



The Gospel of Mark - Chapter Fifteen

- III. Mark 8:27-16:8 - Testing Jesus' Authority in Suffering (continues)
- III.c. Mark 14:1-16:8 - Death and resurrection in Jerusalem (continues)
- III.c.ii Mark 14:53-15:20 - Trial (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Fifteen

Following their misguided conviction against Jesus of a charge of blasphemy, members of the Sanhedrin took him to Pilate to be tried as an opponent to Cæsar. Pilate found Jesus innocent and wanted to release him. When the crowd bayed for Jesus' blood, Pilate offered to release either Jesus or the murderer Barabbas; the people chose the murderer, calling for the death of Jesus.

The Roman soldiers dressed Jesus as a king in royal robes, with a crown of thorns forced on his head. They mocked and beat him, spat on him and falsely worshipped him, before taking him out to be crucified.

Jesus' Cross was carried for at least part of the way by Simon, a visitor to Jerusalem. When they arrived at Golgotha, Jesus was nailed to the Cross and raised between two criminals. Even on the Cross, the mocking continued.

A divine darkness covered the land for three hours before Jesus cried out in victory and released his Spirit, returning to the Father.

Joseph of Arimathæa, a member of the Sanhedrin and a covert disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate to request the body of Jesus. He dressed it with spices and wrapped it in new linen, before laying it in his own new rock cut tomb.

III.c.ii.3 Mark 15:1-15 - Jesus Before Pilate

Having determined that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy during the hours of darkness, the Sanhedrin then planned what charges they would bring when they had Jesus brought before the Roman Prefect; the only man who could pronounce a

death sentence on him. A charge that he claimed to be a king in opposition to Cæsar would secure the outcome they desired, and so it was claimed.

Pilate heard the charges against Jesus, with Jesus saying little in his own defence. Despite the animosity of the crowd and especially the leaders, Pilate determined that Jesus was innocent. According to the custom at Passover he offered to release a prisoner to the people. He offered the peaceful Rabbi Jesus or the insurrectionist and murderer Barabbas, thinking that logic would prevail but the people called for Barabbas, for Pilate had failed to understand the deep level of influence the religious leaders had. So Pilate then handed Jesus over for crucifixion.

¹ Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

Mark 15:1

Very early in the morning. They had first brought Jesus in during the hours of darkness, contrary to their own laws, making the foregoing trial illegal.

This was Friday Nisan 15 and the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law were making their plans as to what charges they would present before Pilate, who would not have been interested in their domestic religious charge of blasphemy, with which they had falsely convicted Jesus during their overnight trial.

Even the whole Sanhedrin did not have the right to execute a person convicted of a capital crime. That right was reserved for the Roman authorities, especially when dealing with popular figures like Jesus. His main concern was not justice but public order.

They bound Jesus. The sacrificial lamb was first bound: <<*The Lord is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar*>> (Psalm 118:27 NASB). There are external indications that Jesus was kept in a pit during part of the night. They would have removed the ropes from his hands so that he could be lowered into and out of such a pit. They now tied him up again to take him before the Roman Prefect.

By delivering him over to Roman power, the religious leaders signified a type of ruin of their church, which hereby they merited, and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, the covenant, and the oracles of God, and the visible state church, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up voluntarily to the Gentiles. By delivering up their King, they did in effect deliver up the Kingdom of God, which was, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ under the demand of the Romans it would have been another matter; but here they voluntarily betrayed him who was Israel's crown to those who were Israel's oppressive yoke.

Pilate, the Roman Prefect or governor, was temporarily in Jerusalem in order to keep the peace during the Passover. The Jewish leaders were in a hurry to get Jesus condemned before news got out to his supporters who might protest, unlike the crowd they managed to bring to Pilate with them.

Normally the seat of the Roman government in Judæa was Cæsarea, not Jerusalem. Pilate was in Jerusalem at Passover to prevent rebellious activities. Pilate had certainly witnessed disturbances in Jerusalem, some of his own making, and he ultimately lost his position by mishandling a disturbance in Samaria. 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 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), supported by Philo, Embassy to Gaius 299-306. An inscription found at Cæsarea indicates that Pilate dedicated a structure there to the imperial cult of Tiberius.

² "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

Mark 15:2

When they brought him to Pilate, the Jewish authorities did not accuse Jesus of blasphemy, a religious crime that would have made no difference to Pilate, but rather that he was claiming to be the king of the Jews, thus challenging Cæsar's rule and authority, a capital crime in the eyes of Rome. Jesus never came to oppose the civilian administration; he came to turn the hearts and minds of the Jewish people back to their God, and to open a way to God for all.

You have said so. Jesus did not claim this title for himself, as his Kingdom was not an earthly realm but a spiritual one: <<Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place">> (John 18:36). Jesus also laid a direct challenge to Pilate's question: <<"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?">> (John 18:34).

³ The chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

⁵ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Mark 15:3-5

The chief priests accused him. These men were entrusted with the care of the people and answerable to God for their actions, yet they were prepared to sacrifice this teacher to protect their own interests. This was not the first time that priests and leaders have been accused of such wrongdoing: <<Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them>> (Ezekiel 22:26), <<Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against you: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor>> (Hosea 5:1), <<As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do

bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes>> (Hosea 6:9), <<Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they look for the Lord's support and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us">> (Micah 3:11), and: <<Her prophets are unprincipled; they are treacherous people. Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law>> (Zephaniah 3:4). The chief priests did in fact commit blasphemy themselves in trying to ensure that Jesus was convicted: <<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>> (John 19:15).

They also took much of the blame for the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the subsequent exile: <<But it happened because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous>> (Lamentations 4:13). They would need to take a major share of the responsibility for the destruction of their current temple and nation, less than forty years later.

The church has had similar problems throughout its history as well. It is not a problem with God, with faith or any aspect of what church stands for. It is the people that abuse the church for their own gains that are the problem, along with others in the church who fail to deal with any malignancy they encounter. A typical example is the ongoing revelations of widespread child abuse by RC clergy, and how the church has failed to deal with them justly.

Jesus still made no reply. No further answer fulfilled: <<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 its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth>> (Isaiah 53:7).

Pilate was amazed. He would not normally have expected men, innocent or guilty, not to make claims of innocence or plead for clemency. Jesus knew who it was who held the real power: <<Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin">> (John 19:11).

⁶ Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. ⁷ A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.

Mark 15:6-7

Release a prisoner, Barabbas. Pilate had apparently instituted this custom as a means of winning favour with the masses. Barabbas was a notorious criminal who had committed robbery, insurrection and murder, which is confirmed by: <<But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder)>> (Luke 23:18-19). 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, or more likely it was the influence of the leaders that made the people call for his release. Barabbas means

‘son of the father’, Aramaic *bar-abbas*. Ironically, the people wanted Barabbas released rather than the true Son of the Father, Jesus.

⁸ The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

Mark 15:8

The custom allowed the people to choose, although they were no doubt prompted by the chief priests and the teachers of the law on this occasion.

⁹ “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, ¹⁰ knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

Mark 15:9-10

Out of self-interest. Pilate realised that the Jewish leaders were motivated by envy, and thus their accusation of Jesus was ill-founded. Jesus had become popular with the common man, not just through his miracles but through his teaching that had authority and insight, providing true revelation of the Scriptures that other teachers failed to match. However, Pilate did not understand the theological issues at stake, i.e. blasphemy, for Rome adopted a liberal stance on allowing both their own citizens and those under their dominion to follow whatever faith they chose, provided it did not cause civil disorder.

¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

¹² “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

¹³ “Crucify him!” they shouted.

Mark 15:11-13

Release Barabbas instead. Ironically, Pilate would free a convicted rebel against Rome instead of a righteous man, who had not spoken out against Rome.

Crucify him. Pilate was in a precarious position; he would execute Jesus in Roman fashion, i.e. by crucifixion, based on a Jewish verdict that seemed tenuous to him at best. It was less than a week since the crowd, perhaps including some of the people in attendance in that crowd, were crying out Hosanna in worship of Jesus.

¹⁴ “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

Mark 15:14

What crime has he committed? Pilate’s last recourse was to protest that Jesus had been accused of nothing worthy of death: <<*Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good. Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God*>> (Psalm 38:20-21), <<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>> (Isaiah 53:9), and: <<The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go>> (Acts 3:13). While Pilate thus tried to make the Jewish authorities solely responsible for the death of Jesus, the fact remains that it occurred under his jurisdiction. He would remain responsible, even if it was fulfilling God's requirements: <<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>> (Acts 4:27-28).

¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15:15

Wanting to satisfy the crowd. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent but had no real qualms about having him executed in order to avoid any trouble with a crowd that had a reputation for being volatile and seditious.

Handed him over. Pilate condemned Jesus to crucifixion, which was the means of executing criminals convicted of high treason, violent crime or murder. Originally, he had found him innocent, offered to have him lightly flogged for causing the commotion and then release him: <<**Therefore, I will punish him and then release him**>> (Luke 23:16). The decision here had nothing to do with justice, although of course the path was divinely ordained and could not be altered by mortal man.

Mark omitted the fact that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who had jurisdiction over Galilæans. He too was in Jerusalem for the Passover. When he met with Jesus he was unable to find any guilt worthy of punishment either, for there was none. Refer to Luke 23:7-15.

He had Jesus flogged. By reading all four Gospels together, it appears that Jesus was given a lighter flogging earlier to try to appease the crowd. Once he was sentenced to death, he was scourged, a much more severe beating that could lead to death by itself.

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 horrific 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.

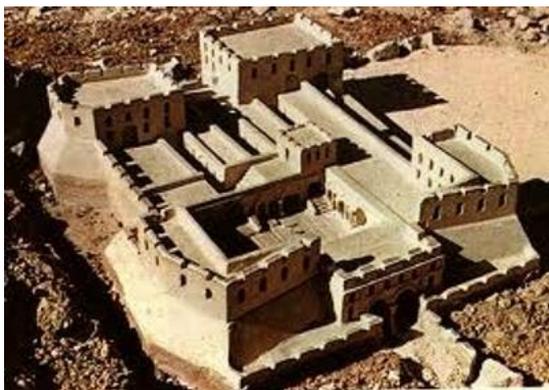
III.c.ii.4 Mark 15:16-20 - The Soldiers Mock Jesus

The Roman soldiers dressed Jesus in royal purple robes, placed a crown of thorns on his head, beat him, spat on him and mocked him with false worship. They then led him out to be crucified.

¹⁶The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Prætorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers.

Mark 15:16

The location of this Prætorium, the residence of a Roman governor, has long been identified with the Antonia Fortress on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount; this large fortress allowed immediate access to the temple in order to suppress any disturbance. Only portions of the walls of the original Antonia Fortress remain. However, many argue that the Palace of Herod, once the Jerusalem home of Herod the Great, but later in Roman hands according to Philo, Embassy to Gaius 299, was more lavish and afforded better accommodation for the Roman governor. It was used later by the governor Gessius Florus (AD64-66), (Josephus, Jewish War 2.301).



Antonia Fortress



The Citadel or Herod's Palace

Since Jesus' day, this palace fortress, today called the Citadel, which was located at the prominent Jaffa Gate at the western entrance to the old city, has been through many rounds of destruction and rebuilding, beginning with the capture of Jerusalem in AD70, and continuing until after the Crusader period in the 11th-13th Centuries. However, some original Herodian portions of the palace do still exist.

Whole company of soldiers. The presence of the whole company, probably referring to a *Centuria* of 100 of the 600 men a legion would have at normal full strength, assumed that Jesus was a rebel against Rome. It appears they wanted all the soldiers to have an opportunity to join in this despicable display. Therefore the soldiers dressed, mocked and mistreated him as the King of the Jews, which, contrary to their view, he truly is. The sarcastic homage paid to Jesus imitated what various emperors in Rome expected of their subjects.

It is believed that, due to the volatile nature in Judæa at that time, there were actually up to 1,000 soldiers under Pilate's command.

¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

Mark 15:17

A purple robe was the normal dress of a king, emperor or affluent individual: <<*When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration*>> (Esther 8:15). This was all part of the mockery they heaped on Jesus. According to the first Gospel account it was a scarlet robe: <<*They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him*>> (Matthew 27:28). Both colours represented regal clothing and with the dyes used in the 1st Century it is likely there would have been less distinction in the colours than exists today. This should not be held as a contradiction to the account being told.

Such colours are often seen in the dress of senior church figures. It is hoped that they do so to signify the ignominy that Jesus faced while dressed in such apparel, rather than for any regal splendour, for it is written: <<*Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight*>> (1 Peter 3:4).

A crown of thorns. This would have been made by plaiting together thick stems from a thorn bush that would have been razor sharp; an instrument of torture in itself. Thorns had long since been identified by the Jews with the fall of mankind: <<*It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field*>> (Genesis 3:18). When Abraham was instructed to sacrifice his beloved Isaac to God, he was asked by Isaac where the lamb was: <<*Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together*>> (Genesis 22:8). Ironically, the ram that was eventually sacrificed was entangled by its head in a thorny thicket too: <<*Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son*>> (Genesis 22:13). This time, there would be no reprieve for the Son.

¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!"

¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ 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.

Mark 15:18-20

This was barbaric mockery, beating Jesus on the head with a staff and spitting on him. Eventually, this act of cruelty ended so that the final one could take place. The sins were of all mankind but the shame here was his alone to bear!

Then they led him out to crucify him. The execution would take place outside of the city according to custom: *<<And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood>>* (Hebrews 13:12).

III.c.iii Mark 15:21-16:8 - Crucifixion and resurrection

In Mark's narrative, Jesus' death separates the group of scoffers, those who spoke before his death, from his followers and admirers, those who spoke after his death.

The empty tomb was part of the fulfilment of Jesus' prediction of his resurrection: *<<He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again>>* (Mark 8:31), *<<They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it>>* (Mark 9:30-32), and: *<<They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise">>* (Mark 10:32-34).

III.c.iii.1 Mark 15:21-32 - The Crucifixion of Jesus

Jesus was in a severely weakened state following his scourging, so his Cross was passed to a visitor, Simon of Cyrene, who was charged to carry it to Golgotha, where Jesus was nailed to the Cross and raised between two convicted criminals. Even on the Cross the mockery did not cease.

²¹ A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Mark 15:21

According to both Jewish and Roman custom, Jesus had to be taken outside of the city walls to be crucified. It was the morning of Friday Nisan 15. As allowed by Roman law, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' Cross. No one ever knows when a cross will come upon him. Here, a man otherwise unknown to history, got to carry 'the Cross' for a short way and was afforded the honour of eternally being recorded in the Word of God for doing so.

Cyrene was a region in North Africa with a large Jewish population. Simon was likely a Jew who had travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover. Since Jesus was severely weakened from the scourging and loss of blood, and was therefore unable to carry his Cross, which would have weighed 30 to 40 pounds, Simon was instructed to carry it part of the way. The skin and muscles of Jesus' 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*, although it originally designated a sharpened pole, but became associated before the NT with various penal means of suspending bodies, both before and after death, including those employing a crux, or cross-shaped device, for crucifixion. Crucifixion was the final public deterrent to warn people not to rebel against Rome.

The mention of Alexander and Rufus leads many to conclude that they were believers known in the early church at the time Mark wrote his Gospel. This may have been the Rufus that Paul referred to: <<*Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too*>> (Romans 16:13).

²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”).

Mark 15:22

The place of the skull. Some commentators have identified an area that would have been just outside the walls of Jerusalem that had a skull-like shape to its area. Others believe it was a name given to an area where the dead were buried.



The Favoured Location Of Golgotha

Many early church fathers including Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius, believed this was the burial place of Adam. Cyprian adds ‘*Many good people believe that the blood of Christ crucified did trickle down upon the skull of Adam, who was buried in the same place*’. Although this would make a great tribute: <<*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*>> (1 Corinthians 15:22), it is highly unlikely that Adam ever came to the region but lived much further to the east.

What is known is that it was very close to the place where Abraham was instructed to sacrifice Isaac: <<Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you”>> (Genesis 22:2), and: <<Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David>> (2 Chronicles 3:1).

²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Mark 15:23

Wine mixed with myrrh was intended to have a mildly numbing effect. Jesus declined to take this mixture: <<They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst>> (Psalm 69:21), and: <<Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish!>> (Proverbs 31:6).

Myrrh was offered as a gift sometime after his birth: <<On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh>> (Matthew 2:11), and an anointing in his death: <<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>> (John 19:39).

²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

Mark 15:24

And they crucified him. 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. The nails were thick metal spikes about 18 inches long.

Dividing his clothes by casting lots fulfilled the prophecy: <<They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment>> (Psalm 22:18). 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, to determine who would get the garment made out of a single piece of cloth, as they would not wish to tear it into pieces to share it. What many people fail to consider is that his shame was complete when they publically crucified Jesus completely naked: <<At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised”>> (Job 1:20-21).

²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

Mark 15:25

It was nine in the morning, which corresponded to the third hour as time was taken from 06:00. John records it as: <<*It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews*>> (John 19:14), but he was not attempting to pinpoint the exact time; therefore, the time references should not be seen as contradictory. As it was Preparation Day for this Sabbath, noon would have been the time when the sacrifices would have started and John was probably making a symbolic reference to Jesus being the sacrificial lamb. What is known is that this was a day of holy convocation being the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the chief priests should have been in the temple offering the peace offerings at that time, not following their own folly in having the Messiah executed: <<*On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do*>> (Exodus 12:16).

They crucified him. What the Romans and certainly the Jews thought was a victory for them, was a victory for God: <<*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross*>> (Colossians 2:15).

²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mark 15:26

The written notice of the charge against him was posted above Jesus' head, so that all could see why he was so shamefully executed. The purpose of the inscription was to indicate a person's specific crime, presumably to deter others from committing similar acts. What the Romans and Jews failed to realise was they were actually honouring Christ with this title, for it did not indicate a crime but the acknowledgement of his sovereignty. The plans, words and thoughts of men often do not come out as they may have anticipated, as seen with Caiaphas: <<*He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation*>> (John 11:51).

The King of the Jews. With this inscription, Pilate justified his actions, for it indicated that Jesus was crucified as a political rebel in the eyes of Rome. The posting of this notice provoked the Jewish authorities: <<*Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."* Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written">> (John 19:19-22). Pilate may have ignored their request due to his conclusion about the Jews' envy (v.10).

²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Mark 15:27

The two rebels crucified with Jesus fulfilled the prophecy: <<*he was numbered with the transgressors*>> (Isaiah 53:12d). Rebels, Greek *lēstēs*, is sometimes rendered insurrectionist, which is possible but the alleged examples in extra-biblical literature are not conclusive, and the meaning robber is more appropriate in all 24 examples of *lēstēs* in the NT and Septuagint. Nothing more is known about the background of these two men.

One on his right and one on his left. This was the place of honour that had been requested by James and John: <<*They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?"*>> (Mark 10:37-38). Jesus was now undergoing that very baptism.

{{v.28 is omitted from the NIV as it was not included in early manuscripts. The following is from the NASB}}

{{²⁸ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors"}}

²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!"

Mark 15:29-30

Those who passed by. Because it was Passover, many travelled past the place of Christ's crucifixion, shaking their heads. These were probably mixed in their response: there were some who despised what Jesus stood for; others perhaps on the shameful end he faced; still others perhaps at the inhumanity of it all. King David prophetically wrote: <<*All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him"*>> (Psalm 22:7-8). Similarly: <<*I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads*>> (Psalm 109:25).

Hurled insults at him. It must have seemed as if the whole world had turned on Jesus for even the criminals next to him were insulting him. Satan must have thought his hour had come, although he no doubt sensed that his defeat was ultimately through the Cross.

You who are going to destroy the temple. This was one of the false testimonies made against Jesus at his trial: <<*"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands'"*>> (Mark 14:58), and was commented on there.

³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!

Mark 15:31

Mocked him among themselves. Their Messiah hung helplessly on the Cross but they still did not have the courage to face him with their mockery; it seems some of the guilt and shame was starting to surface from within them.

Jesus' opponents conceded that he saved others, but they believed that all of his authority, power and claims had been nailed to the Cross. Jesus appeared to have been silenced and divinely condemned for his blasphemy: <<*If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance*>> (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Mark 15:32

That we may see and believe. Jesus had clearly revealed God through himself, with his work and his words, to all who would listen, yet many would not accept him: <<*“Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe”*>> (John 4:48), and: <<*But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe*>> (John 6:36). Many would not even believe in the ultimate revelation of God's power in Christ's resurrection, although he knew that before hand: <<*“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ “No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead’”*>> (Luke 16:27-31).

Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. Luke alone records that, sometime later, one of the two robbers repented and expressed faith in Jesus: <<*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”*>> (Luke 23:39-43).

This text from Luke indicates that salvation is a matter of the heart and not proclaiming any special words or going to church every Sunday. All this man did was to ask Jesus to remember him.

III.c.iii.2 Mark 15:33-41 - The Death of Jesus

After about three hours, a deep darkness came upon the whole region, which lasted a further three hours until Jesus cried out in victory and died. Jesus' death

demolished the barrier that existed between God and all mankind, giving them a way to come back to God. The centurion who witnessed this realised this was the Christ. The female disciples of Jesus were noted as eyewitnesses to his death.

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

Mark 15:33

At noon a period of total darkness commenced that lasted for three hours. Darkness represented 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 festivals 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 toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt – darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived*>> (Exodus 10:21-23).

The Jews had asked for a sign from heaven, this darkness was one. It might not have been the three days inside the fish that some had expected - that was yet to come - but Jonah would have been in complete darkness inside that fish just the same: <<*"A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away*>> (Matthew 16:4).

His scourging and then the agony of crucifixion had made Jesus into an horrific sight beyond imagination, as was foretold of the Messiah: <<*Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness*>> (Isaiah 52:14). Thus three hours of darkness, hiding this hideous form from the sight of his mother and the disciples, and indeed any other decent person, was a blessing from God.

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 was a supernatural act of God displaying his displeasure and judgment upon humanity for crucifying his Son. Astronomers have identified a probable lunar eclipse if this did occur on Nisan 15 AD33: <<*The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine*>> (Joel 3:15).

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 came to faith in Jesus realising his past 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.

Another 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's 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'.

³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Mark 15:34

Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani. Once again Mark records the actual words spoken by Jesus in Aramaic and offers a translation for his Greek speaking readership.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? These are some of the most profoundly mysterious words in the entire Bible. In some sense Jesus had to be cut off from the favour of and fellowship with the Father that had been his eternally, because he was bearing the sins of his people and therefore enduring God's wrath: *<<We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all>>* (Isaiah 53:6), *<<Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand>>* (Isaiah 53:10), *<<Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?>>* (Habakkuk 1:13), *<<God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished>>* (Romans 3:25), *<<God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God>>* (2 Corinthians 5:21), *<<Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole">>* (Galatians 3:13), and: *<<He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world>>* (1 John 2:2).

And yet, in quoting Psalm 22:1, Jesus probably had in mind the remainder of the psalm as well, which moves on to a cry of victory: *<<Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honour him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfil my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him – may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all*

the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him – those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!>> (Psalm 22:21-31); and he expressed faith, calling God ‘my God’. Surely he knew why he is dying, for this was the purpose of his coming to earth. And surely his cry, uttered with a loud voice, was expressing, not bewilderment at his plight, but witness to the bystanders, and through them to the world, that he was experiencing God-forsakenness not for anything in himself, but for the salvation of others. Surely Mark, understanding this, quoted Jesus’ words to challenge his readers. Jesus’ torment, despite his anticipations of it in Gethsemane, was surely inconceivable in advance

³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

Mark 15:35

He’s calling Elijah. Jesus’ call to God in Aramaic, ‘Eloi, ‘Eloi, must have sounded similar to the Hebrew name for Elijah, ‘Eliyahu, which the bystanders misunderstood as a summons to the prophet. Those who had not accepted Jesus’ testimony about John the Baptist coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, may have thought Jesus was heralding in the promise of the prophet: <<*See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes*>> (Malachi 4:5).

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

Mark 15:36

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 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Mark 15:37

The final loud cry was probably the cry of victory: <<*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit*>> (John 19:30). Once Jesus had died, all the mocking ceased in Mark’s account. Subsequently, only the voices of the respectful centurion and the women mourners are heard. Jesus died around the time of the daily afternoon sacrifice in the temple according to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 14.65).

It is amazing that after all he had endured that he managed to cry out in a loud voice. Of course, it could be the work of his Spirit within in him. What disciples can take heart from is that, if they do not have the strength to cry out, they

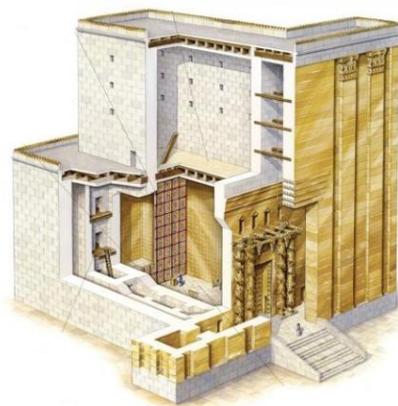
just need to whisper, or even hold a plea in their heart, and God will hear their cry.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:38

The inner curtain of the temple was torn in two, removing the separation between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Access to God was now provided by the unique sacrifice of Jesus, rendering the temple sacrifices obsolete. Whether this was literal or symbolic makes no difference to the outcome.

The curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the Most Holy Place, and could only be accessed by the High Priest and then only once per year on the Day of Atonement. The sketch gives 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. Even then, he had a rope tied around him so that if he was taken ill or died, he could be pulled out as no one was allowed to go in and get him.

The writer to the Hebrews described it with these words: <<A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its 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 had 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, thus obtaining eternal redemption>> (Hebrews 9:12), <<For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands 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 and sisters, 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 in 587BC 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 severe 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 man's approaches to God, so that now he may come boldly to the throne of grace.

³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:39

The centurion had probably observed the death of many crucified criminals; he recognised the purity and power of Jesus in this way and rightly saw that he is the Son of God. Like the thief on the cross who expressed faith in Jesus, the centurion may have had an 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.

Saw how he died. He died courageously; there was no complaining or crying out for himself. He died while praying to God for others, and not himself: *<<Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing">> (Luke 23:34a)*. He died offering salvation to others: *<<Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise">> (Luke 23:43)*. One thing the Centurion knew was that he was dead, even before he was pierced for the transgressions of sinful man: *<<Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true>> (John 19:34-35)*.

A parallel account uses different wording: *<<The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man">> (Luke 23:47)*. Although this is not as theologically profound as Mark or: *<<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!>> (Matthew 27:54)*, for Luke this confession is important and serves as the culminating expression of Jesus' innocence. It also notes that it caused the centurion to praise God.

For those who have chosen to follow Jesus it is very easy to rush forward to Sunday and the glorious resurrection which forms the basis of the Christian faith. However, it must never be allowed to diminish the power of the Cross, and perhaps this is an opportunity to take a break from this study 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, only the hand holding the mallet is seen. It was apparently Mel Gibson hammering the nails in, as he felt that it is something that he, and therefore all of mankind, did and continue to do through their sin. Something that all people should perhaps reflect on!

Determining the actual date of Jesus' death is something that has taxed scholars throughout church history. It is known that it was Nisan 15 and that Pilate was governor of Judæa from AD26-36, providing four possibilities when Nisan 15 occurred on a Friday:

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

Because Jesus was born in or before 4BC, which was the year Herod the Great died, and that Jesus was around 30 years old when his ministry began, the two favoured dates were those in AD30 and AD33. The text: <<*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar*>> (Luke 3:1a), would give a start date for Jesus ministry of probably AD29, thus 3 years of ministry makes 3rd 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.

⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. ⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

[Mark 15:40-41](#)

Some women were watching. The women were singled out because of their role in the resurrection account. John, the only apostle known to have been an eyewitness of the crucifixion, confirmed their presence: <<*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 nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the*

[Mark15-20](#)

disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home>> (John 19:25-27).

They may have been watching from a distance but it was not a case of: <<My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbours stay far away>> (Psalm 38:11).

Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph was the Virgin Mary: <<Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?>> And they took offense at him>> (Mark 6:3).

Mary Magdalene was one woman who followed Jesus after being healed. She and many others followed him in Galilee and would continue to follow him beyond the grave. Luke makes a record of them during the earlier Galilæan ministry: <<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>> (Luke 8:1-3).

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 toward women in the church, which did not always appear to match those of Jesus.

III.c.iii.3 Mark 15:42-47 - The Burial of Jesus

A religious leader called Joseph, who was also a disciple, received permission from Pilate to have Jesus' body brought down from the Cross. With the help of a fellow religious leader Nicodemus, he prepared the body with spices and wrapped it in linen, before placing it in his own newly rock cut tomb.

⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,

Mark 15:42

Preparation Day is idiomatic for the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached would indicate that the Sabbath was about to commence at sunset, during which no work, even the burial of a corpse, could be undertaken. On this day all preparation was to be done, such as decorating the house and preparing all food. It was also a day to prepare the heart to be in God's presence during the Sabbath Day.

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathæa, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Mark 15:43

Joseph of Arimathæa, a prominent member of the Council, i.e. the Sanhedrin, intended to bury Jesus before the Sabbath began at sundown on Nisan 16. It was likely that Pilate knew him or of him at least. Even so it was a bold action for him to approach the governor on this issue. It is likely that he would have met with more success from Pilate than a family member or disciple would have in making the same approach to authorise the release of Jesus' body.

Who was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God, i.e. a disciple of Jesus, as confirmed in: <<*As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathæa, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus*>> (Matthew 27:57).

⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died.
⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.

Mark 15:44-45

Pilate had jurisdiction over whether or not the corpse should be buried. Once he ascertained that Jesus was indeed dead, Pilate agreed to it as a benevolent concession.

He was already dead. Despite the barbaric scourging and the agony of crucifixion, a young, healthy man like Jesus might survive many hours or even days on a cross.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he had died so quickly. However, this was confirmed by the centurion that Jesus was dead, not just unconscious as some would like to claim in order to dismiss the power of the resurrection to come.

⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Mark 15:46

Joseph bought some linen cloth. Joseph showed his respect by providing brand new cloth to wrap Jesus' body in.

Took down the body. As mangled and macerated as it was, Jesus' body was shown great respect in death. Moses wrote: <<*you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance*>> (Deuteronomy 21:23), which mandates the burial of a corpse on the day of death and particularly before a

Sabbath Day, taking priority even over the Passover and Day of Unleavened Bread festivities.

Joseph wrapped the corpse in a linen shroud, 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 tomb cut out of the rock: <<*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*>> (John 19:41).

Rolled a stone against the entrance. In Daniel's incarceration in the lion's den, the stone was there to ensure he could not escape: <<*A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed*>> (Daniel 6:17). For Jesus, it was meant to keep others out, but it could not prevent the angels from revealing the empty tomb!

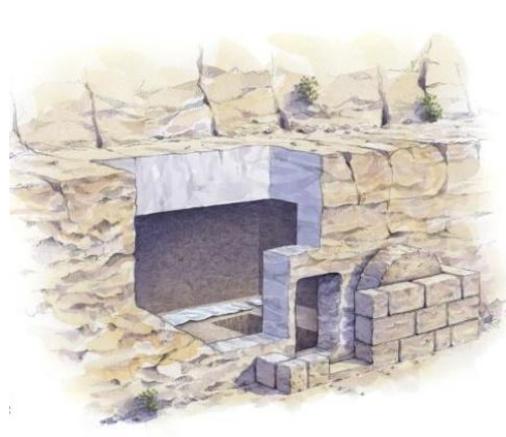
The two main locations, where Jesus is thought to have been buried are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to the west of the temple and the Garden Tomb, north of the ancient city. Both would have been outside the 1st Century city walls.

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



A tomb similar to that of Jesus

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 the 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.

⁴⁷ **Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.**

Mark 15:47

Saw where he was laid. These two women were eyewitnesses of Jesus' burial. They noted where the body was so that they could come to care for it after the Sabbath Day was over: <<***When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body***>> (Mark 16:1). This was common practice and not just because they did not trust the two men to have performed their duties correctly, as some have suggested!

No one knew the location of the grave of the man who wrote down the law: <<***And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is***>> (Deuteronomy 34:6). Particular notice was taken when it was the law maker and the law giver.

It may be said that: <<***My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me***>> (Job 17:12), but this was only Friday, Sunday was coming!