood by both Jews and Gentiles. The trilingual nature of the inscription thus ensured the widest possible awareness of the official reason why Jesus was being crucified.

Above him suggests the shape of the Cross was not an ✕ or T but the traditional †.

Jesus was crucified on political grounds for claiming to be the Messiah, i.e. **the king of the Jews**. The inscription considered a condemnation by the Romans has become, for Christians at least, a confession of faith.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. Don't you fear God, he said, since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.

⁴² Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

⁴³ Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

[Luke 23:39-43](#)

These verses are unique to Luke.

[Save yourself and us](#): It is hard to tell whether the criminal is being sarcastic or whether, despite the fact he [hurled insults at](#) Jesus, he might have had a sudden pang of guilt and desire for salvation.

[Hung](#) is a synonym for crucified.

[Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom](#) is both a plea and a confession of faith.

[Paradise](#) is another name for heaven, that is, the dwelling place of God and the eternal home of the righteous. The Septuagint uses the same Greek word *paradeisos* to refer to the Garden of Eden. Jesus' words, therefore, may hint at a restoration of the intimate personal relationship with God that existed in Eden before the fall. It shows that it is never too late for true and heart-felt repentance, but it is probably not wise to leave it as late as this criminal did!

VII.b.x [Luke 23:44-49 - Jesus' death](#)

This section, narrating the death of the Messiah, is the culmination of Luke's emphasis on his complete and proven innocence.

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

[Luke 23:44-45](#)

[About the sixth hour until the ninth hour](#). This is from noon until 15:00. This was confirmed by Matthew 27:45 <<From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land>>, and in Mark 15:33 <<At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour>>.

Josephus records that the ninth hour was the time when Jews offered the daily evening sacrifice (Jewish Antiquities 14.65). It was the time that the Christ became the final sacrifice that would appease God's wrath and fulfil all righteousness.

Often a sign of an eschatological event taking place, [darkness](#) also represents lament: <<In that day, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the

earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day>> (Amos 8:9-10), and **divine judgment**: <<Then the LORD said to Moses, Stretch out your hand towards the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt – darkness that can be felt. So Moses stretched out his hand towards the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No-one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived>> (Exodus 10:21-23).

Here, it is both literal: **the sun stopped shining**; and figurative: <<The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord>> (Acts 2:20), probably signifying that Jesus was bearing God's wrath for his people, as confirmed in Joel 2:2 <<a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come>>, in Amos 5:18 <<Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light>>, in Amos 5:20 <<Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?>>, and, in Zephaniah 1:15 <<That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness>>, and also expressive of God's displeasure and judgment upon humanity for crucifying his Son.

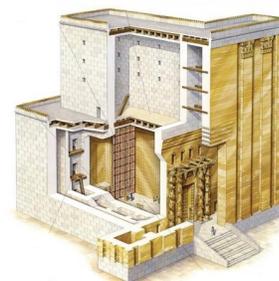
The darkness was not a solar eclipse, since Passover occurred during a full moon and a solar eclipse can occur only during a new moon. Rather, it is a supernatural act of God displaying his displeasure and judgment upon humanity for crucifying his Son.

During his time in Athens, Paul addressed the Areopagus. One of its members was a man named Dionysius. According to Eusebius, Dionysius was a judge and senator in the Areopagus on Mars Hill. He was a local Athenian, who had studied astrology in Egypt and was there at the time of the miraculous darkness that occurred during the Saviour's passion, something he took particular note of. When he returned to Athens, he would at first dispute with Paul and then was converted to faith in Jesus from his error and idolatry. He went on to be the first Bishop of Athens. By this one convert alone, Paul's labours in Athens were not in vain.

The prophet perhaps foresaw this day when he wrote: <<See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you>> (Isaiah 60:2). It is these words that inspired worship leader Godfrey Birtill to write 'There is great darkness over the land, a deep darkness on the people. But a light is shining that the dark can't understand: Light of the World - King Jesus'.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two refers to the curtain leading from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place in the temple.

The curtain separates the Holy of Holies from the Most Holy Place, and can only be accessed by the High Priest and then only once per year on the Day of Atonement. The sketch gives us an idea of the layout.



The curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was an elaborately woven fabric of 72 twisted plaits of 24 threads each. It was 60 feet or 18m high, and 30 feet or 9.1m wide.

No one was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place behind the curtain except the high priest and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The writer to the Hebrews describes it with these words: <<A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything has been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance>> (Hebrews 9:2-7).

Torn in two signifies the removal of the separation between God and the people. An extended commentary on this event and the heavenly reality that it symbolised is found in Hebrews 9:11-10:22; especially: <<He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption>> (Hebrews 9:12), <<For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence>> (Hebrews 9:24), and: <<Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body>> (Hebrews 10:19-20).

The writer to the Hebrews explains how the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place were laid out, at God's command, by Moses in the original Tabernacle. This was faithfully reproduced and extended by Solomon in the temple he built in Jerusalem. The Ark and its contents, along with the other items in the two rooms, disappeared at the time of the temple's destruction on the orders of King Nebuchadnezzar, when he captured Judah and took the people into exile in Babylon. Its whereabouts have never been fully explained, although there is a glimpse of it in God's temple: <<Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm>> (Revelation 11:19).

The tearing of this veil signified the removal of the ceremonial law, which had been a wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and all other difficulties and discouragements in our approaches to God, so that now we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

Palestine sits on a major seismic rift, so earthquakes were not uncommon but the splitting of rocks and opening of tombs as in Matthew 27:52 <<The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life>>, make this a major testimony to the meaning of Jesus' death and the subsequent resurrection.

⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. When he had said this, he breathed his last.

[Luke 23:46](#)

[I commit my spirit!](#) Jesus' own human spirit returned into the presence of God the Father (v.43).

His spirit does not mean the Holy Spirit but Jesus' own human spirit, which he voluntarily released from his body that it might return to the presence of God the Father. His spirit would remain in heaven with the Father until it returned to his body at his resurrection <<on the first day of the week>> (John 20:1).

Jesus uses these words on the Cross: <<Into your hands I commit my spirit>> (Psalm 31:5). He borrowed these words from his father David; not that he needed to have words put in his mouth, but he chose to make use of David's words to show that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the OT prophets, and that he came to fulfil the scriptures.

He died as an innocent sufferer, with the words of scripture on his lips, trusting in God for vindication: <<and the spirit returns to God who gave it>> (Ecclesiastes 12:7b). We see a similar account in Acts 7:59 <<While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit>>.

He was now to make: <<his life a guilt offering>> (Isaiah 53:10), he gave: <<his life as a ransom for many>> (Matthew 20:28b), by: <<the eternal Spirit offered himself>> (Hebrews 9:14), to the Father in substitution for all mankind.

When he had said this he breathed his last. Even in death, Jesus is still in control of things.

In John 10:17 the statement: <<I lay down my life that I may take it up again>> implies that Jesus voluntarily yielded up his life when he knew that his suffering was completed. It also implies that the divine nature of Christ was active in his resurrection: he was able to take up his life again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, Surely this was a righteous man.

Luke 23:47

A centurion is a Roman officer in charge of a hundred men. They had a lot of authority and were generally well respected.

Seeing includes: Jesus' behaviour toward his enemies (v.34), the words spoken to the repentant criminal (v.43), the supernatural darkness (v.44), Jesus' prayer to God (v.46), and his giving up his life in the manner which he chose to do so (v.46).

Praised God. We have no indication whether the centurion was a God-fearer before this event. If he were, and it had been known to Luke, no doubt he would have said so. It seems more likely that, being in the presence of the Christ and witnessing his grace and majesty on the Cross convicted him and he felt the need to call out to God in thanks, and perhaps the hope of the forgiveness that Jesus had so recently prayed for.

Surely this was a righteous man or this man was innocent. Although this is not as theologically profound as Matthew 27:54 <<When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, Surely he was the Son of God!>>, which is confirmed in Mark 15:39. For Luke this confession is important and serves as the culminating expression of Jesus' innocence (v.41).

The centurion and his guards were accustomed to seeing crucifixions, but these cataclysmic events, coupled with the extraordinary self-control, purity and love shown by Jesus in his death, made the centurion realise that Jesus was the Son of God. Like the thief on the cross who expressed faith in Jesus (vv.39-43), the centurion may have had incomplete

understanding of Jesus' identity and mission, but Mark seems to record this testimony as an indication of the centurion's faith and the truth about Jesus' identity, for if he were not the Son of God as he had confirmed earlier, he would have to have been a liar (John 8:55), and therefore, could not be considered a righteous man.

For those of us who have chosen to follow Jesus it is very easy to rush forward to Sunday and the glorious resurrection, which forms the basis of our faith. However, we must never diminish the power of the Cross, and perhaps this is an opportunity to take a break from our study and to contemplate the imagery and words of 'You Are My King' (Amazing Love), sung by Candi Pearson. The imagery is from The Passion Of Christ, directed by Mel Gibson. In the scenes of the nails being hammered into Christ, we only see the hand holding the mallet. It was apparently Mel Gibson hammering the nails in, as he felt that it is something that he, and therefore all of us, did through our sin. Something that we should perhaps reflect on!



⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.

Luke 23:48

Beat their breasts is symbolic of grief and repentance as seen when: <<but the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'>> (Luke 18:13). We are not told if these were the same people who a few hours earlier had been shouting 'Crucify him'. Perhaps the realisation of what they had been a part of had brought them to repentance just as it did to those who heard of these things a few weeks later at Pentecost: <<When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?>> (Acts 2:37). We can also reflect on a prophecy of Simeon offered before Mary over 30 years earlier in Luke 2:34-35 <<Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too" >>.

⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Luke 23:49

All those who knew him were Jesus' relatives, friends and disciples.

The **women** are singled out because of their role in the resurrection account; see vv.55-56 and Luke 24:1-12. This is confirmed in John 19:25-27 <<Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to his mother, Dear woman, here is your son, and to the disciple, Here is your mother. From that time on, this disciple took her into his home>>.

During the 1st Century and for much of the following 2,000 years, Jewish women were uneducated and had few rights either in their father's home or their husband's; and none at all outside of these domains. Jesus welcomed women into discipleship. His acceptance of women as equals of men and his willingness to speak, not just to Jewish women, itself seen as bad enough, but also to foreign women, was considered to be outrageous. Rabbi Eliezer wrote in the 1st Century AD: 'Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman; whoever teaches his daughter the Torah, is like one who teaches her obscenity'. Some of Paul's writings reflect some of his Jewish heritage in his attitude towards women in the church, which did not always appear to match those of Jesus.

We are reminded of his earlier ministry recorded in Luke 8:1-3 <<After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means>>.

VII.b.xi Luke 23:50-56 - Jesus' Burial

As Jesus is buried in the tomb of a wealthy disciple, other disciples prepare spices to complete the burial process. Even the detail of his burial fulfils scriptural prophecy.

⁵⁰ **Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man,** ⁵¹ **who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judæan town of Arimathæa and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.**

Luke 23:50-51

A man named Joseph was unknown except for this incident and is recorded in all four Gospels.

A member of the Council is of the Sanhedrin.

Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin who did not consent to the actions against Jesus. His high standing within the Jewish community gave him access to Pilate. That he asked for the body of Jesus would not have come as a surprise as such, as Jewish custom dictated that crucified bodies should be taken down before evening, especially before the Sabbath, which began at sundown on Friday.

A good and upright or righteous man. This was said of Zechariah and Elizabeth: <<Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly>> (Luke 1:6), of Simeon: <<Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel,

and the Holy Spirit was upon him>> (Luke 2:25), and of Cornelius: <<The men replied, We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say>> (Acts 10:22).

From the Judæan town implies that Luke's readers were Gentiles, or at least unfamiliar with the geography of Palestine.

The location of Arimathæa has not been conclusively determined although Eusebius, in his 4th Century list of place names, believed it was identical to Ramah or Ramathaim-Zophim. Ramah was the birthplace of Samuel: <<Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her>> (1 Samuel 1:19).

Waiting for the Kingdom of God implied that Joseph was a believer. Matthew 27:57b refers to him as one: <<who had himself become a disciple of Jesus>>.

⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.

Luke 23:52

Going to Pilate, he asked. As a member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph had greater access to the governor and would raise less suspicion and hostility than Jesus' family or disciples.

Joseph wrapped the corpse in a linen shroud, which was complemented by Nicodemus' burial spices: <<He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs>> (John 19:39-40), **and placed it:** <<in a new tomb>> (John 19:41), <<cut out of the rock>> (v.53). **According to Jewish custom, in part due to Deuteronomy 21:22-23** <<If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance>>, **but mainly due to decomposition, proper burials were to take place within 24 hours.**

⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.

Luke 23:53

Then he took it down. Joseph supervised Jesus' body being taken down. This was no doubt almost as distressing as when they witnessed it being raised up.

A tomb cut in the rock would have been Joseph's own tomb. Matthew provides a similar account: <<Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away>> (Matthew 27:60). Thus Jesus is buried in a rich man's tomb fulfilling Isaiah 53:9 as previously noted.

The new tomb would be a rectangular chamber cut into rock. It was accessed through a low entry room and blocked with a stone that could be rolled back and forth, mainly to protect the body from wild animals. The use of a rich man's tomb fulfils Isaiah 53:9 <<He was

assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth>>.

The two main locations, where Jesus is thought to have been buried are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to the west of the temple and the Garden Tomb, north of the ancient city. Both would have been outside the 1st Century city walls.

Early church tradition favours the Holy Sepulchre site, as the area around the Garden Tomb consists largely of Iron Age or OT-era tombs.

The Holy Sepulchre Church originally dated from the time of Constantine and was dedicated in AD335, although the present structure is largely medieval.



Church Of The Holy Sepulchre



Tomb Beneath The Church Of The Holy Sepulchre

The main options for Judæan burial included shallow trench graves; sarcophagi, which were coffin-like stone boxes, rarely used above ground; and rock-cut tombs, such as the one described here.

Rock-cut tombs were much more expensive than trench graves, since they required extensive excavation into existing or manufactured caves. They are thought to have generally belonged to single, extended families. Therefore this tomb would most probably have been Joseph of Arimathæa's family tomb.

Rock-cut tombs would have rolling stone doors and inside burials would occur in loculi, i.e. beds cut into rock or arcosolia that are beds cut sideways into the rock like ledges with an arched top. Sarcophagi and wooden coffins were also occasionally used in the tombs.

After a body had decayed, its bones were removed to allow reuse of the loculus or arcosolium. These bones could be piled elsewhere in the tomb or reinterred in a specially designed box called an ossuary, which held one or more bodies.

In which no one had yet been laid is confirmed in John 19:41 <<At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no-one had ever been laid>>. There are similarities to the donkey's colt: <<which no-one has ever ridden>> (Luke 19:30).



A tomb similar to that of Jesus

⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Luke 23:54

The Preparation Day was the day before the Sabbath and was Friday Nisan 15.

The day of Preparation of the Passover refers to the day preceding the Sabbath of Passover week. All four canonical Gospels concur that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal eaten on Thursday evening Nisan 15, which by Jewish reckoning is the onset of Friday.

That Sabbath was a high day, i.e. a special Sabbath because it was the Sabbath of Passover week. The Jews' request to bury the body was based in part on Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and confirmed in Joshua 8:29 <<He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day>>, according to which bodies of hanged criminals were not to defile the land by remaining on a tree overnight.

Determining the actual date of Jesus death is something that has taxed scholars throughout church history. As we know that it was Nisan 15 and that Pilate was governor in Judæa from AD26-36, we have four possibilities when Nisan 15 was a Friday:

- 11 April AD27
- 7 April AD30
- 3 April AD33
- 28 March AD36

Because Jesus was born in or before 4BC, which is the year Herod the Great died, and that he was around 30 years old when his ministry began, the two favoured dates are those in AD30 and AD33. Luke 3:1a <<In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar>>, would give us a start date for Jesus ministry of probably AD29 thus 3 years of ministry makes 3 April AD33 the most likely. Analysts of the prophecy of 70 weeks in Daniel Chapter 9, which was made some 500 years before Jesus was born, also come up with this year by separate calculation.

⁵⁵ **The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.**

Luke 23:55

The women followed Joseph and saw the tomb so that they knew where it was and could return to attend to his body. This is confirmed in Luke 24:1 <<On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb>>. The first day of the week is Sunday.

⁵⁶ **Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.**

Luke 23:56

Either because they wanted to minister to Jesus' body themselves, or they thought the body was inadequately prepared, the women, whom Mark 16:1 identifies as Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, prepared spices and perfumes or ointments.

They rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth they walked: <<upright in the sight of God>> (Luke 1:6b).