

## BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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### MATTHEW 27; LUKE 23; JOHN 19 – JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL



In this study, we continue going over Jesus Christ's crucifixion. While He was being crucified, the afternoon sky darkened as if there was an eclipse, but this normally lasts only seven minutes, yet Mark said it lasted three hours (Mr. 15:33). So miraculous things were happening on earth, while in heaven, there was much grief and mourning.

Now, around 700 years before, the prophet Isaiah had prophesied in chapter 53 much about Jesus' crucifixion, giving details from the start until His burial and even of His resurrection. It is one of the greatest proofs of Jesus Christ being the Messiah and it is said this chapter has converted more Jews than any other place in the Bible.

Let's read it for ourselves, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:4-12).

Through it all, Jesus still showed compassion when so many sneered and even hated Him, yet He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He also showed care and concern for His mother, as John writes, "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home" (John 19:26-27). Since Jesus had unbelieving siblings, He wanted Mary to be under the care of John.

He even showed compassion toward one of the thieves, who had previously insulted Him, assuring him he would be in His kingdom. Notice the thief asked to be remembered *at Jesus' coming!* Unfortunately, Bible translators place the comma in such a way as to make it say the thief was going to be with Jesus on that day in paradise.

Yet, as Wayne Blank, in his article, *Today I say to You*, writes, "English translations of the Holy Scriptures use punctuation, specifically, commas, that did not exist in the original Hebrew and Greek. Translators inserted commas where they decided to put them, based upon their own ideas and interpretations of the Scriptures. In most cases, they are correct. In a few cases, they are not correct. For example, in the King James Version (as well as almost every other version ever since) the translators believed in the unbiblical idea of the dead being alive, so it was natural for them to want to place a comma in the words of Jesus Christ where, first of all, there wasn't one (although there was almost certainly a pause when He spoke, but not where the translators put it), and secondly, which made it incorrectly seem that Christ was saying, in Lk. 23:43 (the capitalization of "Today" is not found in the actual Scriptures either), "Verily I say to you, Today shall thou be with me in paradise," rather than what He actually said, which, translated, was, "Verily I say unto thee today (pause) thou shall be with me in paradise," or in modern English, with a comma placed where Christ actually paused, (in keeping with all of His other teachings about death and resurrection), "I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise."

"Christ said to that man, that day, he would be with Christ in Paradise in the future. Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures does it say that the dead are alive. For now, the dead are dead - in a peaceful oblivion in which there is no consciousness or activity. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, 'For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.'"

Next, Luke writes, "Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, 'Into Your Hands I commit My Spirit.' "Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!' And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:45-49).

John, who was at the scene, says, "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced'" (John 19:30-37).'

*The IVP Background Commentary* mentions, "A foot soldier was armed with a short sword and a *pilum*, or lance; the *pilum* was of light wood with an iron head, and was about [six] feet long. Such a lance could easily penetrate the pericardial sac which surrounds and protects the heart and contains watery fluid."

It is important to note *when* Jesus died -- on the Preparation Day of a *High day*, (Gk. *megale*, in John 19:31) from the Gk. root *megas*, which means something great or important and refers to a High Sabbath. It was the preparation was for the First Day of Unleavened Bread and was a High Sabbath. So the bodies could not remain on the stakes -- this all taking place on a Wednesday afternoon.

So when Christ died, around three o'clock in the afternoon, several things happened. The first was that the thick veil of the Temple, dividing the Holy of Holies from the rest, was rent in two. Matthew records, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Mt. 27:50-53).

So the Temple veil was torn in two when Christ died. Alfred Edersheim notes, "The veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 cubits (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and woven in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 300 priests to manipulate each" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

The meaning of it being rent is explained in Hebrews 10:19-22, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, *through the veil, that is, His flesh*, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Another question arises about those dead brethren that were resurrected at that time. Their graves were opened and when Jesus was resurrected, they rose and went back to the city where they were known by family and brethren.

Since John 3:13 says no one has ascended into heaven except Jesus, they were resurrected to physical life, just as Lazarus had been a week before. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* states, "These people returned to Jerusalem, (the Holy

City) where they were recognized by friends and family. Like Lazarus (John 11:43-44), Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:52-56), and the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:13-15), they too passed through physical death again" (notes on Mt. 27:50).

John continues, "After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43 says he went boldly); and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby" (John 19:38-42).

Matthew adds Joseph was wealthy, "Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus...When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb" (Mt. 27:57-61).

Luke says about Joseph, "Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God...That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near." (Luke 23:50-51, 54). Interestingly, Jesus was bound in strips of clean linen cloth, not a long sheet, so the idea the Shroud of Turin was used for Jesus' burial is plain wrong.

Christ was laid in the tomb right before sunset, and would be in the tomb for three days and three nights, just as He had prophesied (Mt. 12:40). Then all proceeded to rest and keep the First Day of Unleavened Bread. But, even though it was a High Day, the Jewish leaders considered it vital to avoid having His disciples steal the body and later claim He had resurrected from the dead.

Matthew records, "On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard" (Mt. 27:62-66).

Now, securing the tomb meant extending a cord across the rolled stone and stamping on it a wax seal with the insignia of the Roman Empire. Anyone attempting to break the seal and open the tomb would be killed.

So that Friday, after the Holy Day was over, the women, not knowing about the Roman seal or the guards, purchased some more spices to properly dress the body, which in haste, had not been done.

As we read, "Now when the Sabbath [the High Day] was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him" (Mark 16:1). Luke then adds, "Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). We clearly see in these accounts there was a High Day and then later the regular Sabbath Day.

So, perhaps the disciples had virtually given up - but not the women! They wanted to pay Jesus the last homage and planned to go into the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week and finish the preparation of the body—just as some of them had done in Lazarus' burial some ten days before.

But were they ever going to be shocked and surprised! From utter despair will come a lasting hope that has lit up so many generations of believers since then - including us!

This resurrection of Jesus is the central tenet of Christianity, and Paul said if Christ had not resurrected, our faith would be in vain (1 Cor. 15:17). Yet, as we shall see in the next study, it certainly isn't! This is the most incredible history of all time and has changed all of us for good, as we await our future resurrection in God's kingdom!