

The Sufferings and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ According To The Four Evangelists

By: John C. Lawrenz

[following the New International Version translation and patterned after the *Passion History* as printed in the *Lutheran Lectionary* of the former Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.]

Jesus' Readiness to Suffer and Die

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching. Jesus said to His disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away - and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Then the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the High Priest, whose name was Caiaphas. They plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill Him. "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the Temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. Judas asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" They counted out for him thirty silver coins. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus sent two of His disciples, Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

"Where do You want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

He replied, "Go into the city. As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher says, My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with My disciples at your house. Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples? He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.'"

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

In the evening at the proper hour, Jesus and His Apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

A dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them are given the title Benefactor. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater? The one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by Me in My trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God, so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "You shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well."

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For He knew who was going to betray Him, and that was why He said not every one was clean.

When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call Me 'Teacher; and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Once you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine from now until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom. I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scripture; 'He who shares My bread has lifted up his heel against Me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts Me; and whoever accepts Me accepts the One who sent Me."

Jesus' Agony of Soul in Gethsemane

After Jesus had said this, He was deeply troubled and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me - one who is eating with Me. The hand of him who is going to betray Me is with Mine on the table." His disciples were very sad. They stared at one another, At a loss to know which of them He meant, and began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. One after the other they began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Jesus replied, "It is one of the Twelve. The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

The disciple whom Jesus loved was reclining next to Him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask Him which one He means."

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

Then Judas, the one who would betray Him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you." As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

"What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, then God will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify Him at once."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread on the night He was betrayed, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat: this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." They all drank from it.

"My little children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new commandment I give you: Love one

another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.”

Simon Peter asked Him, “Lord, where are You going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You.”

Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for Me? Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you all as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers.”

But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death.”

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me.”

Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in Me. Yes, what is written about He is reaching its fulfillment.”

The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

“That is enough,” He replied.

When Jesus had finished praying, and they had sung a hymn, He went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him.

Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of Me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will.”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “today yes, tonight -before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown Me three times.”

But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You.” And all the others said the same.

Then Jesus went with His disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, a place called Gethsemane. Jesus and His disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

On reaching the place, Jesus said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray. Pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, along with Him and began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and fell on the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from Him. “*Abba*, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will. Not My will, but Yours be done.”

When He rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. “Simon,” He said to Peter, “are you asleep? Could you men not keep watch with Me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.”

When He came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to Him. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Returning to the disciples the third time, He said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes My betrayer!"

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

While He was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. With Him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and elders of the people. Judas was leading them.

Jesus knowing all that was going to happen to Him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am He," Jesus said. Judas the traitor was standing there with them. When Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again He asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I told you that I am He," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for Me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words He had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those You gave me." "Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them. "The one I kiss is the man; arrest Him and lead Him away under guard."

Going at once to Jesus, Judas approached Jesus to kiss Him and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? Friend, do what you came for."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested Him. When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" One of Jesus' companions, Simon Peter, reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

"No more of this! Put your sword back into its sheath," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me? Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" And He touched the man's ear and healed him.

At that time Jesus said to the crowd, the chief Priests, the officers of the Temple guard, and the elders, who had come for Him, "Am I leading a rebellion; that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture Me? Every day I sat in the Temple courts teaching, and you did not lay a hand on Me. But this is your hour - when darkness reigns! This has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." All the disciples deserted Him and fled.

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound Him and took Him away.

A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

They brought Jesus first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year. Then they took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the people had assembled. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the High Priest, he went with Jesus into the High Priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the High Priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there, and brought Peter in. It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

One of the servant girls of the High Priest on duty at the door came by. When she saw Peter seated there in the firelight warming himself she looked closely at him and said, "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus. Are you not another of that man's disciples?"

He replied, "Girl, I am not. I don't know Him. I don't know or understand what you're talking about." Simon Peter went out into the entryway and the rooster crowed.

A little later, when the servant girl again saw him there, she said to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Someone else saw him and said, "You are one of them."

Again he denied it, with an oath, "I am not! I don't know the man!"

About an hour later, another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with Him, for he is a Galilean." Those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." One of the High Priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with Him in the olive grove?"

Then Peter began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Just as he was speaking the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside, broke down, and wept bitterly.

Now Annas had sent Him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest.

The High Priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching.

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question Me? Ask those who heard Me. Surely they know what I said."

When Jesus had said this, one of the officials nearby struck Him in the face. "Is that any way to answer the High Priest?" he demanded.

"If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "speak up about it. But if I spoke the truth, why did you hit Me?"

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against Him, but their statements did not agree. Finally two came forward and declared, "We heard Him say, I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days. I will destroy this manmade temple and in three days will build another, not made by man." Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

Then the High Priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are You not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against You?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the High Priest asked Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God."

"I am," said Jesus, "it is as you say. But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the High Priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

Some began to spit at Him. They blindfolded Him, and struck Him with their fists. Others slapped Him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" The men who were guarding Jesus began to mock and to beat Him and to say many other insulting things to Him.

Jesus Before Pilate

Very early in the morning, at daybreak, the chief priests with the elders, the teachers of the Law, and the whole Sanhedrin met together, and Jesus was led before them. "If You are the Christ," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe Me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

They all asked, "Are You then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You are right in saying I am."

Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from His own lips."

The whole assembly rose. They bound Jesus and led Him from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor and handed Him over to Pontius Pilate, the governor.

When Judas, who betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the Temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the Law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled. "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on Him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace. They wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

"If He were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed Him over to you."

Pilate said, "Take Him yourselves and judge Him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death He was going to die would be fulfilled.

Then the chief priests and elders began to accuse Him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

Pilate then went back inside the palace and summoned Jesus. Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked Him, "Are You the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about Me?"

"Do You think I am a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was Your people and Your chief priests who handed You over to me. What is it You have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out to the Jews, and announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

The chief priests and elders accused Jesus of many things. Pilate asked Him, "Don't You hear how many things they are accusing You of?" Jesus gave no answer. So again Pilate asked Him, "Aren't You going to answer?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge - to the great amazement of the governor.

The chief priests and elders insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by His teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

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

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see Him perform some miracle. He plied Him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were standing there, vehemently accusing Him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked Him. Dressing Him in an elegant robe, they sent Him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends - before this they had been enemies.

Jesus Condemned to Death

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought

me this man as One who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined Him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against Him. Neither has Herod, for he sent Him back to us. As you can see, He has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish Him and then release Him.”

Now it was the governor’s custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate said to them, “It is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Which of the two do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus, the King of the Jews, who is called Christ?” Pilate knew it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, because I have suffered a great deal today in a dream on account of Him.” But the chief priests and the elders stirred up the crowd and persuaded them to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

With one voice they cried out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again, “What shall I do, then, with Jesus, who is called Christ, the one you call the king of the Jews?”

“Crucify Him!” they shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

For a third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in Him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have Him punished and then release Him.” But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!” and their shouts prevailed.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace of the governor, the Praetorium, and called together the whole company of soldiers. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on him, wove a crown of thorns and set it on His head, put a staff in His right hand and knelt in front of Him worshipping. They spit on Him, struck Him in the face, and took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again. They mocked Him and began to call out to Him; “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, “Look, I am bringing Him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against Him.” When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw Him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

But Pilate answered, “You take Him and crucify Him. As for me, I find no basis for a charges against Him.” The Jews insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. “Where do You come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. “Do You refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t You realize I have power either to free You or to crucify You?”

Jesus answered, “You have no power over Me that was not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar’s. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as The Stone Pavement, which in Aramaic is Gabbatha. It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, Pilate granted their demand, wanting to satisfy the crowd. He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said, “it is your responsibility!”

All the people answered, "Let His blood be on us and on our children!"

Then he released Barabbas, the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, and had Jesus flogged. He then surrendered Jesus to their will to be crucified.

The soldiers of the governor took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him. Carrying His own cross, He went out to the Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was passing by on his way in from the country. They seized him, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed Jesus, including women who mourned and wailed for Him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then, 'They will say to the mountains: Fall on us; and to the hills: Cover us!' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Jesus' Death on the Cross

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be executed. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means The Place of the Skull. And they offered Him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, He refused to drink it.

It was the third hour when they crucified Him, along with the criminals - one on His right, the other on His left, and Jesus in the middle. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was counted with the lawless ones." Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened above His head on the cross. The written charge against Him read, Jesus Of Nazareth, The King Of The Jews. The sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. 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."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them. They cast lots to see what each would get. The undergarment remained. It was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided My garments among themselves and cast lots for My clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. And sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

The people too stood watching. 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, come down from the cross and save Yourself! Come down from the cross, if You are the Son of God!" Even the rulers sneered at Him. 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! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe. He trusts in God. Let God rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" In the same way the robbers who were crucified with Him heaped insults on Him. The soldiers also came up and mocked Him. They offered Him wine vinegar and said, "If You are the king of the Jews, save Yourself!"

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: "Aren't You the Christ? 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, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise."

Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her

into his home. It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" - which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" nWhen some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

A jar of wine vinegar was there. Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. But the rest said, "Leave Him alone now. Let's see if Elijah comes to save Him and take Him down."

When He had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."

Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." When He said this, He bowed His head and gave up His life.

At that moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the Holy City and appeared to many people. The centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, and those with him who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and all that had happened. They were terrified, yet they praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man. Surely He was the Son of God!"

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew Him, stood at a distance. They included many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for His needs, among them Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph, and Salome the mother of Zebedee's sons. Many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem were also there.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

But when they came to Jesus and found that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 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. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may have faith. These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of His bones will be broken," and as another Scripture says, "They will look on the One they have pierced."

Jesus' Burial

Later, as evening approached on the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, there came a man named Joseph, a rich man from the Judean town of Arimathea, also a prominent member of the Council, who had not consented to their decision and action. He was a good, upright man who was waiting for the kingdom of God, and he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he feared the Jews.

Going to Pilate, he asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that He was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he had learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. Joseph took the body down and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, which he had bought.

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.

At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb cut out of rock in which no one had ever been laid. They laid Jesus there because it was nearby and also because it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from

Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it. Joseph rolled a big stone in front of the entrance of the tomb and went away. The women went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while He was still alive that impostor said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’. So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first!”

“Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting a guard.