

The Life of Jesus 4

John 18:12-24, Matthew 26:58-75, Luke 22:54-71, Luke 23:1-25, Mark 14:53-15:20

The Trials

After the Garden arrest Jesus was taken to Annas. Annas was once a High Priest and was now a power broker in Jerusalem. His sons had served as High Priest and now his son-in-law, Caiaphas, held the position. Annas asked just two questions. The first about his disciples. Annas had no concern for the riff raff that followed Jesus but was interested in which of the religious leaders had sided with him. Jesus does not respond. They won't stand up for Jesus, and yet He won't betray them.

Then he asked about his teaching. These religious leaders had spent the previous day trying to trick him and catch him in his words but failed. Jesus says to ask those that heard Him, probably referring to those assembled. The guard strikes Jesus' sensitive face, the first of many blows to his body.

Next Jesus is sent to Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law and the current High Priest. A kangaroo court begins in the middle of the night. Judas has been paid for the betrayal, a price equivalent of the cost of a slave, just as the prophet Zechariah prophesied, but he returned the money. The accuser was usually the chief witness. With Judas not showing up, the plan was unraveling.

Other witnesses are called. According to the Law, their testimonies must agree. They did not. So Caiaphas tries a last ditch effort, the Oath of Testimony, which required a truthful response. Now Jesus has a reason to answer. The answer would determine the destiny of man. "Tell us if you are the Christ the Son of the Living God." "You have said it yourself," Jesus replied. Now, in their minds, they had just cause to condemn Him for blasphemy. Jesus then clarified his intent by quoting the Messianic Ps 110:1 and Daniel 7:13,14 "Nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The Law forbade the High Priest to tear his priestly clothes but this did not stop Caiaphas from doing so. Now they did not need false witnesses. Here was the miracle-working enemy of theirs, seemingly helpless in their hands. They took full advantage of the situation. In Jerusalem, I visited the home of the High Priest where this actually took place. Only the lower level levels hewn in limestone remain. There were rooms where prisoners were chained to the cold stone walls. Jesus was probably lowered into the empty cistern at the lowest level, an inescapable hole, reserved for the worst criminals.

PSALM 88:6-8 When He was being led from Caiaphas' home his eyes met with Peter's just after Peter had betrayed Him the third time and the rooster crowed. Peter, broken hearted by his failure ran out to weep. The guards blindfolded Jesus and began to beat him while mocking him. "Prophecy, who punched you?" There was a belief that the Messiah could see through a blindfold based on Isaiah 11:3. They were mocking his claim to be the Messiah. He could have told each person the details of their lives as He did with the woman at the well, but He had come to die, not entertain hoodlums.

Another trial by the Sanhedrin at the crack of dawn with a quorum of just 23, they obtained a unanimous consent for his death. A trial was not legal until after the morning sacrifice but apparently this legality did not bother them. By unanimous consent, we assume Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not present or maybe not notified. No witnesses were called. They got right to the point. "If you are the Messiah, tell us." Jesus replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." He again applies Ps 110:1 to himself.

To authenticate the verdict they ask him to clarify with the question, "Are you the Son of God then?" Jesus answers, "I AM!" He used the expression He used in the Garden, the expression with which God identified Himself to Moses. There was no doubt among them as to what He meant. Jewish legal tradition was to fast and mourn before condemning a man to death. The real decision was made earlier in the night and rules had been set aside for this special case.

Under Roman rule the Jews could not carry out capital punishment. They had to take Jesus to Pilate for the rubber stamp approval. But Pilate surprises them by asking what the charge is. The weak answer comes back, "He's a bad guy." Their reason of blasphemy was not a concern to Rome so they had to come up with a new charge. They added, "He claims to be a king."

Pilate takes Jesus into the Praetorium to question Him privately. The Jews would not follow for to enter a Gentile's home would defile them for seven days and they could not take part in the Passover celebrations. Jn 18:33-38 When Pilate declared Jesus innocent the crowd went wild, hurling accusations. Jesus refused to answer this rage, which amazed Pilate. In the accusations he heard of Jesus' Galilean origins and saw a way to get out of sentencing Jesus and get on the good side of Herod, who was in town for the feast, by passing Jesus to him for judgement. This was the man who had killed John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin. Curiosity about the mystical fascinated Herod. He wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. Jesus refused to say a word. Herod's soldiers ridiculed him and mockingly dressed him in a royal robe, which, for the Jews, was white. He was then sent back to Pilate. Perhaps Herod feared killing another prophet.

Now Pilate had to make a decision. He could infuriate the religious leaders by turning him loose. His wife warned him of Jesus' innocence because of a dream she had. He tries again to get off the hook by the annual release of a prisoner. The crowd wanted a physical Savior. The religious leaders incited them to call for Barabbas – He was more of a warrior leader than Jesus.

Pilate tries again by scourging Jesus. He is hoping this will satisfy their lust for blood. It was usual before crucifixion and made the victims compliant. So many died from this punishment it was named, "Half Death". One to six officers stood in different angles from the victim and swung a flagrum (several braided leather thongs with a sheep bone or piece of lead in the knot at the end. Deut 25:3 limits lashes to 40 but the Pharisees not wanting to break the Law would only allow 39 in case of a miscount. The officer (called a lictor) was medically trained to bring the victim as close to death as possible. If the victim died he was not blamed.

Early lashes would create bruises. Later ones would tear open the bruises leaving the skin and muscle hanging in ribbons. Blood loss was intense, first from capillaries and veins and finally from arteries as inner muscle was torn open. The victim normally fainted after two and a half minutes. The lictor would check for pulse and respiration and if the victim had not gone into shock, he would continue. The wording of 1 Peter 2:24 indicated Jesus scourging was very severe. This would account for his short duration on the cross. Pilate presents Jesus torn body to the crowd hoping they are satisfied. "Behold the man."

Now the soldiers toy with him as He is still able to stand. They follow Herod's soldier's example and clothed him in Roman royal purple and crowned him with thorns. Hitting him about the head and face with a stick they mock and spit on him. Pilate tries again, "Isn't this enough?" Finally the priests spill the real reason. "He claims to be God and our Law says He must die!" Fear grips Pilate, remembering the warning from his wife's dream. Ancient Roman traditions tell of sons of God taking human form. He takes Jesus back in for questioning. In his weakened condition Jesus has great presence of mind and, in a sense, lets Pilate off the hook. "The one who delivered me to you has the greater condemnation." Pilate tries one last time to release him. The priests resort to blackmail. "If you let him go you are not a friend of Caesar."

Pilate's protector in Rome, Sejanus, had been executed for treason. Pilate needed to stay in good graces with Caesar to keep his job as Judea was Caesar's appointment to give to whomever he chose. Pilate already had two major uprisings which didn't speak well for his leadership. He could not afford another. To keep his power he did what he had been avoiding all morning and pronounced the sentence, "Put the cross on the slave!" The soldiers rip the

blood clotted robe off the back of Jesus. The crossbeam was laid across the victim's shoulders and his arms were lashed to the beam, which usually weighed 75 –125 pounds.

Have you ever been accused falsely? Did you respond anything like Jesus?
Why were the religious leaders so anxious to execute Jesus?
History tells us Pilate was a brutal selfish man, so why does he try so hard to get Jesus released?
What is the catch 22 Pilate faced?

The Execution

Mark 15:21-47 Matthew 27:31-56 Luke 23:26-49 John 19:16-37

Crucifixion was reserved for slaves and the worst of criminals. It was illegal to crucify a Roman citizen. They walked the path to Skull Hill – Golgotha. A rope was tied around the victim's waist so a soldier could jerk them when they did not move fast enough. Jesus, so weakened and having gone without food since the Last Supper, loss of blood, lack of sleep and weight of the cross, that probably at one of those jerks of the rope, stumbled and fell. A bystander, Simon of Cyrene, was forced to carry the beam.

A society of Jewish women who hated crucifixion, met the processions and offered them a pain deadening drug. Jesus, wanting a clear mind for the ordeal refused to take it. Spikes with a square top about 5.5 –7 inches long first driven through a thin piece of wood and then through the space between the bones of the forearm. As the victim was raised up and the beam set on the post, if he was not already unconscious he might stay on his toes as the beam was raised in place. Then the feet would be yanked off the ground. The nails would tear up into the wrist and hitting the median nerve would cause such pain the he probably passed out. This made it easier for the soldier to pound one more nail, this time through the lower leg bones just above the ankle. Originally they let the victims hang, but the flailing of the crucified would irritate the soldiers and they found the victims would last much longer with the legs secured.

When the arms were fastened, it was at a 90 degree angle. The body weight would cause the angle to go to 65 degrees. This fixed the breathing muscles in an inhalation state and made exhaling difficult. The pectoral muscles would paralyze and to breathe out, weight had to shift to the nail at the ankles. This is why Jesus words on the cross are such short sentences. You know how tender the ankle is and how painful it can be. Each sentence was spoken while enduring that pain. Alternating the body weight between wrists and ankle nails required sliding the torn back up and down the post. He was secured to the cross at approximately 9AM.

To hang a body on a tree was a curse. Deut 21:23 It may be why the religious leaders insisted on this type of death. If He was cursed how could He be the Messiah? This shameful death was a most dishonorable way to die both to Romans and Jews. This accounts for Paul's statement in 1 Cor 1:23 that Christ crucified was "a stumbling block to the Jews, foolishness to the Gentiles." To worship a victim of crucifixion seemed absurd. Jesus took upon himself the shame of our sin and became a curse in our place so that the justice of God upon sin could be fully met. His first words on the cross were for others, "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing." The mocking continued. "If you are the Christ" (does this sound like the echo of another voice at the beginning of his ministry?) "come down off the cross." Loss of blood and dehydration, perspiration from the muscles cramping and pain caused extreme thirst. It's a wonder He could speak at all.

Witnessing Jesus' noble endurance of this torture, a thief on another cross was convinced and asked to be remembered. Jesus second statement was for him. "I tell you a truth, today you will be with me in paradise." The next statement is for his mother and John. He says, "Dear woman, here is your son. Here is your mother."

Noon... This torture was overshadowed by darkness. As our sins were laid upon him, hell vented its fury upon him. The visibility of stars would have signaled an early start of the Sabbath so we know stars could not be seen. This was not an eclipse for the sun cannot be eclipsed at the full moon of a Passover. It was the absence of the presence of God, for He is light and in him is no darkness at all. The darkness of all the sins of the past and future, every fist in the face of God, every selfish act of man, the sins of serial killers, and the lies men tell to cover their failures, lust greed, hatred, all placed upon our Savior.

Darkness is called a curse in Ex 10:21-23. The suffering in this darkness is something of which we have no understanding. There, the wrath of God was poured out on sin. I believe this is what He had sweat blood about in the Garden. He became cursed in our place. As Isaiah had prophesied, He bore our iniquity. It did not change his holiness, but it was placed upon his holiness. The Law also tells us that the altar is most holy, and whatever touches the altar is holy. Jesus was most holy. The darkness of the sins of the world tried to quench his holiness. When man is faced with such wickedness, we lash back in the same manner. But Christ bore the sin of the world and the fury of hell and his holiness proved greater and more powerful than all evil.

Normally the brain would cause fainting at this severe trauma. If it does not, the stomach pours blood and gastric juices into the abdomen causing it to bloat. Is 52:14 tells us "his appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness." After three hours the darkness lifted. Lk

23:44 Jesus uttered that chilling cry from Psalm 22:1 Mk 15:34 "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" a thousand years earlier David had witnessed his Savior suffering for him.

In this emaciated condition, blood serum engorged the thin sack around the heart. This would cause great pain in the chest as the heart labored to pump what was left of his thickened blood. "I thirst" A soldier gave him a sponge soaked in cheap vinegar. It moistened his tongue enough for more words. "It is finished!" It was a loud voice, the gospel writer records. It was a voice for all the world to hear. This same word is stamped on Roman invoices. We would stamp "PAID IN FULL" Jesus paid our sin debt in full. Praise his name forever! What you and I incurred, a debt of sin against the holiness of God, He paid in full. The justice of God was met in His suffering for our sin. He paid what we owed. Believe it, and you are changed by it.

Then He gave his Spirit to the Father. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." He was in control even of his death. He, bowing his head to the Father, breathed his last breath. The Son of God was no longer in his physical body. Now He had other work to do. He took the keys of death and hell from Satan. He earned that lawful right. Now you and I need no fear death. The veil into the Holy of Holies was torn top to bottom. This 3+ inch thick fifteen foot high veil had separated man from the presence of God. Only a high priest was allowed to enter once a year for all mankind. Now you and I can access God. Heb 10 Tells us the veil of Jesus flesh was torn so we could see the love of God, his sacrifice for us. The Roman soldiers come to break the legs of the crucified to hurry death so the Jews could take them down before the holiday began. Jesus already appeared dead. A Roman soldier would pay with his life if a prisoner escaped, so he thrust a spear up into the heart and the blood and water pouring out confirmed that He was indeed dead. Jesus secret disciples now came out of hiding. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea did not want Jesus body cast in the burn pile where most criminal bodies went, so they asked permission from Pilate to bury him. When Pilate was assured He was dead, he gave them permission. One provided the linen to wrap the body and the other brought the spices to cover the smell of decay. They put him in one of their own tombs. Touching the dead made them unclean and therefore unable to participate in this highest, holiest, feast. But more than that it separated them forever as Jesus' disciples.

The disciples had gone into hiding. It was a dark night. They may have wondered if they were next to be crucified. Had all their hopes been lost? Were the three years of miracles and dreams to end here? That Sabbath day they must have reminisced about the miracles and expressions of love and continued to mourn. If He rose from the dead... He would be Jehovah. It was too much. To believe God would take a human body and die for me. How could that be

possible? All their hopes for deliverance from Rome were still hard to let go of. And the dream that their hopes would become a real and living thing with the Messiah of God reigning over men... But now He lies cold and dead in a tomb.

The women quickly purchased spices and perfumes, but as the Sabbath was about to begin, they did not have time to anoint the body. They agreed to meet at dawn the morning after the Sabbath. Dusk, and the Sabbath ends as it began, at the sight of the first three stars. They don't yet know it has been sealed and that guards stand before the tomb. One more sleepless night wondering why, trying to recall what He had said. Wondering what it all meant and how they could go on...without Him.

How do you think you would have felt at that moment?

Why were the disciples unable to believe his words about rising again the third day?

Are you willing to permanently lose status and respect in your world like Nic and Joe did when they took Jesus to the tomb, because of your love for Him?

The Victory!

Matthew 28:1-10 John 20:10-18 Luke 24:13-35 John 20:19 – 21:23 Acts 1:1-11

Fear took over and they hid behind locked doors. After two sleepless nights and still in mourning their loss, the women came knocking on the door with some incredible tale of angels and an empty tomb. They told the message that Jesus had said to them almost a week earlier. "Meet me in Galilee." But their hearts were in too much pain to dare to believe. Women, they get all emotional. No wonder the law says not to believe their testimony. How could He have escaped those trained soldiers guarding the tomb even if He did come back to life?

But Peter and John both ran to the tomb. John outran Peter, but Peter ran into the tomb. The linen that Joseph of Arimathea had wrapped the body in was laying there and the head shroud neatly folded. John began to believe – but Peter could not bring himself to it. If Jesus is alive, he has to face Him. He has to confess his failure and denial, his fear and love of life.

Back in the locked room two of the brothers came to visit. They brought the story of meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They told how they were downcast and then this stranger started to explain the Scriptures, how their hearts burned within them as He spoke. And then when He broke the bread, their eyes were open - It was Jesus!

After the two men left for Galilee, arguments flew back and forth - He was alive. No, it is someone who looks like Him. He told us this was what was going to happen. No, you misunderstood Him. It's all over. Peter spoke up and said he

had seen Him but he would not say any more. --And then suddenly – right there in the middle of them all – He stands. How can that be? The door is locked. He is dead. They saw the spear plunged into his side. Maybe it's his ghost.

"Fear not" he says. And then He showed them the wounds, and it was as if those wounds meant something special to Him, the reason they did not need to fear. Only later did they realize He was displaying His love for them. Some stood trembling, others dropped to their knees. Then He rebuked them for their unbelief. He tells them again, to meet Him in Galilee.

And suddenly, He is gone – just like He came. Silence fills the room, and then weeping. But not the kind of weeping that had been heard the day before. "He's alive!" one says. "He is risen," says another and another and another and John declares, He is risen indeed. They find Thomas who was not there and he says he will have to see it to believe it. When they are all together Jesus appears again and uses Thomas own words to invite him to touch his wounds. Thomas reply, "My Lord and my God." Jesus tells him he is blessed but that those of us who do not get to see are more blessed. God loves faith and believing without seeing truly pleases his heart. Are you one of those truly blessed believers? Finally they leave Jerusalem and head toward Galilee. We could go on, but we should pause here and realize with the disciples – He's alive! No one else in any age has conquered death on their own. What does that mean?

First it means that death cannot hold Him. Acts 2:24 It means that He has the power over death itself – in other words – He holds the keys of death and Hades Rev 1:18. He shared our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Heb 2:14,15 "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor 15:54-57

Secondly it means God the Father accepted the sacrifice. You see when Jesus died with the sins of you and me and all mankind upon Him, if He was not an unblemished perfect sacrifice then the payment for sin would not have been accepted. But because He rose from the dead we know that shout that was his last breath was a shout of victory. The translation you hold may say "It is finished." But that same Greek word is stamped on paid Roman invoices. It means the debt is cancelled. Payment has been accepted. Now you know why Jesus shouted that one last word! Resurrection is proof of payment accepted.

Thirdly – it means right now – **today, if you die to your self-life – with Jesus on the cross - you can experience the resurrection with Jesus.**

Let me ask you – have you experienced the resurrection of Jesus? Not read about it, not thought about it, actually experienced it? Listen to the Word “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Read all of Romans 6 about resurrected life. In Col 3 Paul tells the Colossians, Since then you have been raised with Christ... Have you been raised with Christ? 1Pt1:3 ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who in his great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope – HOW – Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ And the clincher is Eph 2:6 ‘And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.’ On the throne with Christ – not in the future, but now, – seated – past tense. Are you there? If not die with Him and in being raised with Him you will be there.

Fourthly - it means that one day our physical body – the molecules – though scattered across the ocean – will one day be gathered and transformed and you will physically be raised. Skeptical? Tell me how did Jesus call up the decomposing stinky body of Lazarus. You don’t think God has the power? His word can stop a storm, or recreate a destroyed nerve, or make a world out of nothing. For in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1Cor 15:52 “ ... because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence.” Eph 4:14

1. Death has been defeated
2. God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice in your place
3. Right now you can walk in resurrection power
4. Everyone who dies in Christ will be physically raised as He was

Satan hates resurrection because it means He is defeated! He bribed the guards through the priest to lie about it. The Apostles duty was to bear witness of the resurrection, not just with words but by walking in the power of it. -He’s alive! He has risen. ... Is your life witness to that fact? If not, it can be. If you will die with Him you can be raised with Him to new life right now, this morning! One last verse from the Apostle Paul’s last recorded message:

2Tim 2:8 REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST, RAISED FROM THE DEAD, DESCENDED FROM DAVID. THIS IS MY GOSPEL!

Jesus ascended into heaven while many of the disciples looked on. He told them to go into all the world and preach not just to the Jews, but to everyone the good new of what He has done for us.

What does his death and resurrection mean to you?

Are you experiencing resurrected life?

Are you living in confident assurance that after you die your body will be raised and transformed?