

MATTHEW

Chapter 27

Jesus delivered to Pilate

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. 2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

27:1 *Early in the morning.* The Sanhedrin could not have a legal session at night, so at daybreak a special meeting was held to make the death sentence (see 26:66) official. (CSB)

Early Friday morning. (TLSB)

took counsel. Jewish law demanded that the trial take place in the daytime; this would fulfill that legal requirement. (TLSB)

A Roman official's workday began at daybreak, so Pilate was already awake when the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to him for trial. The Roman government did allow the Sanhedrin considerable freedom and authority in the oversight of Jewish affairs, but the only time the Jews had the right to impose the death penalty was if a Gentile invaded the sacred precincts of the temple. (PBC)

The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the Jewish Church, had lasted into the hours of early morning on Friday, to the time of cock-crowing. Even after that, the Lord had been given no rest, the wicked tortures which some of the servants and others inflicted upon Him robbing Him of even the few moments of respite which his racked and weary body needed. And as soon as the day dawned, the members of the Council convened once more to confirm the sentence of a few hours before, and to make plans for carrying out the resolution thus passed. The law required at least two sittings in grave criminal cases, and thus they observed the letter, even if they did not comply with the spirit of the Law. All the members being present, a formal vote was taken, really only a formality, since any opposing voices would quickly have been silenced. Again the object is nakedly stated: to put Him to death. It seems from the language used by Luke, chapter 22:66, that they led Jesus, in formal procession, from the palace of the high priest to the House of Polished Stones, the meeting-hall at the Temple, for according to the Talmud sentence of death could be pronounced only in this room. In the bitterness of their hatred and their burning desire for revenge, the Jews even overlooked the fact that on a festival day the rules of the Sabbath held good, according to which a meeting of the Sanhedrin was unlawful. (Kretzmann)

27:2 *handed him over to Pilate.* The Sanhedrin had been deprived by the Roman government of the right to carry out capital punishment, except in the case of a foreigner who invaded the sacred precincts of the temple. So Jesus had to be handed over to Pilate for execution. For additional information about Pilate. (CSB)

Pilate was the Roman governor (prefect) of the province of Judea. Only he had the legal authority to put people to death (cf Jn 18:31). (TLSB)

Pontius Pilate served as the Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. His official residence was in Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast which was a more pleasant place for a Roman to live than in Jerusalem would have been. When Pilate had to come to Jerusalem to perform some of his official duties, he would stay in the magnificent palace that had been built by King Herod. It was located mostly west

and a little south of the temple area. This was the place, known as the Praetorium where Jesus Roman trial took place. (PBC)

Having agreed upon their course of action, they now led forth the Lord, bound like a criminal, and delivered Him to Pilate, the governor or procurator of the province. For since Judea had become a Roman province, after the deposition of Archelaus, the Jews no longer had the right to carry out a sentence of capital punishment. They were obliged to turn over criminals whom they believed guilty of death to the procurator, who resided at Caesarea, but came up to Jerusalem during the week of the Passover, partly to keep order among the many thousands of pilgrims, partly to overawe and thus keep in check any revolutionary spirits by the power of Roman prestige. (Kretzmann)

27:1–2 Christ is handed over to Pilate. When others betray you or falsely speak evil against you, take counsel with Jesus. He knows your sorrows and has borne your sins. He will sustain you in the hour of trial. • Lord Jesus Christ, let us die to sin and live to You. Lift up our hearts. Amen. (TLSB)

Judas Hangs Himself

3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” 7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.”

27:3–10 See Ac 1:16–19. (CSB)

27:3 *when...saw* – Here we see both facts, as Luther says, namely, that the sin enters in a very smooth way, but afterwards causes a terrible end. Judas had probably been under the impression that Jesus would do as He often had done, make use of His divine power, throw off His bonds, and walk away a free man. But the procession to the governor's palace showed him definitely that there would be no miraculous deliverance in this case. Christ's condemnation by the Jews had been voted upon, and it was to be expected that the governor would agree to the demand of the Jews. As this certainty was brought home to him, his eyes were suddenly opened to the heinousness of his offense against Jesus. Deep remorse and sorrow over this took hold of him, a repentance nursed by Satan, as seeing only the depth, the abyss of the transgression. (Kretzmann)

SEIZED WITH REMORSE – Not repented (sorrow and faith), but had a deep regret. (TLSB)

27:4 I HAVE SINNED – His first thought was not to make an open confession of his sin to the Lord, humbly imploring the forgiveness which was even now being earned for this sin also, but to get rid of the fruits and proof of his sin. So he returned the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of iniquity, attempting to hand the money back to the high priests and elders that had accepted the offer of betrayal from him. He realized now that his betrayal of innocent blood, of the blood of an innocent, holy man, was a grievous sin. But he met with a cool reception, being told that this was no concern of theirs; he must attend to his own affairs. That is the manner of the tempters and deceivers: Before the sin is committed, they exhibit a kind face, but when the victim of their wiles is tortured by harrowing remorse, they disclaim all

responsibility. Let each one take care of himself, is their cry at such a time. In this case the devil took care of his own. (Kretzmann)

Judas took a bribe to shed innocent blood and thereby fell under a curse (Dt. 27:25). (TLSB)

what is that to us – despite their sacred calling, they hate Jesus more than they love to minister to sinners. (TLSB)

27:5 *hanged himself*. For Judas took the money which the high priests and elders rejected, threw it in the Temple, probably with the idea of making partial expiation for his sin, and then committed suicide by hanging. That was the end of a repentance which did not turn to the Savior, but despaired of ever finding mercy. The sorrow of the world worketh death, 2 Cor. 7:10. That is the other peculiarity of sin, which we should note carefully. In the beginning it sleeps, and seems to be an easy, harmless thing. But it does not sleep long, and when it awakens, it becomes an unbearable burden, which it is impossible to carry, unless God helps in a special way. This we see in the case of poor Judas.... For when he sees the Lord being led to Pilate, and now must fear that His life is forfeited, he repents and sees for the first time what he really has done. There sin awakens and shows itself in its way so fierce and terrible that he cannot endure it. Before this he had loved the money, the thirty pieces of silver, so dearly that it seemed a small matter to him to betray and to sell Christ the Lord; but now he is changed: If he had the money and goods of the whole world, he would give it all in return for the assurance that the life of Christ the Lord might be saved. (Kretzmann)

Judas executes himself for murder (cf. Lv 24:21). As he felt cursed by the Law (Dt. 27:25), so he died an accursed death (Dt. 21:23). This faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and David. The contrition of Judas or Saul (Mt. 27:3-5; 1 Sam. 31:4-6) is useless because faith is not added. Faith grasps the forgiveness of sins, given as a gift for Christ's sake. So the contrition of David or Peter (2 Sam. 12:13; Mt. 26:75) helps because faith, which takes hold of the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ's sake, is added to it. Whenever the Law alone exercises its office, without the Gospel being added, there is nothing but death and hell, and one must despair, as Saul and Judas did. (TLSB)

27:6 *it is not lawful* – The evangelist here draws a picture of hypocrisy in its most repulsive form. The remorse of Judas over the betraying of innocent blood makes absolutely no impression upon them, but the possible infraction of a rule drawn from Deut. 23, 18 fills their hearts with consternation. (Kretzmann)

Ill-gotten gains could not be brought into the temple (Dt. 23:18). By this statement, the priests tacitly acknowledge that they have unjustly prosecuted Jesus. Blood money meant money sued for a violent sin. (TLSB)

27:7 *bought...potter's field* BUY POTTERS FIELD – In sanctimonious horror they hold up their hands to ward off a threatening calamity: It will never do to lay this blood-money (which they themselves had paid for that purpose) into the holy treasury. And so the pious frauds hold a solemn meeting and decide to invest the money in a cemetery for strangers, an old clay-pit being available for that purpose. (Kretzmann)

Good clay, for pottery in this area; the En-rogel Spring south of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley is nearby. (TLSB)

Cemeteries were unclean because corpses were unclean by OT Law (Cf. Nu. 19:11, 14). Tainted money could be used to buy such land, especially since it was intended for Gentile burials. (TLSB)

27:8 *called the Field of Blood*. Cf. “the Valley of Slaughter” in Jer 19:6(CSB)

So called because of the origin of the money used to buy it. (TLSB)

27:9–10 Quotes Zec 11:12–13, but adds phrases from Jer 19:11 (a potter’s field is used for burial) and an allusion to Jer 32:6–11 (Jeremiah’s purchase of land). (TLSB)

27:9 *Jeremiah.* The quotation that follows seems to be a combining of Zec 11:12–13 and Jer 19:1–13 (or perhaps Jer 18:2–12 or Jer 32:6–9). But Matthew attributes it to the major prophet Jeremiah, just as Mark (1:2–3) quotes Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 but attributes them to the major prophet Isaiah. (CSB)

27:10 They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him who was valued at that sum, or the price of the inestimably Valuable One, whom they bought from the children of Israel, paying the money for the field of the potter, according to the command of the Lord. The two prophecies are here blended in a wonderful way, affording a further proof for the inspiration of both the gospel and the books of the prophets, since the Lord states His eternal truth according to His will. For many years after the events here recorded, the cemetery thus purchased was simply known as the Field of Blood, a fine monument to the chief priests and the betrayal of the Holy One of God. (Kretzmann)

27:3–10 Peter’s denial is followed closely by Judas’s suicide. The two commit similar sins in betraying Christ, but things turn out differently for each. Both are sorry for their misdeeds—perhaps Judas is even sorer in that he tries to undo the damage. But Judas ends his life in despair, while Peter ultimately trusts in Christ, who alone can save us from guilt and despair. • Oh, let us ever flee to You, Christ, when overwhelmed by our sin! Let us not despair but know the depth of Your mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Before Pilate

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “**You have said so.**” **12** But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. **13** Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” **14** But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

27:11 *governor.* Pontius Pilate (v 2). (TLSB)

King of the Jews? The Council translated their accusation against Jesus into political terms Pilate could understand. (TLSB)

27:12 *no answer.* Jesus did not defend Himself, because He was willing to be crucified. (TLSB)

27:11–14 Jesus silently listens to His accusers. His silence leads to His condemnation, but also to our forgiveness. When foes accuse you, curb your tongue. Loose your tongue in prayer to the One who takes away your sin. • Thank You, dearest Jesus, for Your silence before Your accusers and Your sacrifice for us. Amen. (TLSB)

The Crowd Chooses Barabbas

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. **17** So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” **18** For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. **19** Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” **20** Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. **21** The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said,

“Barabbas.” 22 Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” 23 And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

27:15 *feast.* Passover. (TLSB)

the governor’s custom. Of which nothing is known outside the Gospels. (CSB)

accustomed to release. As a favor to those Pilate governed, he usually released one prisoner every year. (TLSB)

27:18 Pilate hoped the crowd’s decency would lead them to ask for a man they did not like (Jesus) instead of one who had committed serious crimes (Barabbas). (TLSB)

27:19 This incident is found only in Matthew’s Gospel. (CSB)

judgment seat. Bench, often outdoors, where the presiding judge sat. Cf Ac 18:12. People could gather around the judge (Jos, War 2:175). (TLSB)

his wife ... dream. Pilate’s wife, like the Wise Men and Joseph (2:12–13), was warned in a dream. This Gentile woman sees what the chief priests and the crowd could not see. (TLSB)

27:20 *crowd.* Probably a mob formed by people employed in the temple and under the chief priests’ sway. They are to be distinguished from the majority of people in Jerusalem, who may have been more sympathetic to Jesus. (TLSB)

destroy. Kill Him and obliterate His movement. (TLSB)

27:15–23 The crowd chooses to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. They prefer the sinful ways of Barabbas and seek to crucify their true Lord. Just as the Lord’s ways disturbed and threatened the people of Jerusalem, His ways disrupt our self-security. The silent Lamb of God would lead us away from the ways of the world to walk in His ways. He was condemned to death, that we might go freely into His kingdom. • Thank You, Lord, that You did not choose freedom for Yourself but life for me. Amen. (TLSB)

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” 25 And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” 26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

27:24 *riot.* Pilate gave the crowd what they wanted rather than risk their displeasure. (TLSB)

washed his hands. Symbol of innocence used by both Jews and Gentiles. (TLSB)

innocent. Pilate recognized that he was putting an innocent man to death and did not want to be held guilty for this miscarriage of justice. (TLSB)

see to it yourselves. Pilate will crucify Jesus, but he puts the blame on the mob. (TLSB)

27:25 If Pilate hesitates to accept responsibility for his role in Christ’s death, the mob does not. However, this is a mob of temple partisans, not a representative sample of the Jewish people; the temple crowd bears the responsibility, not all Jews. Rather than simply blaming the Jews, the apostles proclaimed the Gospel to them, and even to those who had called for Jesus’ death (cf Ac 3:17). (TLSB)

27:26 *flogged.* Roman floggings were so brutal that sometimes the victim died before crucifixion. (CSB)

27:24–26 Pilate condemns Jesus to death while he seeks to absolve himself of responsibility for it. No matter how a sinner tries to evade responsibility for sin, he cannot wash himself of it. Thanks be to God that Christ took responsibility for the sins of the whole world and let Himself be crucified for our sakes. • I am guilty, Lord; grant me Your forgiveness and a new heart. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus is Mocked

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. **28** And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, **29** and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" **30** And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. **31** And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

27:27 *soldiers of the governor.* Pilate's Roman soldiers now take over; the temple guard had previously arrested Jesus (Jn 18:3). (TLSB)

Praetorium. The governor's official residence in Jerusalem. (CSB)

The crowd had previously stood outside of the building (cf Jn 18:28). (TLSB)

27:28 *stripped.* Clothing that had been put on Jesus after His scourging was removed. (TLSB)

scarlet robe. The outer cloak of a Roman soldier. (CSB)

Most likely a soldier's cape; this color was also used by royalty. Cf Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2; dye baths can yield different hues from the same dye materials, depending on their strength, quality, mordant, and the receptivity of the fabrics being treated. The different terms for hues are likely a reflection of this trade issue. (TLSB)

27:29 *staff.* A mock scepter. (CSB)

Mock scepter, symbol of royal power. (TLSB)

mocked. They honored Christ as King, but only in sport. (TLSB)

27:27–31 Jesus is mocked as a false king by the Roman soldiers. They despise His weakness, but it is the way that He would win His kingdom—He will redeem the world and win His subjects on the cross. How different are the Lord's ways by which He rescues us! • Hail, O true King of the Jews and of all the world. I confess You as my King. Amen. (TLSB)

The Crucifixion

32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. **33** And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), **34** they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink

it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 42 “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

27:32 *Cyrene.* A city in North Africa.

City in Libya on the northeast coast of Africa. (TLSB)

Simon ... to carry the cross. After His scourging, Jesus was unable to carry the heavy crossbeam, so the Romans pressed Simon into carrying it. (TLSB)

27:33 *Golgotha.* Aram; so called because people were crucified there or because of the shape of the rock. (TLSB)

27:34 *mixed with gall.* Tradition says that the women of Jerusalem customarily furnished this pain-killing narcotic to prisoners who were crucified. Jesus refused to drink it because he wanted to be fully conscious until his death (v. 50). (CSB)

Bitter substance made from plants; perhaps a narcotic or even poisonous, here mixed with wine. (TLSB)

He would not drink it. Christ would not lessen the pain until all was finished (cf Jn 19:28). (TLSB)

27:35 *crucified.* Nailed Him to the cross. (TLSB)

casting lots. Explained more precisely in Jn 19:23–24. (CSB)

They gambled as a way to divide His clothes. (TLSB)

27:36 *kept watch.* Implies that they knew Jesus was no ordinary prisoner facing execution. They still feared the crowds who had followed Him. (TLSB)

27:37 Placard explaining the reason for His execution. (TLSB)

27:39 *derided Him, wagging their heads.* Gesture of scorn. The whole Passion evokes Ps 22. (TLSB)

27:40 *save Yourself!* Christ’s mockers assume that one with divine powers would use it to save Himself. (TLSB)

27:42 *King of Israel.* Jews used this title for the Messiah rather than “King of the Jews.” (TLSB)

we will believe in Him. A mocking claim. Most likely, they would still have refused to trust in Him. (TLSB)

27:44 Mt emphasizes that even those executed used their last breaths to mock Jesus. Lk 23:39–41 clarifies that one robber repented of his sin. (TLSB)

27:32–44 Jesus is crucified and reviled on every hand. Here we see the full depth of our sin: the pain of the cross and the reviling of the whole world is what we deserve. But we also see the full depth of God’s mercy in that He willingly submitted Himself to this torture for our sakes. • Grant, O God, that I boast in nothing but in the cross of Your Son. Amen. (TLSB)

The Death of Jesus

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” 55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

27:45 *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour.* From noon until 3:00 P.M. (CSB)

darkness. Sign of sorrow and judgment (Jl 2:2; Am 8:9). (TLSB)

27:46 *loud voice.* Cry of pain and loneliness. (TLSB)

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? A mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew, translated by Matthew for his readers – (The words were spoken in Aramaic (but with some Hebrew characteristics), one of the languages commonly spoken in Palestine in Jesus’ day. They reveal how deeply Jesus felt his abandonment by God as he bore the sins of mankind.) (CSB)

Poignantly portrays the separation of Christ from His Father. (TLSB)

This is His fourth word on the cross. The first three descend from above downward, the last four ascend from below upward (Besser). The last four are the words of the sacrificial Lamb from the earth toward heaven. (The Greek *egkataleipo* is very emphatic, leave in the lurch, in a difficult situation, surrender to the enemy.) This soul cry is taken from Psalm 22:1. It is an indication, on the one hand, of Jesus’ terrible mental anguish, but, on the other, also of His ability to survive in the hour of His greatest stress. He does not address the “Father,” but by the name “God.” He adds a word which implies devotion and trust: “My God!” He was despondent, but did not despair. This word pictures a measure of suffering which is beyond and above our human conceptions. It is mystery which eternity alone will penetrate: God forsaken of God. These words must be accepted in their literal sense. It was a real God-forsakenness, albeit the personal bond of unity between Father and Son was not broken. He who came to take our place and to represent us before God as the second Adam was forced to experience the agonies and terrors of hell in order to free us from them; for He must suffer what we should have endured. For here He suffers who is eternal. Lohe writes as follows: “I do not know what took place in heaven and in the soul of the Redeemer to cause His God-forsakenness, but I shudder at the thought, and the dread of night suffuses my soul, even as the physical darkness of those hours. Here I realize the full truthfulness of St. Paul’s and Luther’s teachings with respect to the vicarious atonement of Jesus. He who does not see this blinder than the night which encompassed the Crucified.” (Ylvisaker)

Notes on Psalm 22 – The anguished prayer of David as a godly sufferer victimized by the vicious and prolonged attacks of enemies whom he has not provoked and from whom the Lord has not (yet) delivered him. It has many similarities with Ps 69, but contains no calls for redress such as are found in 69:22–28. No other psalm pointed beyond itself so fully to the circumstances of Jesus at his crucifixion. Hence on the cross he took it to his lips (see Mt 27:46 and parallels), and the Gospel writers, especially Matthew and John, frequently alluded to it (as they did to Ps 69) in their accounts of Christ’s passion (Mt 27:35, 39, 43; Jn 19:23–24, 28). They proclaim the passion of Jesus as the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. The author of Hebrews placed the words of v. 22 on Jesus’ lips. No psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT. (CSB)

Three of the seven words from the cross were prayers. The first was, “Father, forgive them…” The middle one was “My God, my God, why…” And the final one was, “Father, into your hands…” It may be helpful to diagram them in a v - shape with the middle prayer at the bottom. Then we can visualize how Jesus had hit rock bottom when He cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why…” Instead of calling on His Father, Jesus calls him, My God.” But even though the tenderness and intimacy of the first and last prayers is missing, the important thing for us to notice is that Jesus is still praying. Even when His Father leaves Him utterly alone, Jesus does not stop praying. (PBC)

“Why have you forsaken me?” This question is very different from everything else Jesus said from the cross. Before this he showed great confidence in spite of all that He was suffering. He promised the dying thief, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” But now Jesus asks a question: “Why, God?” He speaks it aloud so that everyone at Calvary may hear it, and it is recorded by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that all people may hear it until the end of time. But the question is addressed to God, not to us. We are not asked to supply an answer for this agonizing question. We rather need to listen to How God answers this question for us. (PBC)

There is no answer recorded in the 27th chapter of Matthew. There was no voice from heaven as there had been at Jesus’ baptism and at His transfiguration. Why was the Father silent? Was Jesus no longer He beloved Son? Was the Father no longer pleased with Him? (PBC)

When Jesus spoke of being forsaken by God, He did not mean to say that He only felt as though He was forsaken by God. He actually was forsaken by God. It is impossible for us to grasp what this actually means. Jesus is God, but He was forsaken by God. The first person of the Holy Trinity forsook the second person, and yet we know that the unity of the Trinity cannot be undone. It is a mystery, the mystery of the God-man, and only because of the incarnation was it possible. In the deepest depths of His humiliation, Jesus endured the God-forsakenness of hell for us. This was a necessary part of His work of redemption. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Co 5:21). (PBC)

The question Jesus asks is one we all want to know the answer to: Why? Jesus shows us that there is no sin in asking the question. But as we listen for God’s answer, it is helpful to distinguish between getting an explanation and receiving comfort. God does not owe us an explanation. He seldom provides explanations. But He is always ready and willing to comfort us. He reminds us of His love for us. He repeats His gracious promises to us. And He says, “Trust me; I have everything under control.” We do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. (PBC)

Jesus’ prayer, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” is actually from the first verse of Psalm 22. As He was dying, Jesus was praying this psalm. Although Matthew describes Jesus as saying only the first part of the first verse of this psalm out loud, it seems likely that Jesus would have recited the

whole psalm in His mind. If so, by the time He had prayed through to the end, Jesus would have found the answer to His own question. “You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor Him! Revere Him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; He had not hidden His face from Him but has listened to His cry for help” (Ps 22:23-24). (PBC)

After praying Psalm 22, it would be easy to continue by praying Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want...” And if that is what Jesus was doing, we might ask the question: did He start with Psalm 1 at noon and pray through the psalms in order until He came to Psalm 22 at about 3:00? Of course, this is only pious speculation, but it would make sense that Jesus was able to ignore most of the mockery that was aimed at Him because His mind was occupied with the psalms He had been praying all His life. In this way Jesus would be setting the pattern that many Christians have followed on their own deathbeds. As life is ebbing away, it can be calming and comforting to sing the hymns and liturgical songs that have become embedded in your memory. If family and friends are gathered around your bed, they can sing or recite them to you and when you can no longer sing them yourself. And that will help them to work through their own grief. (PBC)

27:47 *calling Elijah*. “Eli” sounds similar to “Elijah.” (TLSB)

27:48 *sour wine*. Cheap beverage that quenched thirst quickly. (TLSB)

27:49 *others*. Probably Jews passing by. Crucifixions typically took place along a roadway to inspire fear in would-be criminals. (TLSB)

27:50 *yielded up His spirit*. He died. (TLSB)

27:51–53 Earthquakes were often associated with manifestations of God. Moreover, they were considered a sign of the end and the final judgment. The destruction of the temple’s veil and the resurrection of the dead also point forward to the end. (TLSB)

27:51 *curtain*. The inner curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The tearing of the curtain signified Christ’s making it possible for believers to go directly into God’s presence (see Heb 9:1–14; 10:14–22). (CSB)

27:52–53 An incident found only in Matthew’s Gospel, perhaps symbolic of Christ’s conquering death through his redemptive work on the cross. (CSB)

Their resurrection demonstrated the purpose of Christ’s death; to bring eternal life to those doomed to die. (TLSB)

This indicated that the cruel reign of death had now been thrown off, that it is impossible for death to hold the bodies of them that fall asleep in Jesus. (Kretzmann)

Johan Gerhard says: “Even as these saints, risen from the dead, go into Jerusalem and appear unto those whom they knew on earth, so shall we also, after our resurrection enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, and after a blessed reunion, join in blissful communion with angels and the elect. (Ylvisaker)

27:54 *Son of God*. It cannot be determined whether the centurion made a fully Christian confession, or whether he was only acknowledging that, since the gods had so obviously acted to vindicate this judicial victim, Jesus must be one especially favored by them. But in view of the ridicule voiced by the Jews (v. 40), it seems probable that Matthew intended the former. (CSB)

Gentile centurion sensed what the unbelieving leaders of Israel did not. (TLSB)

27:56 *Mary Magdalene*. She had followed Christ ever since He expelled seven demons from her (Lk 8:2). (TLSB)

Mary ... Joseph. Possibly Mary the wife of Clopas (Mk 15:40; Jn 19:25), a sister to Mary the mother of Jesus. (TLSB)

mother ... Zebedee. Mother of James and John. (TLSB)

27:45–56 After Jesus cries in agony at His abandonment, He dies. His death is followed by supernatural signs. His cry shows the abandonment that we should have experienced. But by His death, He destroyed the power of death and removed the barrier that separated us from God. • We praise You, O Christ, and we bless You. By Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. Amen. (TLSB)

The Burial of Jesus

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. **58** He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. **59** And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud **60** and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. **61** Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

27:57 *Arimathea*. A village in the hill country of Ephraim, about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. (CSB)

City in Judah; exact location unknown. (TLSB)

27:59 Burial customs included anointing the corpse with spices and wrapping it in a shroud. (TLSB)

27:60 *tomb ... cut in the rock*. Graves were often hollowed-out clefts in a rock. (TLSB)

great stone. Disk-shaped and several feet in diameter, it was thick enough to keep out animals. It was rolled in a hewn channel to seal off the tomb's entrance and would require several men to move it. (TLSB)

27:57–61 Jesus is buried. By sharing our human grave, He sanctifies our tombs and makes them places where our bodies can rest, confident in the resurrection. Honor the faithfully departed by remembering their graves and by praying for their families. As Christ burst from His tomb, so shall He raise all the dead on the Last Day. • Thank You, Lord, for the life and sacrifice of others and for the certain hope of the resurrection. Amen. (TLSB)

The Guard at the Tomb

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate **63** and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ **64** Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” **65** Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” **66** So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

27:62 *The next day, the one after Preparation Day.* Saturday, the Sabbath. Friday was the preparation day for the Sabbath (sunset Friday to sunset Saturday). (CSB)

Whether it was due to a bad conscience or to vindictiveness, cannot be determined, but the Jewish chiefs even now were not satisfied. The day of preparation closed at sundown, and they were so anxious about a certain matter that they disregarded the rules of the great festival. Jesus was hardly laid into the grave when their delegation attended upon Pilate. (Kretzmann)

It is characteristic of the chief priests that they were not going to let the Sabbath regulations prevent them from working overtime. (PBC)

27:63 *that impostor* – Jesus’ enemies did not understand who He was. (TLSB)

It had occurred to them that yonder seducer, pointing contemptuously in the direction of the cross, had predicted that He would rise on the third day. What they now wanted was a way of safeguarding the tomb, in order that the body might not be stolen by fanatical disciples and His resurrection then proclaimed. In that event, they believe that the last delusion, the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, would be worse than the first one was, the belief in His Messiahship. (Kretzmann)

Jesus had foretold His resurrection to the Pharisees (12:40). Who ironically paid more attention to His words than did the disciples. (TLSB)

27:64–66 Chief priests request a guard from Pilate, but he tells them to use their temple guards to make the tomb as secure as possible. Ironically, these guards are among the first human witnesses of the resurrection. (TLSB)

27:64 *This last deception will be worse than the first.* The first would be that Jesus was the Messiah, the second that he had risen as the Son of God. (CSB)

The fears of Jesus’ enemies were very powerful. It is telling that they could not simply forget about Jesus now that He was dead and buried. They were obsessed with the Man they hated. (PBC)

27:65 *Take a guard.* Pilate granted them a guard of Roman soldiers (28:4, 11–12).

The ESV has “You have a guard of soldiers.” Ironically, these guards are among the first human witnesses of the resurrection. (TLSB)

A further indication that this is what is actually happened is provided in the next chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. After the resurrection, when the guards went into the city to report what had happened, to whom did they go? They went straight to the chief priest (Matthew 28:11). Why would Pilate’s Roman soldiers report directly to the chief priests? (PBC)

Pilate, in a somewhat gruff manner, as though heartily disgusted with the whole affair, granted the request: Have your watch: there will be mighty little need of it, I am sure; secure the tomb as ye know how! (Kretzmann)

27:66 *secure by sealing the stone* – This they proceeded to do in as thorough a manner as possible. They stretched a cord across the stone, fastening it on either side of the door with wax, upon which the seal of the governor was stamped. This was done in the presence and with the aid of the watch detailed for that purpose, the soldiers finally remaining to guard the tomb. Without knowing or in the least intending it, the

Jews here prepared the way for a sound proof of the resurrection of Christ. The testimony of the very men whom they had chosen, soldiers that were entirely disinterested, would be strong evidence in favor of the great resurrection miracle. (Kretzmann)

27:62–66 The chief priests and their allies secure Jesus' tomb to prevent a faked resurrection. Their act, done out of unbelief, will ironically give them compelling evidence for the resurrection. Christ permits this to happen so His disciples could be confident that His resurrection was no hoax, but fact. • Living Lord, You triumphed over all Your enemies. Be with us always and deliver us. Amen. (TLSB)