

Holy Week: Background, Sequence, Significance

Section One: The Pre-Last Supper Period

A: *The Players:*

□ Pilate

“Pontius Pilatus was a Roman of the equestrian, or upper middle-class, order... Little is known of his career before ad 26, but in that year the emperor Tiberius appointed him to be the fifth *praefectus* (*hēgemōn*, Mt. 27:2, etc.; the same title is used of Felix in Acts 23 and Festus in Acts 26) of Judaea. Evidence of this title was discovered in 1961 on an inscription at Caesarea, and E. J. Vardaman suggests that this title was used in Pilate’s earlier years, being replaced by *procurator* (the title used by Tacitus and Josephus) later. In accordance with a recent reversal in the policy of the Senate (in ad 21—Tacitus, *Annals* 3. 33–34) Pilate took his wife with him (Mt. 27:19). As procurator he had full control in the province, being in charge of the army of occupation (1 ala—c. 120 men—of cavalry, and 4 or 5 cohorts—c. 2,500–5,000 men—of infantry), which was stationed at Caesarea, with a detachment on garrison duty at Jerusalem in the fortress of Antonia. The procurator had full powers of life and death, and **could reverse capital sentences passed by the Sanhedrin, which had to be submitted to him for ratification. He also appointed the high priests** and controlled the Temple and its funds: the very vestments of the high priest were in his custody and were released only for festivals, when the procurator took up residence in Jerusalem and brought additional troops to patrol the city.

“Even pagan historians mention Pilate only in connection with his authorization of the death of Jesus (Tacitus, *Annals* 15. 44): **his only appearance on the stage of history** is as procurator of Judaea.

“Josephus relates (*Ant.* 18.55; BJ 2.169) that Pilate’s first action on taking up his appointment was to antagonize the Jews by setting up the Roman standards, bearing images of the emperor, at Jerusalem: previous procurators had avoided using such standards in the holy city. Because of the determined resistance of their leaders in spite of threats of death, he yielded to their wishes after 6 days and removed the images back to Caesarea. Philo (*De Legatione ad Gaium* 299ff.) tells how Pilate dedicated a set of golden shields in his own residence at Jerusalem. These bore no image, only an inscription with the names of the procurator and the emperor, but representations were made to Tiberius, who sensibly ordered them to be set up in the temple of Roma et Augustus at Caesarea.

“Josephus (*Ant.* 18.60; BJ 2.175) and Eusebius (*EH* 2. 7) allege a further grievance of the Jews against Pilate, in that he used money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct to convey water to the city from a spring some 40 km away. Tens of thousands of Jews demonstrated against this project when Pilate came up to Jerusalem, presumably at the time of a festival, and he in return sent his troops in disguise against them, so that a large number were slain. It is generally considered that this riot was caused by the Galileans mentioned in Lk. 13:1–2 (whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices), and C. Noldius (*De Vita et Gestis Herodum*, 1660, 249) claimed that Herod’s enmity against Pilate (Lk. 23:12) arose from the fact that Pilate had slain some of Herod’s subjects. This explains Pilate’s subsequent care (Lk. 23:6–7) to send Jesus to be tried before Herod...

“Pilate finally over-reached himself by the slaughter of a number of Samaritans who had assembled at Mt Gerizim in response to the call of a deceiver who had promised to show them that Moses had hidden the sacred vessels there. In spite of the obvious falsehood of this claim (Moses had never crossed Jordan...), a great multitude came armed to the mountain, and Pilate surrounded and routed them, capturing many and executing their ringleaders. A Samaritan delegation went with a protest to Vitellius, who was then governor of Syria, and he ordered Pilate to answer this accusation of the Jews before the emperor, ordering Marcellus to Judaea in Pilate’s place (*Jos., Ant.* 18.85–89). Pilate was on his journey to Rome when Tiberius died. We know nothing of the outcome of the trial, but Eusebius (*EH* 2. 7) preserves a report of otherwise unknown Gk. annalists that Pilate was forced to commit suicide during the reign of Gaius (ad 37–41).

“The above incidents are all related by Josephus or Philo. E. Stauffer draws attention to a further instance of provocation of the Jews by Pilate. According to G. F. Hill (*Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine*, 1914), the procurators minted small copper coins to meet local needs in Palestine. Normally these bore symbolic designs of natural features, such as trees and ears of corn, in deference to the second commandment. In ad 29–31 Pilate issued coins bearing imperial religious insignia, the *lituus*, or augur’s staff, and the *patera*, or pagan libation bowl. Such issues ceased after ad 31, and the British Museum has a coin of Pilate on which his successor Felix appears to have over stamped the staff with a palmbranch, though Y. Meshorer (*Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period*, 1967) states that Felix also produced coins with symbols of a provocative nature, such as Roman weapons, which underlined the Roman subjugation of Judaea.

“Philo can find no good thing to say of Pilate: in *De Legatione ad Gaium* 301 he describes him as ‘by nature rigid and stubbornly harsh’ and ‘of spiteful disposition and an exceeding wrathful man’, and speaks of ‘the bribes, the acts of pride, the acts of violence, the outrages, the cases of spiteful treatment, the constant murders without trial, the ceaseless and most grievous brutality’ of which the Jews might accuse him. **The verdict of the NT is that he was a weak man, ready to serve expediency rather than principle, whose authorization of the judicial murder of the Saviour was due less to a desire to please the Jewish authorities than to fear of imperial displeasure if Tiberius heard of further unrest in Judaea.** This is made abundantly evident by his mockery of the Jews in the wording of the superscription (Jn. 19:19–22). [*New Bible Dictionary*]

“Pilate’s role in the death of Jesus is recorded in each Gospel (Mt 27:2; Mk 15:1; Lk 23:1; Jn 18:29) and was remembered as a historical datum in the preaching of the later church (Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; 1 Tm 6:13; Ignatius: *Mg* 11; *Tr* 9:1; *Sm* 1; and the *Gospel of Peter*, 1:1; 2:3–5; 8:29; 31; 11:43; 45; 49). In order to secure the conviction and death of Jesus, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin brought their charges to Pilate. While the accusations now took on a political flavor to evoke the governor’s interest, he still could find no grounds for condemnation. In the end, Pilate is unexpectedly accommodating and Jesus is killed. **Why would Pilate act in behalf of the Sanhedrin?** Two answers are possible. First, there may have been collusion between Caiaphas and Pilate that stemmed from a longstanding relationship and conterminous reign. **Ten of Caiaphas’ 18 years in power were under Pilate and when the prefect was dismissed in a.d. 36, Caiaphas was simultaneously removed.** Second, if Jesus’ trial occurred in a.d. 33, **Pilate may have been concerned about his impeachment.** He had originally been appointed by Sejanus (prefect of the praetorians in Rome who had appointed men to colonial office under Tiberius) but in the autumn of a.d. 31 Sejanus died. This explains why a Jewish delegation could report directly to Tiberius during the votive shield incident. Hence the charge recorded in John 19:12 (“if you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend”) would have had genuine power over Pilate. Pilate perceived his jeopardy and was anxious to pacify the Jews and please the emperor. This may help to explain an inscription recently found in Caesarea bearing the name of both Pilate and Tiberius in connection with the dedication of a building or temple to the emperor. [*Baker Ency of the Bible*]

□ Herod

“Herod the tetrarch’ (Lk. 3:19, etc.), who bore the distinctive name of Antipas. He was Herod’s younger son by Malthace, and inherited the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father’s kingdom. In the Gospels he is conspicuous chiefly for his part in the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist (Mk. 6:14–28) and for his brief encounter with Jesus when the latter was sent to him by Pilate for judgment (Lk. 23:7ff.). Jesus is recorded as having once described him as ‘that fox’ (Lk. 13:31f.). **He was the ablest of Herod’s sons, and like his father was a great builder; the city of Tiberias on the Lake of Galilee was built by him (ad 22) and named in honour of the Emperor Tiberius.** He married the daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas IV, but divorced her in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip. According to the Synoptic Evangelists, John the Baptist incurred the wrath of Antipas for denouncing his second marriage as unlawful; Josephus (*Ant.* 18.118) says that Antipas was afraid that John’s great public following might develop into a revolt. Aretas naturally resented the insult offered to his daughter, and seized the opportunity a few years later to wage war against Antipas (ad 36). The forces of Antipas were heavily defeated, and **Josephus says that many people regarded the defeat as divine retribution for Antipas’ killing of John the Baptist.** In ad 39 Antipas was denounced to the Emperor Gaius by his nephew Agrippa (see 4) as a plotter; he was deposed from his tetrarchy and ended his days in exile.[*NBD*]

“The only important event recorded early in Antipas’s reign was the **downfall** of his brother **Archelaus** in a.d. 6. **This was accomplished when he, his brother Philip, and a Jewish and Samaritan delegation went to Rome to complain about his rule to Tiberius** (*Ant.* xvii.13.2 [342–44]; *BJ* ii.7.3 [111]). Although Antipas remained a tetrarch, he was able to obtain the **dynastic title Herod** (cf. *BJ* ii.9.1 [167]; *Ant.* xviii.2.1 [27]), which was of great significance both to his subjects and to the political and social circles of the Roman world. Tiberius may have given him this title in lieu of the coveted title king. [*ISBE*]

□ Sadducees

”Josephus identifies the Sadducees as one of the three varieties of Judaism that existed during the Maccabean period... Josephus tells us that the Sadducees (1) rejected the concept of fate and accepted the idea of free will, so that God could not be held responsible for evil, (2) did not believe that the soul exists after death and (3) did not believe that there were rewards and punishments after one died. Josephus also mentions that the Sadducees observed nothing apart from the law and that they considered it a virtue to dispute with their teachers. He further states that the Sadducees did not have the support of the masses, that they only enjoyed the “confidence of the wealthy” (Josephus *Ant.* 13.10.6 §297), and that only a few men of the “highest standing” know the Sadducean doctrines (Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.4 §17). He claims that the Sadducees were “boorish” (Josephus *J.W.* 2.8.14 §166) and “more heartless” than other Jews (*Ant.* 20.9.1 §199). He claims that the Sadducees frequently accepted Pharisaic doctrine. He names only one high priest, Ananas, as a Sadducee. .. The NT considers the Sadducees’ rejection of resurrection as their primary characteristic, for the issue of resurrection was central to the early church. The Gospel of Mark does not place the Sadducees in opposition to the Pharisees, and Matthew often places them together as if they were two similar groups. Luke mentions the Sadducees only in his discussion of resurrection. John does not mention the Sadducees. Only in Acts do we find the two groups disagreeing; however, the disagreement centers only on the issue of resurrection. While some Sadducees seem to be attached to the temple, the NT does not equate them with the priests, or the priests with them. [*Dictionary of New Testament Background*]

□ Pharisees

“But all three source collections, although they understand the Pharisees differently, support the conclusions that: they were a **lay**, not priestly, association who were thought to be expert in the laws; they were in a sociological sense brokers of power between the aristocracy and the masses; **they promoted their special living tradition in addition to the biblical laws**; they were interested in issues of ritual purity and tithing; and they believed in afterlife, judgment and a densely populated, organized spirit world. [*Dictionary of New Testament background*]

“What can be learned of the Pharisees from a comparison of the three major sources? First, the **Pharisees were the rivals of the Sadducees**. At the time of the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees were the leading party and held so much influence over the common people that the Sadducees were often forced to conform to pharisaic practice (Mt. 23:2; Josephus *Ant.* xviii.1.4 [17]; *TB Yoma* 19b). Second, the Pharisees in the NT are definitely a group distinct from the scribes, though **some** Pharisees were scribes. This lack of complete synonymity is also reflected in the rabbinic literature, where the[*y*] are often found as separate groups (*TB Niddah* 33b; *Mish Parah* xi.5f). Third, the Pharisees followed and perpetuated an oral law, the **“tradition of the elders,” which, they believed, had also come from Moses** (*Mish Aboth* i.1–12; ii.8). For example, they believed in the resurrection of the body, a concept, among others, that the Sadducees rejected (Acts 23:6–9). In addition, the Pharisees followed a strict system of religious practices (Josephus *BJ* i.5.2 [110]). They fasted (Mt. 6:16; Lk. 18:12), made proselytes (Mt. 23:15; Josephus *Vita* 2 [11f]; *Mish Demai* ii.12), prayed (Mt. 6:5; Lk. 18:12; *Baraita* to *TB Berakoth* 47b), and tithed their goods (Lk. 11:42; 18:12; *Mish Demai* ii.12). There were ranks among their members, including those who were initiates and others who were leaders (*Vita* 5 [21]; Jn. 3:1–10), scribes (Mk. 2:16; Acts 23:9), and priests (*Vita* 39 [198]). **They sent out deputations to examine individuals who did not conform to their policies or doctrines** (*Vita* 39 [196]; Jn. 1:19–24). They were very zealous for their vision of Judaism (Gal. 1:14) and, on occasion, ruthlessly opposed their enemies, real or imagined, by means of bribery, incarcerations, and executions (cf. Josephus *BJ* i.5.3 [113f]; Jn. 18:3; Acts 8:1; 9:1f)..... **Even while the Pharisees had dominant status, they came under increasing criticism**. Anti-pharisaic sentiment is associated with various passages in the Gospels, especially Mt. 23... . Severe criticism, however, is also found in some of the documents from Qumrân and in the rabbinic literature.

“**The Qumrân community rejected pharisaism because it frequently nullified the law while trying to protect it from transgression**. If the Damascus Document (CD) is an Essene product, then those described in CD 1:18–2:1 who “presented false expositions” may well be the Pharisees and pharisaic scribes of Jerusalem. Similarly, **1QH 4:10 speaks of those who seek to exchange the teaching of God for “smooth words.” ... Hillel established a legal formula (*prozbul*) that, in effect, annulled the law of remission in Dt. 15:2. Such an exegesis, aimed more at circumventing the text than expounding it, “represents precisely what the anti-Pharisaic criticism of the Zadokites calls a ‘deceitful exposition of the Torah’ ”.**

“The NT criticism of the Pharisees is in some ways similar to that from Qumrân. Jesus accused the Pharisees of being “blind guides” (Mt. 23:16). **He also rebuked them for nullifying the word of God by means of their tradition, closing His remarks with, “and many such things you do”** (Mk. 7:6–13). Apparently He could have given examples other than the Corban issue, **in which pharisaic Halakah contradicted the intended meaning of Scripture**. Another similarity is in the criticism on the subject of divorce. CD 4:20f rebukes those who take two wives in their lifetimes and Jesus (Mk. 10:2–9) condemns divorce “for any cause.” Both passages cite Gen. 1:27 to prove that God’s original intent was that marriage should be with one partner only. In addition, Jesus frequently referred to the Pharisees as “hypocrites,” implying not that Jesus saw their teaching as always wrong but that they failed to follow it themselves.

“The criticism of the Pharisees **in the rabbinic literature** is neither as sharply focused nor as plentiful as that found in the Dead Sea Scrolls or in the NT. Since, **however, the rabbis who rebuilt Judaism after the fall of Jerusalem seem to have avoided associating themselves with the name “Pharisee,”** embarrassment on the part of these direct heirs of the spiritual legacy of pharisaism calls for an explanation.

“A rather obscure reference is *Mish Sotah* iii.4, which states, “a foolish saint, a wicked man with cunning, a woman who is *perushah*, and the wounds of the Pharisees [Heb *makkôṭ perûšîm*], these wear out the world.” While it is not clear what the *makkôṭ perûšîm* are, they are certainly uncommendable in the eyes of Rabbi Joshua. Another example is *TB Sotah* 22b, in which Alexander Janneus exhorts his wife, “Fear not the Pharisees and the non-Pharisees but the hypocrites who ape the Pharisees; because their deeds are the deeds of Zimri but they expect a reward like Phineas” (Soncino ed). Seven kinds of Pharisee, most of them insincere, appear in *TP Berakoth* ix.5. Two who are sincere are the *pārûš* who loves like Job and the *pārûš* who loves like Abraham. The others are interested in fulfilling their obligation to the law **only if** they have the time or if in doing so their sin and guilt may be counterbalanced. The *makkôṭ perûšîm* are more clearly described in *TP Sotah* iii.4, where they designate the practices of those who use casuistry to take advantage of someone. Two examples are given. In one, a group of children uses pharisaic legal advice in attempting to wrest financial control of the estate from their widowed mother. This parallels Jesus’ accusation in Mk. 12:40 that the Pharisees “devour widows’ houses.” [*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*]

□ Sanhedrin

“Sanhedrin: the transcription used in the Talmud for Gk. *synedrion* (from which Heb. *sanhedrîn* is a loan-word). Both before and at the time of Christ, it was the name of the highest tribunal of the Jews which met in Jerusalem and **also for various lesser tribunals**. In evv the term is often translated ‘council’. **There are parallels in classical writings to similar courts in Greece and Rome**. Josephus used the word for the council that governed the five districts into which the Roman Gabinius, proconsul of Syria 57–55 bc, divided Judaea (*Ant.* 14.90; BJ 1.170). Josephus first uses it of the Jews when referring to the summoning of the young Herod before it for alleged misdemeanours (*Ant.* 14.163–184). In the NT the term refers either to the supreme Jewish court (Mt. 26:59; Mk. 14:55; Lk. 22:66; Jn. 11:47; Acts 4:15; 5:21ff.; 6:12ff.; 22:30; 23:1ff.; 24:20) or simply to **any** court of justice (Mt. 5:22). In a few cases other words are substituted for *synedrion*, e.g. *presbyterion*, ‘body of elders’ (Lk. 22:66; Acts 22:5), and *gerousia*, ‘senate’ (Acts 5:21). [*New Bible Dictionary*.]

“The history of the Sanhedrin is not clear at all points. Traditionally it originated with the seventy elders who assisted Moses (Nu. 11:16–24). Ezra is supposed to have reorganized this body after the Exile. **The Persians gave authority to the Jews in local affairs** (Ezr. 7:25–26; 10:14), and **it is possible that the elders** of Ezr. 5:5, 9; 6:7, 14; 10:8, and the rulers of Ne. 2:16; 4:14, 19; 5:7; 7:5, **made up a body** which resembled the later Sanhedrin. Later, the Greeks permitted a body known as the *gerousia* (‘senate’) which was made up of elders

and represented the nation (Jos., *Ant.* 12.142; 1Macc. 12:3, 6; 14:20). In the days of the Seleucids this *gerousia* had dealings with such rulers as Antiochus the Great in 208 bc and with Antiochus V (Jos., *Ant.* 12.128), and **was then apparently composed of elders drawn from the aristocracy** (1 Macc. 12:6; 2 Macc. 1:10; 4:44; 11:27). In the days of the Maccabean revolt it was this council that united with Jonathan, the high priest and leader of the people, to make an alliance with Sparta (1 Macc. 12:5ff.), and it was they who advised him about building fortresses in Judaea (1 Macc. 12:35; cf. 13:36; 14:20, 28, 47). **It would appear that the high priest presided over this body.** ... Under the Romans, except for a short period under Gabinius [d.48/47bc), this body had wide powers. The term used for the district councils was subsequently adopted for the more powerful *gerousia* at Jerusalem, and by the close of the 1st century bc this council was known as the *synedrion*, though other terms such as *gerousia* and *boulē* ('council') were also used at times. **It was Julius Caesar who reversed the plan of Gabinius and extended the power of the Sanhedrin once again over all Judaea, although during the reign of Herod (37–4 bc) its powers were severely curtailed.** Under the procurators (ad 6–66) the powers of the Sanhedrin were extensive, the internal government of the country being in its hands (Jos., *Ant.* 20.200), and it was recognized even among the diaspora (Acts 9:2; 22:5; 26:12) in some ways. From the days of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, its direct powers were, however, limited to Judaea, since it had no power over Jesus while he was in Galilee. In Judaea there were, of course, the local authorities who tried cases locally but reported certain cases to the central authority. The councils (*synedria*) of Mt. 5:22; 10:17; Mk. 13:9, and the *boulai* of Jos., *Ant.* 4.214, etc. **were local courts of at least seven elders, and in large towns up to twenty-three elders.** ... **After ad 70 the Sanhedrin was abolished and replaced by the Beth Din (Court of Judgment)** which is said to have met at Jabneh (ad 68–80), Usah (80–116), Shafran (140–163), Sepphoris (163–193) and Tiberias (193–220). **Though regarded in the Talmud as continuous with the Sanhedrin, it was essentially different, being composed of scribes whose decisions had only moral and religious authority.** [NBD]

“Both the NT and Josephus agree that in the first century the chief priests (*archiereis*) were the key figures in the Sanhedrin (Mt 27:41; Mk 14:53; Josephus *J.W.* 2.14.8 §301; 2.15.2–16.3 §§316–42). These were probably the former high priests and members of the priestly aristocracy from which the high priests were chosen and belonged to the party of the Sadducees (Acts 4:1; 5:17; Josephus *Ant.* 20.9.1 §199). The **scribes** (*grammateis*) were the **second major component of the Sanhedrin and dominated the body** (Acts 5:34; 23:6; Josephus *Ant.* 18.1.4 §17; *J.W.* 2.17.3 §411). In the Persian period all the members of the Sanhedrin (*gerousia*) were called “elders” (*presbyteroi*, 1 Macc 14:20; 2 Macc 4:44). **By NT times the term “elders” was used for a third group consisting of priests and lay members of the nobility** (Mt 26:3; 27:1; 28:11–12) within the Sanhedrin. From observing the synonyms for these elders we learn that they are leading men of the people (Lk 19:47; Josephus *Life* §194), the leading men of Jerusalem, the powerful and the dignitaries (Josephus *J.W.* 2.15.2 §316; 2.17.2 §410; *Life* §9). [*Dictionary of New Testament background*]

“Only the high priest could preside over the Sanhedrin (though later at Jamnia two scribes held the positions of president and assistant). Next in rank to the high priest were the chief priests, whose presence and power in the Sanhedrin were due to their office in the temple.

They were uniformly members of the **sadducean aristocracy**, which solidified them into a powerful party. Next came the elders, the term not being used in the original, broader sense of all members of the Sanhedrin, but in the later more narrow sense describing **lay members (which includes priests) of the Sanhedrin coming from the more influential families of Jerusalem, who like the chief priests were consistently Sadducees**. The sadducean monopoly of the Sanhedrin began to diminish under Queen Alexandra when the pharisaic scribes gained admission. **Herod's hostility toward the nobility led to a substantial increase in the pharisaic influence in the Sanhedrin**, to the point that in the Roman period the Pharisees' support was necessary for any decision to be made or carried out. The resultant change in the complexion of the Sanhedrin was nevertheless not from a council of nobles to a community of scholars, but rather from a body ruled solely by the aristocracy to one which was a mixture of sadducean nobility (priestly and lay) and pharisaic scholars. [ISBE]

□ The Chief Priest(s)

“The office of high priest is frequently referred to in the NT. Several high priests are named, the plurality of current and former holders of the office reflecting the nature of the position as **an essentially political appointment as distinct from its oldest definition, that of an office passing from father to son on the death of the father**. The two most significant high priests in the NT are those who held office during the lifetime of Jesus. **Annas** was high priest about a.d. 6–15, but **even after he ceased to hold the office formally, he continued to exert considerable influence through his son-in-law, the high priest Caiaphas** (c. a.d. 18–36). Both were significant figures in the trial of Jesus. At a later date, Ananias, son of Nedebaeus, was high priest (c. a.d. 47–58) and president of the Sanhedrin during the time in which Paul was brought to trial. [Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible]

“**CAIAPHAS**. The name of Joseph, a son-in-law of Annas (cf. Jn. 18:13), who filled the post of high priest ca a.d. 18–36, and then was deposed by Vitellius (cf. Josephus *Ant.* xviii.2.2; 4.3). He is mentioned by Luke as holding office at the time of John the Baptist's preaching in the wilderness (Lk. 3:2). ... Caiaphas took a leading part in the trial and condemnation of Jesus. It was in his court or palace that the chief priests (Sadducees) and Pharisees, who together constituted the Sanhedrin, assembled “in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him” (cf. Mt. 26:3f; Jn. 11:49). **The regal claims of the new Messiah and the growing fame of His works had made them dread both the vengeance of imperial Rome upon their nation, and the loss of their own personal authority and prestige** (cf. Jn. 11:48). But Caiaphas pointed a way out of their dilemma: let them bide their time till the momentary enthusiasm of the populace was spent (cf. Mt. 26:5), and **then by the single sacrifice of Jesus they could at once get rid of a dangerous rival and propitiate the frowns of Rome** (cf. Jn. 11:49f; 18:14). ... The commentary of John upon this (Jn. 11:51f) indicates how the death of Jesus was indeed to prove a blessing not only for Israel but also for all the children of God; but not in the manner which the cold-blooded state-craft of Caiaphas intended. The advice of the high priest was accepted by the Sanhedrin (v 53), and they succeeded in arresting Jesus. After being led “to Annas first” (18:13), Jesus was conducted thence in bonds to Caiaphas (v 24). [ISBE]

B: Jesus' Claims to Authority:

□ The Triumphal Entry

And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to Me. 3 "And if anyone says something to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." 4 Now this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

5 "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold your King is coming to you, Gentle, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

6 And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them, 7 and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid on them their garments, on which He sat. 8 And most of the multitude spread their garments in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees, and spreading them in the road. 9 And the multitudes going before Him, and those who followed after were crying out, saying,

"Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!"

10 And when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" 11 And the multitudes were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." [Mt 21.1ff]

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." [Luke 19.39]

"Among the crowds of Galilean pilgrims arriving on foot in Jerusalem for the Passover festival, Jesus chose to make a conspicuous entry on a donkey. ... The instructions in vs 1–3 suggest that it had been carefully prepared. It was, as Matthew makes clear, **an acted allusion to Zechariah's prophecy (Zc. 9:9–10) of the coming of the Messianic King.... The disciples and the Galilean crowd recognized the allusion, and turned the arrival into a triumphal procession.** Their shouts in v 9 made no secret of their belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, now coming to set up his reign in Israel's capital. ... The people of Jerusalem were, however, taken aback, and the whole city was stirred, not with enthusiasm but with concern: 'Who is this?' Jesus was to them an unknown countryman, little better than a foreigner, from the remote northern province. But the Galilean crowds responded by asserting the claim of 'their' prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee. So we see set up the polarization of attitudes to Jesus which during the next week would have some supporting Jesus (21:46) while others shouted for his crucifixion (27:20ff.)." [*New Bible Commentary*]

“**21:4-7**. Colts that had not yet been ridden sometimes accompanied their mothers. ... The text is messianic, as ancient interpreters generally acknowledged, but applying this part to himself redefines Jesus’ messiahship: officials used donkeys for civil, not military, processions (e.g., 1 Kings 1:33). Thus this text is not a “triumphal entry” in the sense of Roman triumphal processions; it is Jerusalem’s reception of a meek and peaceful king.

21:8. Festal pilgrims were often welcomed in this way, though the acclamation of 21:9 suggests that in Jesus’ case the welcome was on a larger and more significant scale. Cf. Psalm 118:27 (NIV).

21:9. Except for the acclamation “Son of David!” which indicates a recognition of Jesus’ ancestry and a hope that he is the Messiah, their cry is taken from Psalm 118:25–26 (“Hosanna!” means “O save!”). **The Hallel, composed of Psalms 113–118, was sung regularly during Passover season and would be fresh on everyone’s mind**; later generations applied these psalms to the future redemption for which they hoped. Jesus cites Psalm 118 messianically in Matthew 21:42. [BBC]

“**21:6-8**. The disciples got the animals, threw their garments on them to make saddles, and people in the large crowd spread their cloaks (cf. 2 Kings 9:13) and tree branches on the road. Most of these people were pilgrims from Galilee on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They were familiar with Jesus and the many miracles He had performed in Galilee.

21:9. As the people walked along, some before Jesus and some behind Him, they were probably singing some of the pilgrim psalms. Matthew noted that they (including children, v. 15) shouted the words of Psalm 118:26, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. [BKC]

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin 98a*: ... whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . .] **lowly, and riding upon an ass!**—**If they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.**

Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 98, 9: ... The Rabbis interpreted: ‘I,’ [said God], ‘am bound to the vine and the choice vine’ [Israel]. HIS FOAL AND HIS COLT intimate: **when he will come of whom it is written, Lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass** (Zech. IX, 9). [Refers to Gen 49.10]

Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes I, 9: ... R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Isaac: **As the first redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be.** What is stated of the former redeemer? And **Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass.** (Ex. IV, 20). Similarly will it be with the **latter Redeemer, as it is stated, Lowly and riding upon an ass** (Zech. IX, 9). As the former redeemer caused manna to descend, as it is stated, Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you (Ex. XVI, 4), so will the latter Redeemer cause manna to descend, as it is stated. May he be as a rich cornfield in the land (Ps. LXXII, 16). As the former redeemer made a well to rise, so will the latter Redeemer bring up water, as it is stated, And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim (Joel IV, 18).

“...an unbroken colt ... was usually introduced into service while accompanied by its parent [WBC]

“The crowd, an exceptionally large one, understanding something of the festivity of this royal entry into Jerusalem, joins in by carpeting Jesus’ path, some with their clothes (for this practice at the recognition of a king, cf. 2 Kgs 9:13 [*And he said, “Thus and thus he said to me, ‘Thus says the Lord, “I have anointed you king over Israel.””*”] 13 Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it under him on the bare steps, and blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”]; for rabbinic background, *Yal. Exod.* 168; *b. Ketub.* 66b), others with cut branches (palm branches according to John 12:13; cf. 1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7). Thus although the king rides into the city humbly upon the lowly colt of an ass, the crowds bring him into the city with a public demonstration befitting a king. [WBC]

“...a rare word usually meaning “mattress” (of straw or leaves)] which they had cut from the fields’... στῖβός is any layer of leaves, twigs, rushes, and the like, used for bedding, or to make a road easy of travel. This throwing their garments on the horse, and strewing the road with garments and layers of leaves, is all in the way of smoothing the road as a part of the homage rendered. [ICC]

“On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the year one hundred and seventy-one, the **Jews entered the citadel with shouts of jubilation, waving of palm branches**, the music of harps and cymbals and lyres, and the singing of hymns and canticles, because a great enemy of Israel had been destroyed.[NAB, *1 Macc* 13.51]

“The Jews celebrated joyfully for eight days as on the feast of Booths, remembering how, a little while before, they had spent the feast of Booths living like wild animals in caves on the mountains. **7 Carrying rods entwined with leaves, green branches and palms**, they sang hymns of grateful praise to him who had brought about the purification of his own Place. **8** By public edict and decree they prescribed that the whole Jewish nation should celebrate these days every year. **9** Such was the end of Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes.[2 Mac 10:6]

“Therefore, every day that he remained in the city, by reason of his friendship for Herod, he went to that sacred place, being delighted with the spectacle of the building, and of the sacrifices, and all the ceremonies connected with the worship of God, and the regularity which was observed, and the dignity and honour paid to the high priest, and his grandeur when arrayed in his sacred vestments and when about to begin the sacrifices. (297) And after he had adorned the temple with all the offerings in his power to contribute, and had conferred many benefits on the inhabitants, doing them many important services, and having said to Herod many friendly things, and having been replied to in corresponding terms, he was conducted back again to the sea coast, and to the harbour, and that not by one city only but by the whole country, **having branches strewed in his road**, and being greatly admired and respected for his piety.[Philo, *Leg. Ad Gaium*, 297]

“The cry “Hosanna” will have been linked with the palm fronds in the minds of the people. הוֹשִׁיעֵה-נָא is a strengthened form of the imperative “save”! (“do please save!”), but it came to be a greeting and even an ascription of praise. Its occurrence in Ps 118:25 was known to every Jew. In the feast of Tabernacles the Hallel (see Pss 113–118) was sung each morning by the temple choir; when the cry “Hosanna” was reached in Ps 118:25 every man and boy in the temple shook the *lulab* (a bunch of willow and myrtle tied with palm), and the cry was repeated three times. So deeply was this ingrained in the minds of the Jews they actually called the *lulabs* hosannas. It was therefore entirely natural for the crowd to repeat the cry of praise from Psalm 118 as they waved the palm leaves in welcome of Jesus. [*WBC*, John]

“Those already present in Jerusalem typically welcomed pilgrims to the feast and strewed branches in their path. Palm branches were used at the Feast of Tabernacles but had to be brought from Jericho. **They had been one of the nationalistic symbols of Judea since the days of the Maccabees**, were consistently used to celebrate **military** victories and probably stirred some political messianic hopes among the people. [*BBC*, John]

“The larger palm branches used for the Feast of Tabernacles (in the fall) would not be available at Passover time (in the spring), unless brought from Jericho; **the branches described here are small enough for the colt to walk on...** Pilgrims to the feast were typically welcomed by crowds already there, so it is unlikely that the whole crowd recognized the significance of Jesus’ entry. [*BBC*, Mark]

“Although the actors so far have been the disciples of Jesus, there is an audience, among which are to be found some Pharisees. **It is possible that they are to be regarded as friendly to Jesus, as elsewhere in Lk.** (7:36; 11:37; 14:1; possibly 13:31-33), but their advice is unacceptable. They think that Jesus should restrain the fervour of his disciples. They may possibly have feared for Jesus’ safety (and their own skins) if such outbursts led to a messianic demonstration. Or they may have felt simply that Jesus should not tolerate such extravagant and (in their eyes) unwarranted sentiments. The same motif appears in Mt. 21:14-16 where the chief priests and scribes are annoyed by the messianic acclamation of the children in the temple. [*NIGTC*, Luke]

❑ Cleansing the Temple

*And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. 13 And He *said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.” 14 And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant, 16 and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus *said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast prepared praise for Thyself?’” 17 And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there. [Mt 21.12ff]*

“21:12. Old Testament law required visitors to the feast to purchase their sacrifices in Jerusalem, hence sellers of doves and other sacrificial animals were necessary. Because visitors would come with foreign currencies—even most Galilean towns had their own coinage—moneychangers had also become necessary. Although ancient moneychangers normally managed to turn an honest profit, those in the temple reportedly made very little. **The issue is not the commerce per se, and possibly not even whether it involves economic exploitation under the guise of religion, so much as where the commerce is occurring.**

21:13. The Old Testament temple did not officially restrict the access of women or non-Jews, **but by extending Jewish purity laws the architects of Herod’s temple had excluded Jewish women from the Court of Israel, placing them on a lower level, and non-Jews outside even the Court of Women.** Non-Jews could enter the Jewish part of the temple only on pain of death, yet the noisy crowds around the merchants’ tables no doubt consumed a significant part of the large space in the Court of the Gentiles at the crowded festivals. Jesus here cites Isaiah 56:7, which goes on to speak of the **temple being for the Gentiles as well**, a subtlety some of Matthew’s more skillful readers might have caught. He also cites Jeremiah 7:11 (“den of robbers”), which addressed religious leaders of Jeremiah’s day who thought their vested interests in the temple would protect them from God’s wrath and the temple’s destruction. It did not. [BBC]

“The provocative nature of Jesus’ arrival in the city was matched by his arrival in the temple area. This was a huge open space of some 33 acres (13.5 hectares), within which stood the temple itself and associated buildings. In the porticos surrounding this area (not in the temple building) were the stalls of those who changed money for the temple offerings and sold sacrificial animals (including doves). They were there with the permission of the priestly authorities and performed a **useful, even necessary,** function for pilgrims coming from a distance. **But the whole thing had got out of proportion,** and worship and prayer were being squeezed out by commercialism. Jesus’ violent onslaught on all concerned (buyers as well as sellers) expressed his conviction that the temple was no longer fulfilling the purpose for which it had been built. . . . Onlookers who knew their Scriptures would have been reminded of Mal. 3:1–4, and perhaps also of Zc. 14:21 (where ‘Canaanite’ means ‘trader’). The Messiah was purifying the people’s worship in readiness for the great day of the Lord. This, together with his healing of the blind and the lame, was enough to provoke not only popular acclamation but also official resentment. But Jesus offered no apology and made matters worse by justifying the cries of the children who hailed him as Son of David **by quoting Ps. 8:2, which is about the praise of God!** [NBC]

“And he shall have the heathen nations to serve him under his yoke; And he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of (?) all the earth; And **he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old:** So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, [Pss Sol 17.30ff]

“In the temple precincts, and especially during the major festivals, provision was made for pilgrims to purchase animals and birds (cf. Luke 2:24) for sacrifice. Money changers exchanged Roman currency for Tyrian coins (the tetradrachma equaled the shekel), which alone could actually be used in making offerings or paying the temple tax (cf. 17:24–27). Jesus was not against these practices in principle, which were necessary for the functioning of the sacred cultus, **but only the stationing of them in the temple area, probably in the court of the Gentiles**. No comment is made on the fairness of prices or rates of exchange, which are again not Jesus’ concern (but v. 13b suggests that profit was certainly a motivating factor for the merchants; for evidence of inflated prices charged for birds, see *m. Ker.* 1.7; cf. *b. Pesah* 57a; *y. Hag.* 2.3). The issue simply concerns the turning of the temple precincts into a place of business. Thus “buyers,” as well as “sellers,” are thrown out of the temple. Jesus turns over the “tables” of the “money changers” and the “chairs” of those selling birds, yet we are not here to think of Jesus as violent. Jesus meant the action as an eschatological sign rather than a practical reform of the objectionable practices (cf. references given above and in a clearly eschatological context Zech 14:21: “And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day”). An era has come wherein the temple has necessarily lost importance (cf. 12:6), yet the messianic king cannot countenance proceedings within the temple precincts that violate its divinely intended purpose. **13** Jesus bases his concrete opposition to the mercantile activities in the temple upon the definition of the essential meaning of the temple given by the prophet Isaiah: “my house shall be called a house of prayer.” ... The temple was meant to be a place of prayer, of communion with God, but instead it had become a place where people were distracted with the transaction of business. “You” (emphatic), argues Jesus, “are making” it by contrast a “den of thieves,” a phrase drawn verbatim from the LXX of Jer 7:11 (where it is also applied to God’s house, the temple, and in a context of judgment upon the temple). The point does not concern the impropriety of the sacrifices (defended by Isa 56:7, just prior to the quoted words) or profiteering by the temple businessmen, despite the fact that they probably were profiteers, or the corruption of the priesthood but the failure to understand the fundamental significance of the temple. **Jesus’ critique resembles that given by the prophets: i.e., the mechanics of the temple ritual were allowed to obscure the point of authentic communion with God** (e.g., Jer 7:21–23; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8). Consequently, the temple cleansing is followed by the cursing of the fig tree, which dramatically symbolizes judgment upon Israel for her failure (vv 18–19). Thus the Son of David’s clearing of the temple symbolizes a broader failure of Israel to realize God’s purposes and will....” [WBC]

“Doves were the offering of the poor, and there is a tradition in *m. Ker.* 1:7, according to which R. Simeon b. Gamaliel **protested against their high cost**. ‘The story shows that the temple treasury was remembered to have set the price of doves at levels which some pharisaic teachers thought too high and sought to reduce.’ [ICC]

“‘The blind and the lame’ recalls the catalogue of healings in 11:5 and the list in 15:30–1 (cf. also 9:27–8; 12:22; 20:30). Just as 1QSa 2:8–9 **excludes** the blind and the lame from the messianic banquet, so LXX 2 Kings 5:6–8 and *m. Hag.* 1:1 **exclude** them from the temple, or at least from certain parts of it; and MMT (= 4Q394 8 iii–iv) does the same for the blind and **deaf**.” [ICC]

“And thereupon he [the newborn] arose in the hands of the midwife, opened his mouth, and conversed with the Lord of righteousness. [1 Enoch 106.3]

Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 14:356E: ‘The Egyptians believe that children have the power of divination, and they take omens, especially from children’s shouts as they play near the temples and say whatever occurs to them.’ [ICC]

“Regarding this last, the Mekilta on Exod 15:1 cites Ps 8:3 in connexion with the exodus and interprets ‘thou hast founded’ to refer to song (cf. LXX). It thus links Psalm 8 with the song of Exodus 15. The exegetical conflation is not peculiar to the Mekilta. Because ’ōz is common to Exod 15:2 and Ps 8:3, the two texts were often brought together, and from this developed **the well-attested belief that, at the Red Sea, children praised God.** The pre-Matthean genesis of this tradition is vouched for by Wisd 10:21, according to which, **when Israel crossed the Red Sea, Wisdom ‘opened the mouth of the dumb, and made the tongues of babes speak clearly’.** [ICC]

❑ Parable of the Wicked Tenants

Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

41 They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the Lord’s doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes’ ?*

43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet. (Mt 21:33,NKJV).

“The Evil Tenants and the Benevolent Landowner

Much of the rural Roman Empire was controlled by wealthy landowners, whose income from the land allowed them lives of complete leisure. Their estates were generally worked by tenant farmers, who were usually free peasants (as in Egypt), but sometimes by slaves (as in most of Italy). **Although landowners gained great honor among the poor if they were benevolent and treated their workers like urban patrons treated lower-class clients, such landowners normally had little incentive to do so.** They generally lived far away, often in cities, and had little personal contact with their workers. **But the landowner in this parable is so benevolent that aristocrats would have considered him naive.** . . . Jesus addresses those who fancy themselves rulers of Israel (21:23), reminding them that they are merely custodians appointed by God (like the shepherds of Jer 23 and Ezek 34) over his vineyard.

21:33. Jesus’ description follows the normal way to prepare a vineyard, but he clearly alludes to Isaiah 5:1–2, where Israel is the vineyard.

21:34. Payments were rendered at harvest time, either by percentage (usually at least 25 percent) or a predetermined amount.

21:35–37. Landowners always had power, socially and legally, to enforce their will on the tenants; a few reportedly even had squads of hired assassins to deal with troublesome tenants. **Here the tenants act as if they are the ones with power,** and they exploit it mercilessly (as opposed to the ideal of a benevolent landowner). This attitude fits the Jewish tradition that Israel martyred many of the prophets God sent.

21:38–39. The tenants presume too much about the inheritance. Although they could have seized it under certain legal conditions, the owner could also stipulate—and after their misdeeds certainly would—that someone else inherit the vineyard; or representatives of the emperor could have seized it. **The story paints the tenants as incomparably wicked and stupid; yet the tenants are a transparent metaphor for the religious leaders who serve themselves rather than God—as Jesus’ hearers know** (21:45).

21:40–41. The ancient hearers would wonder why the landowner had not intervened earlier to throw out the tenants. Asking questions was a standard rabbinic way of involving hearers in the story or teaching; getting hearers of parables to pronounce judgment on themselves was familiar from the biblical prophets (2 Sam 12:5–7; 14:8–17; 1 Kings 20:40–42).

21:42. This text is from Psalm 118:22–23, part of the Hallel, like 118:25–26 cited in Matthew 21:9. The building referred to is the temple (see Ps 118:18–21, 25–27); as the cornerstone of a new temple, Jesus poses a threat to the builders of the old one (the Jewish aristocracy). [BBC]

“Here the theme of replacement is explicit. The story is of an absentee landowner and the tenant farmers who are obliged to pay him a fixed proportion of the produce as their rent. **Their failure to do so is in itself sufficient reason for them to be replaced; the murder of his son makes matters far more serious.** . . . The point of the story was obvious to the chief priests and the Pharisees (45) and would have been so to anyone who knew the book of Isaiah, where the memorable parable of the vineyard (Is. 5:1–7) symbolized Israel’s failure to live up to God’s expectations. But the focus here was **not on Israel as a whole but on its leadership,** whose execution of God’s son was about to bring to a head the repeated rejection of his prophets in the past. They could now expect only a wretched end, while others took their place.

“Vs 42–44 work out the implications of the story. V 42 (quoting Ps. 118:22) illustrates the divine reversal which was soon to happen, when the one rejected by Israel’s leaders was to be proved to be the one chosen for the place of highest honour. V 44 takes up the same metaphor with allusions to the destructive stones of Is. 8:14–15 and Dn. 2:34–35, 44–45. V 43 is more direct: the kingdom symbolized by the vineyard belongs to God not to them, and he will entrust it to someone more responsible. **‘A people’ suggests not just a change of leadership but that the very composition of the people of God was to change (along the lines suggested in 8:11–12).** It was not, however, a simple matter of Jews being replaced by Gentiles (that would have needed a reference to ‘peoples’ in the plural, the normal Greek term for Gentiles); rather a new community of God’s people was being created (cf. on 16:18), in which both Jews and Gentiles would find their place. What would characterize them was not their nationality, but that they would produce fruit (cf. 3:8, 10; 7:15–20; 12:33–37; 13:8, 26; and especially 21:18–20). [NBC]

Ps 118.22-34:

*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.
23 This is the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.*

Isaiah 5.1-2:

*Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
2 And He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it, And hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones.*

Is 8.13-15:

*“It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy.
And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread.
14 “Then He shall become a sanctuary;
But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,
And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
15 “And many will stumble over them,
Then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught.”*

Dan 2.31-45:

*“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 “You continued looking until **a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them.** 35 “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. **But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth**” 36 “This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king. 37 “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the*

kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. (Medo-Persia and Greece) 39 “And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. (Rome) 40 “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41 “And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 “And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. (The Divine Kingdom) 44 “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

□ David’s Son as Lord

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “The Son of David.”

43 He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’?

45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. [Matt 22]

“The unassailable fact was that David called the Messiah Lord. This raised a problem: How then, or in what sense, can (estin, “is”) He (the Messiah, David’s Lord) be his (David’s) Son? **Jesus’ rhetorical question pointed His listeners to the only valid answer: the Messiah is David’s Son and David’s Lord at the same time.** This strongly implies that the Messiah is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s Son; cf. Rom. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:8). He will restore the future Davidic kingdom on earth (2 Sam. 7:16; Amos 9:11-12; Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:31-33). No doubt Jesus deliberately raised this issue so that His listeners might relate it to Him. It carried a bold yet veiled reference to His true identity which the Jewish leaders probably caught but did not accept. (Interestingly the NT has more references and allusions to Ps. 110 than to any other single OT passage [cf., e.g., Acts 2:29-35; Heb. 1:5-13; 5:6; 7:17, 21].) [BKC, Mark]

“The only question posed by Jesus in the sequence of temple dialogues is remarkably enigmatic, the more so since it is unanswered and is left hanging tantalizingly in the air. It raises an apparently academic question about ‘the Messiah’, without any overt indication that Jesus is that Messiah, though in the context of Mark’s gospel, coming between Peter’s declaration in 8:29 and Jesus’ own open messianic claim in 14:61–62 (which again uses words from Ps. 110:1 concerning his coming glory), there is no doubt that the reader is expected to apply it to him. **In the narrative context, too, it is hardly likely that those who were aware of Jesus’ ostentatiously royal ride to the city, with the shouts of Hosanna and the invocation of the coming kingdom of David, could have seen this question as having no relevance to Jesus’ own identity and status**, even though its ‘academic’ presentation prevents it from being used against him as a messianic claim. [NIGTC, Mark]

Session Two: Judas, The Last Supper, The Arrest

□ Plot to kill Jesus / Judas’ Bargain

And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, 2 “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion.” 3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; 4 and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him. 5 But they were saying, “Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people.”

14 Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?” And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him. [Matthew]

Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. [Jn 11.47]

And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. 4 And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 And he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude. [Luke 22.3f]

“The one new point is the attribution of Judas’s action to the inspiration of Satan, a feature shared with Jn. 13:2, 27. [NIGTC, Luke]

“Jesus’ presence in Jerusalem gave the chief priests and elders the opportunity to kill him, as indeed the Pharisees had proposed earlier in Galilee (12:14). But Jesus had plenty of supporters (see 21:9, 15, 46), and a riot among the people was a serious possibility if he was publicly arrested. There was to be an unexpected solution to this dilemma (14–16)... The treachery of Judas (see Mk. 14:10–11; Lk. 22:3–6). Judas’ inside knowledge of the movements of Jesus and his group during their stay in Jerusalem enabled him to show the authorities when and where Jesus could be arrested secretly (see v 5). **Thirty silver coins was the sum due as compensation to an owner for the loss of a slave** (Ex. 21:32), and the phrase is used **for the ‘wages’ of the rejected shepherd** (Messiah) in Zc. 11:12, which Matthew refers to in 27:9–10. This was a substantial sum (some four months’ wages), but **few have believed that money alone caused Judas to change sides**. More likely he was already thinking of leaving Jesus, and decided to cash in on his opportunity. **No-one knows why he changed sides**. He was probably the only non-Galilean among the Twelve and so may have felt increasingly out of place, especially when the Galilean group came south to Jerusalem. **Perhaps he had become disillusioned by the style of Jesus’ ministry, especially if he, like Peter, had harboured nationalistic hopes**. Maybe he had even concluded that Jesus was a false Messiah, so that it was his religious duty to stop him. [NBC]

“Chief priests would be easily located, but they would not have been accessible to Judas had his mission been less in line with their plans. The average price of slaves varied from place to place and period to period, but Matthew’s biblically informed readers would recognize thirty pieces of silver as the average Old Testament compensation for the death of a slave (Ex 21:32); **Judas sells his master cheaply**. [BBC]

“Judas Iscariot must have been viewed by the religious leaders as an answer to their prayers. Judas’ offer to the chief priests to betray Jesus Christ was more than agreeing to point out Jesus to arresting officers. **Judas was offering his services as a witness against Jesus when He would be brought to trial**. He would do anything to gain more money (cf. John 12:6). The offer was made in exchange for funds, probably paid out immediately to Judas. [BKC]

“‘Those who should be celebrating freedom make plans to preserve their servitude by killing the one who can give them true freedom.’ They know not what they are doing. [ICC]

“In Matthew, under the influence of Zech 11:12–13, the notion of a business deal is emphasized: Judas, with apparent eagerness, co-operates with Jesus’ enemies and **exchanges Jesus for something else**. In Mark ‘it sounds as if money and payment first enter into the transaction as an expression of the pleasure and thankfulness which the enemies felt in face of the amazing proposal with which Judas came’. [ICC]

And I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. 13 Then the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord. [Zech 11.12f]

“If the historical facts are obscure, in Matthew at least the emphasis falls upon money: **Judas—in complete antithesis to everything Jesus has taught—wants money.** One cannot but think of 1 Tim 6:10 [*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains*]. Nonetheless Judas later returns the silver, so his avarice is not unbounded. [ICC]

“The modest amount and the lack of bargaining on Judas’ part suggest that money was not his only or even his primary motive. [WBC]

“Why did the priests need Judas? After several days of public exposure in the temple area they could hardly have any problem in identifying Jesus even in a crowd (though apparently the men sent to arrest Jesus in the garden at night did need such identification, v. 44). A more likely reason has been indicated in vv. 1–2: in order to avoid popular resistance they **needed to secure Jesus in a less public location** than the temple area, and for that they needed someone who could inform them of his movements, in particular of where he might be found at night. **Only a member of the group who lived with Jesus could provide such information, hence the delight of the priests at Judas’ offer.** It is as guide to the arresting party that Judas will reappear in 14:43–44. ... When Jesus is brought to trial in 14:53–65, **we shall find the High Priest well informed about the supposed claims of Jesus** (14:61). ... It is within the disciple group that such [Messianic] language has been more openly used, and another part of Judas’s service to the priests may have been to fill out a dossier of Jesus’ words and actions which could be used against him at his trial, to prove that the incautious words of his followers (11:9–10) had not been unfounded.” [NIGTC, Mark]

□ The Last Supper

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” 9 And they said to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare it?” 10 And He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. 11 “And you shall say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” 12 “And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there.” 13 And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover....14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. [Lk 22.7ff]

And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

30 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mt 26:26ff).

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” [Jer 31]

“Passover practice had evolved through various stages by the time of Jesus. A festival originally based in the home (cf. Exod 12) **later became a temple-based festival** (cf. Deut 16:7; 2 Chr 35:13–14). **The practice of Jesus’ own day combined elements of both: the lambs were slaughtered in the temple forecourts during the afternoon of 14 Nisan, but the meal in the evening was held in family or wider groupings throughout the city** [WBC, Luke]

“Against the somber background of the plot against Jesus Luke now recounts how Jesus prepared to celebrate his last meal with his disciples. Following Mk., he relates the story of the preparations at some length, describing in great detail how the disciples appointed for the task were to recognize the person who would take them to the intended room and then prepare the room for the meal in the customary Jewish manner. Here especially the Passover character of the meal is evident. **The story itself suggests that Jesus made arrangements to hold the meal secretly, possibly in order to avoid arrest before he had completed what he intended to do: he is presented in the Gospels as being in control of the situation.** At the same time, Jesus is perhaps regarded as showing supernatural knowledge of the circumstances; it is a moot point whether he is simply giving directions in terms of a previously-made secret arrangement with the owner of the room or is acting with supernatural knowledge and authority. [NIGTC, Luke]

“The task of preparation for the Passover (πάσχα here means the meal as a whole) included making ready the room, providing the lamb, the unleavened bread and other food, and cooking the meal or arranging for helpers to do this. Since Jerusalem was crowded at the

Passover season, and the meal had to be eaten within the confines of the city, the obtaining of a room was a matter of importance. [NIGTC, Luke]

“The instruction sounds like a reference to a pre-arranged sign, and it must be assumed that the time for the disciples to enter the city was pre-arranged. The disciples were then to follow the man to his destination; ... **But what was the purpose of the arrangement?** Why could Jesus not have told the disciples the address of the house? He may have wished not to be seen making the arrangement himself and so being tracked down. **More probably he wished to avoid naming the rendezvous in the presence of Judas.** [NIGTC, Luke]

“In response to the query ‘Where?’ the owner will show them an upper room, i.e. an extra room built onto the flat roof of a typical Palestinian house. It will be ‘furnished’ (στρώννυμι, usually ‘to strew’) sc. with cushions [NIGTC, Luke]

“If, then, we accept that the last supper took place on the Thursday evening which began Nisan 14, **it was a day in advance of the official Passover.** Yet the case for **its being nonetheless a Passover meal in intention**, based on the Synoptic accounts, seems overwhelming. It therefore seems most likely that **Jesus deliberately anticipated the official date in his anxiety to hold a Passover with his disciples while it was still possible (cf. Lk. 22:15), aware that by the official date he would not be there to do so. The failure to mention a Passover lamb as part of the last supper might then suggest that Jesus and his group, in common with Jews who had to celebrate the feast away from Jerusalem (and with those who continued to celebrate it after the destruction of the temple), held the meal without a lamb**, since the lamb must be slaughtered in the temple and the official date for the sacrifice there had not yet come [NIGTC, Mark]

“A Passover was a symbolic meal with explicit interpretation. *M. Pes.* 10:1–7 details the traditional blessings over the cups and recitation of the Hallel and the answers given by the head of the family to the child’s question (arising from the requirement in Ex. 12:26–27 that the significance of the meal should be explained to children), and something like this ritual was probably already normal in Jesus’ day. It includes specific explanation of the elements of food eaten. It was **not therefore surprising that Jesus, as head of the ‘household’, should offer explanatory comments and blessing over bread and wine, and it may be that Jesus did indeed first offer the traditional explanations before adding his own new pronouncements.** But if so, Mark has not seen fit to remind his readers of what was already familiar. What he does record is not the traditional words but something radically new. ... the content is impressively consistent: the bread represents Jesus’ body and the wine his blood, and **their reception of these elements symbolizes the beneficial effects of his imminent death.** The tortuous progress of subsequent debate about eucharistic theology should not be allowed to obscure this stark but profound symbolism. **In the context of the Passover meal, the memorial of the rescue of God’s covenant people from slavery and of the lamb whose death was a necessary part of that deliverance, these words gave the disciples a whole new dimension against which to set Jesus’ insistent prediction that he had come to Jerusalem to die.** [NIGTC, Mark]

“Jesus has already talked of being ‘handed over’ to his enemies (9:31; 10:33), but no agent has been mentioned. The reader, of course, now knows what to expect (vv. 10–11), **but for the disciples this is the first hint of treachery within their own ranks.** The formal “Amen, I say to you” emphasizes the enormity of the idea, and the wording of the prediction with the phrase “he who eats with me” echoes Ps. 41 with its complaint that ‘Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me’ (Ps. 41:9). **The unnatural treachery experienced by the psalmist is a prefiguration of what was to happen to another righteous sufferer,** as ‘the Son of Man goes as it is written of him’ (v. 21). [NIGTC, Mark]

“**By NT times the Passover observance had features added to those already specified in the OT.** A seder, meaning a set “order of service,” was now followed (cf. *Pesahim* x.1–9). It was a festival that celebrated freedom, hence celebrants ate reclining (cf. Ex. 12:11). Each had to “regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt” (*Pesahim* x.5). The meal included various symbolic elements, each consumed at specified points throughout the evening. These included roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, *haroset* (pasty mixture of nuts, fruit, and wine), and a raw vegetable dipped into a tart liquid. At various intervals **four cups of wine,** a symbol of joy, were consumed. The wine was probably mixed with water and heated (cf. *Pesahim* vii.13). Ritual hand-washings, prayers, and portions of the Hallel (Pss. 113–118) also punctuated the observance. A key point of instruction in Israelite tradition came when the son asked his father the ceremonial question, “Why is this night different from other nights?” (*Pesahim* x.4). The father responded by giving a historical synopsis of God’s redemptive dealings with Israel that led to deliverance from Egypt. ... **From the NT record it seems clear that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper by associating it with the third cup of wine, which came after the Passover meal was eaten** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25). **It was known as the “cup of redemption,” linked in rabbinic tradition to the third of the fourfold promise of redemption in Ex. 6:6f, “I will redeem you.”** Jesus associated this cup of red wine with His atoning death in saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:25). **According to some scholars** (e.g., W. Lane) **He refused, however, to drink the fourth cup** (Mk. 14:25 par; cf. *Pesahim* x.7), **referred to as the “cup of consummation”** (cf. Ex. 6:7) based on the promise that God will take His own people to be with Him. **The unfinished meal of Jesus was a pledge that redemption would be consummated at that future messianic banquet** when he “drinks it anew in the kingdom of God” (Mk. 14:25; cf. Mt. 26:29; Rev. 3:20; 19:6–9). The Lord’s Supper concluded with the singing of a hymn (Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26), doubtless the second half of the Hallel (Pss. 115–118). ... In referring to His death as a sacrifice, **Jesus was comparing Himself to the Passover lamb** (cf. Rev. 5:12, “Lamb who was slain”). John the Baptizer calls him “the Lamb of God” (Jn. 1:29, 36). Paul reflects this same rich symbolism: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). Peter describes God’s children as redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18f). This blood-redeemed community is called a new lump of “unleavened dough” (1 Cor. 5:7). The prophetic significance of Christ’s death, “Not one of his bones will be broken” (Jn. 19:36), is a fulfillment of Scripture that states the bones of the Passover lamb were not to be broken (Ex. 12:46; Nu. 9:12; cf. Ps. 34:20 [MT 21]). [ISBE, “Passover”]

“Elsewhere Jesus on various occasions referred to the joyous participation in the consummated kingdom as a sharing in the messianic banquet (Mt 8:11 par. Lk 13:29; Mt 5:6 par. Lk 6:21; Lk 12:35–38; Mk 7:24–30). The feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 were probably also understood by the Evangelists as proleptic participations of the Last Supper and the eschatological banquet (Mt 14:19 par. Mk 6:41 and Lk 9:16 [Jn 6:11] and Mt 15:36 par. Mk 8:6)...According to the Jewish tradition in *Mekilta* Exodus 12:42, Israel’s future redemption would come on the night of the Passover. As a result the celebration of the Passover looked back to the greatest redemptive event of the OT and forward to the joyous anticipation of the coming of the messianic age. In a similar way Jesus in the Last Supper points his disciples to the greatest redemptive event of the NT, which is soon to be a past event, and to the arrival of the kingdom in glory when he comes (1 Cor 11:26) and shares the messianic banquet with his followers (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:16). **Clearly, Jesus does not see his passion as a tragedy or error, but the crowning act of his ministry in which he pours out his blood as the once-for-all sacrifice which secures redemption “for many” and insures a glorious consummation in the future.** Paul in his future word refers more specifically to the event which will bring about that consummation—the Parousia. Thus the Last Supper, while not itself the realization of the messianic banquet, is a proleptic experience of it, a kind of earnest, or first fruits, of that banquet. [*DictJG*]

❑ Washing of the Disciples’ Feet

*Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 And so He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” 7 Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.” 8 Peter *said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” 9 Simon Peter *said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” 10 Jesus *said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.” 12 And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. 18 “I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’ 19 “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. 20 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” [NASB, John 13.5]*

“He rises from the supper,” that is, from the couch on which He had been reclining. This shows that the **Feet-washing which follows was not before supper, and so is not to be regarded as the cleansing of the feet which was preparatory to a meal.** Where sandals are worn, the feet get dusty and tired, and it was a courtesy of hospitality to arrange that water was available for washing them (Lk. 7:44; cf. Gen. 18:4, 19:2, 24:32, 43:24, Judg. 19:21, 1 Sam. 25:41, 1 Tim. 5:10). But in this case, the supper had not only begun, but was probably ending. **In the talk that followed, the disciples began to dispute about their precedence (Lk. 22:24), perhaps in reference to the order in which they were placed at the meal; and Jesus, rising from His place, proceeds to give them an object-lesson.**

“Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth” (Lk. 22:27). So, stripping off His outer robe or *tallith* and appearing in His tunic only, He girded Himself with a towel, as a slave would do, that He might pour water upon their feet. Wetstein recalls the story of Caligula, who was wont to insult members of the Senate by making them wait at table *succinctos linteo* (Suetonius, *Cal.* 26). This story indicates how great an act of condescension the Feet-washing by Christ must have seemed to His disciples to be. [ICC]

“The answer of Jesus, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,” is very severe. **“To have part with another,” or to be his partner, is to share in his work, and ultimately in his reward.** Thus the unfaithful slave is condemned to have his part with the hypocrites (Mt. 24:51; cf. Ps. 50:18). The Levites had no part in the inheritance of Israel, their work being different from that of the other tribes (Deut. 10:9, 12:12); Simon Magus had no part in the apostolic endowments of the Spirit, being animated by ideals wholly different from those of the apostles (Acts 8:21); a Christian has no part with an unbelieving heathen (2 Cor. 6:15). So to decline the call of ministry, to which every disciple is called, is to have no part with Christ, to be no partner of His, for His work was pre-eminently a work of ministry (see on 12:26). **Peter’s refusal to allow his Master to minister to him was really to reject that principle of the dignity of ministry and service which was behind the work of Jesus.** [ICC]

“λούειν is frequently used of bathing the whole body (e.g. Lev. 14:9, 16:4, 17:16, Num. 19:7, Deut. 23:11, Acts 9:37). Guests were accustomed to bathe before they went to a feast; when they arrived at the house where they were to have dinner or supper, it was only necessary that their feet should be washed (see on v. 4). There was no need for the head or the hands to be washed. And so Jesus reminds Peter, who has been wrong in thinking that the washing of his feet by his Master was for the purpose of bodily cleansing. The man who has bathed before the meal is καθαρὸς ὅλος, and Jesus adds, of the disciples who were present, ὑμεῖς καθαροί ἐστε. [ICC]

“The menial nature of footwashing in Jewish eyes is seen in its inclusion among works which Jewish slaves should not be required to do (*Mekh* Exod. 21.2.82a, based on Lev 25:39); the task was reserved for Gentile slaves and for wives and children. ... The action of Jesus in removing his outer garment and tying a towel around him underscores the humiliation of his action; the Midrash on Gen 21:14 states that when Abraham sent Hagar away he gave her a bill of divorce, and took her shawl and girded it around her loins “that people should know that she was a slave” (Str-B 2:557). [WBC]

□ Garden of Gethsemane

I. **Name.** The name is mentioned in Matthew (26:36) and Mark (14:32) as the piece of land or field to which Jesus and His disciples retired following the Last Supper. In Jn. 18:1 it is described as a garden, from which comes the traditional designation “Garden of Gethsemane,” while Lk. 22:40 has simply “place”. From Jn. 18:1 it is evident that it was across the Kidron, and from Lk. 22:39, that it was on the slope of the Mt. of Olives. It was a place where Jesus frequently went with His disciples (Lk. 22:39f; Jn. 18:2). Its name suggests a grove of olive trees, as does its location on the Mt. of Olives. The language of John’s Gospel seems to imply a **walled** garden (“entered,” 18:1).

II. **Event.** The terms in which the experience of Gethsemane is described in the Gospels speak of **deepest sorrow and suffering**. Lk. 22:44 used the word “agony” to speak of Our Lord’s experience, thus implying a great strain or struggle (cf. Mt. 26:37 par Mk. 14:33). And it is Luke who gave the physical description: “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (Lk. 22:44, RSV mg). Jesus’ words of warning to His disciples (Mt. 26:41; cf. Lk. 22:40, 46) and His prayer (Mt. 26:39 par) imply that He regarded the event in terms of a temptation (cf. He. 5:7f), from which He emerged victoriously. [ISBE]

“The name Gethsemane derives from Hebrew and Aramaic words for “oil press.” Presumably Gethsemane consisted of an olive orchard and an oil press to squeeze oil from the olives, both of which were common on the Mount of Olives. . . . **The garden must have been fairly large** because Jesus led Peter, James, and John away from the rest of the disciples (Matt 26:36–38; Mark 14:32–34), and later Jesus withdrew further in order to pray alone (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35). . . . Early Christians conceived of Gethsemane as analogous to the garden of Eden in the divine plan for human redemption. The sinful actions of the first Adam are contrasted with the prayerful obedience of the second Adam—Jesus Christ. Other Christians claim that Jesus’ example in Gethsemane gave rise to the custom of kneeling for prayer (Luke 22:41). [ABD]

□ Betrayal & Arrest

*And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him.” 49 And immediately he went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. 50 And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus *said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 53 “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 “How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must*

happen this way?” 55 At that time Jesus said to the multitudes, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56 “But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled. [Matt; NASB]

*When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples. 2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. 3 Judas then, having received the cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, *came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and *said to them, “Whom do you seek?” 5 They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He *said to them, “I am He.” And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 When therefore He said to them, “I am He,” they drew back, and fell to the ground. 7 Again therefore He asked them, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.” 8 Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,” 9 that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, “Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one.” 10 Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. 11 Jesus therefore said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” 12 So the cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.[John 18; NASB]*

“Although there are certain points of contact between John’s account and the Synoptics, **this record of the betrayal is mainly peculiar to John.** John alone mentions the name of the valley where the garden was situated, whereas the Synoptics tell us the garden was called Gethsemane. Although John does not mention the agony in the garden, he knew about it (cf. v 11). His comment that Judas knew the garden because the disciples had often met Jesus there, looks like an eyewitness observation. The aim of the detachment of soldiers would have been to maintain order, to augment the temple police. Jesus did not wait for Judas to single him out, but stepped forward and addressed the soldiers and police. The ‘I am’ in v 5 does not appear to carry the same implications as the earlier sayings, although the fact that **the questioners fell back suggests that they were overawed by more than a mere assent of identity.** Their staggering was, however, only temporary. There was no ongoing recognition of the extraordinary character of Jesus. The request of Jesus that the disciples should be allowed to go is found only in John. V 9 is seen as a fulfillment of the statement of Jesus in 17:12. It is surprising that Peter was carrying a sword. It is possible that it was some kind of dagger. The act of striking the servant’s ear was **clearly one of desperation, courageous but pointless.** John alone mentions the servant’s name. The reference to the cup seems to be a clear allusion to the experience in Gethsemane recorded by the Synoptics (cf. Mt. 26:39–40). Peter had not grasped Jesus’ determination to follow through his mission. [NBC]

“18:1–2. “Kidron Valley” is literally the “winter-swollen Kidron”: this brook flowed only in the rainy season—winter—so crossing it in April would not involve even getting wet. Jesus and his disciples had met there other times; cf. Luke 22:39. **18:3.** Many scholars have noted that this military contingent is described in a manner much like Roman cohorts (so NASB). Nevertheless, the same language was equally used of Jewish units, and this unit is undoubtedly Jewish—the temple guard. (Roman troops would not be used for a routine police action like this one, and Romans would not have taken Jesus to the house of Annas—18:13—whom they had deposed [in 15 AD].) A full cohort in the Roman sense could have involved eight hundred soldiers, but a detachment from the cohort is all that John need mean here. Both the temple police and Romans carried torches (two kinds are mentioned here) at night, although only a few need have carried them, especially since the moon would be nearly full at Passover. **18:4–6.** “I am” can mean “I am he (whom you seek),” but it can also allude to Exodus 3:14, translated literally. A Jewish tradition, purportedly pre-Christian (attributed to the early Diaspora Jewish writer Artapanus), said that when Moses pronounced the name of his God, Pharaoh fell backward. (If Jesus’ hearers had thought he was pronouncing the divine name, they might have also fallen back in fear, because magicians were said to try to cast spells in that name.) 18:10. As slave of the high priest, Malchus would be a powerful person with much authority. [BBC]

“Jesus left the room where He ate the Last Supper with His disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley, to the east. The Kidron is a valley or torrent bed which starts north of Jerusalem and passes between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives on its way to the Dead Sea. David was betrayed by a friend (Ahithophel) while crossing the Kidron and going up to the Mount of Olives (2 Sam. 15:23, 30-31). So too Jesus was betrayed by His “trusted friend” Judas while crossing the Kidron and going to the Mount of Olives. The olive grove was a place where Jesus and His disciples came each night to bivouac when they were in Jerusalem (Luke 21:37). . . . Peter had promised that he would die for Jesus (Matt. 26:33-35) and he thought he perhaps could save Jesus or at least go down fighting. Undoubtedly he was better at fishing than at swordplay, for he no doubt tried to take off the head of the high priest’s servant . . . Malchus, not just his ear. Both Luke (22:50) and John recorded that it was his right ear which is an incidental evidence of the historical reliability of these Gospel books. (Luke added that Jesus healed the man’s ear [Luke 22:51], an amazing touch of love for His enemies!) Peter’s blind loyalty was touching, but it missed God’s plan. Zeal without knowledge in religion often leads men astray (cf. Rom. 10:2). [BKC]

“It was unlawful to carry arms on a feast-day, and—although at such a crisis, an eager disciple like Peter would probably have had no scruple in breaking the law if the safety of his Master was at stake—the fact that two of the company had knives with them earlier in the evening tends to show that the Last Supper was not the Passover. [ICC]

“A kiss was a sign of special affection among family members and close friends, or of a disciple’s honor and affection for his teacher. Judas’s kiss is thus a special act of hypocrisy (cf. Prov 27:6). Given ancient values concerning hospitality, friendship and covenant loyalty, any of Matthew’s readers encountering this story for the first time would have been horrified by the narration of the betrayal. Judas appears as the most contemptible of traitors; Jesus appears as one unjustly betrayed. [BBC, Matt]

“Compare v. 25; Prov 27:6 (‘profuse are the kisses of an enemy’). χαίρει, the Greek equivalent of šālôm, ... The greeting, like the kiss, is insincere and so ironic: Judas does not wish Jesus well. He is rather like those who mock Jesus in 27:29, and also like Joab who, in 2 Sam 20:9–10, kisses Amasa and then kills him. [ICC, Matt]

“In 26:47–56 the twelve are utter failures. One of them betrays Jesus. Another vainly takes up sword to return evil for evil. And all finally forsake Jesus and flee. These events augment Jesus’ suffering. **For not only is he forsaken and left alone, but his teaching seems without effect: betrayal, violence, and cowardice characterize those who have paid him most heed.** And yet this failure is not the last fact but rather the introduction to the story of the resurrection, where reconciliation is made. [ICC, Matt]

Session Three: Trials, Cross, Burial

❑ Trials: High Priest and Jewish Leaders

And those who took Jesus into custody led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders had gathered together. 58And Peter followed him from a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and having entered it, he was sitting with the servants to see the outcome.

59Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking false testimony against Jesus so that they might have an excuse to put him to death, 60and they did not find any evidence they could use among the many false witnesses who came forward. But eventually two came forward and 61said: “This man said: ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and after three days to build it again.’” 62 And the high priest rose and said to him: “Have you nothing to answer to what these men accuse you of?” 63But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him: “I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” 64Jesus said to him: “You have said the truth. I furthermore tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming upon the clouds of heaven.” 65Then the high priest tore his garments, saying: “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Look, you have now heard the blasphemy. 66What is your opinion?” And they answered and said: “He is guilty and should die.”

67Then they spit in his face and struck him. And they slapped him, 68saying: “Prophecy to us, Messiah, who is it that has hit you?” [Matt 26.57ff; trans WBC]

“Matthew says nothing about how grievous this charge may have been regarded, but the fact that this testimony was allowed after much else had been refused suggests that the prosecutors believed it would be useful. To speak of destroying the temple or even of the temple being destroyed would definitely have been regarded as an extremely serious, indeed a treasonous, offense, one deserving of capital punishment (cf. Acts 6:13–14: *And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and dragged him*

away, and brought him before the Council. 13 And they put forward false witnesses who said, “This man incessantly speaks against this holy place, and the Law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us). Matthew’s “I am able” (v. 61), however, has the effect of shifting attention to the authority or power claimed in such a statement. And it was in the personal claims of Jesus that the Jewish authorities thought their best hope of doing away with Jesus lay (thus the high priest’s question of v. 63b). The high priest asks Jesus whether he has any response to the accusations made against him, no doubt hoping he would expose himself to further peril by what he said. Jesus, however, “kept silent”. In his trial before the Jewish authorities, as before Pilate (27:14), Jesus makes no attempt to defend himself. The silence of Jesus is an important motif in the passion narrative and perhaps alludes retrospectively to Isa 53:7 [*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away;*]. It was probably understood by Caiaphas as consent to the truthfulness of the charge brought against him. Jesus submits to the faulty reasoning of his accusers and opponents in order to accomplish the will of God and so to fulfill the scriptures (cf. vv 54, 56). His silence was a sovereign silence.

63b–64 The high priest’s next question is made even weightier in Matthew than it is in Mark by the addition of the solemn words “I adjure you by the living God.” He charges Jesus under an oath to God to answer his question truthfully. The modifier “the living,” in reference to God is found also in 16:16. The question is whether Jesus considers himself to be “the Messiah, the Son of God.” There is no need to suppose by this language that the high priest meant exactly what the early church meant by this phrase in its Christology. That the Messiah would be the Son of God, even uniquely so (though of course metaphysically distinct from God), was quite probably the high priest’s own understanding. For “Son of God,” see 14:33; 16:16 (Messiah as Son of God); 27:40, 43, 54 (cf. John 11:27; 20:31). Jesus offers an answer to the direct question of the high priest, and it is an answer of the greatest significance. **Nowhere does Jesus reveal himself more than here.** In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ response, given in the historical present tense for vividness, the words “you have said,” rather than being strictly evasive (or negative), amount to an affirmative answer, but in a much less direct and emphatic way than Mark’s “I am” (Mark 14:62). . . . Jesus’ affirmation of being the Messiah, the Son of God (the background for the two combined titles may have been Ps 2), **may not yet in itself have been sufficient grounds for the high priest to regard him as blaspheming. But when Jesus adds to his answer the quoted material from Dan 7:13 and the allusion to Ps 110:2**, identifying himself as that triumphant figure—and thus **more than the Messiah as a merely human agent**—as the one who is “given dominion and glory and kingship” whom all will serve and whose kingdom will see no end (Dan 7:13–14), the one who sits at the right hand of God (Ps 110:1), the high priest reacts to what he regards as horrifying blasphemy (cf. v. 65). In the face of such a startling claim, his reaction is understandable. [*WBC*]

“In Matthew Jesus is neither the victim of tragic, impersonal circumstances nor the casualty of the ordinary machinery of justice. He is rather done in by wicked people. Jesus’ adversaries speak falsehoods (vv. 59–60), accuse him of blasphemy (v. 65), condemn him to

death (v. 66), and viciously hit and mock him (vv. 67–8). In the midst of this sinful folly Jesus' identity becomes fully visible. He is the Son of God and Messiah who, in accordance with 2 Sam 7:14, builds the temple. He is the king of Ps 110:1 who sits at God's right hand. He is the suffering servant of Isa 50:6 whose face is spat upon. And he is the Son of man of Dan 7:14 who will come on the clouds of heaven. Obviously the passage is, like 16:13–20, a climactic confluence of the main christological streams which run throughout the text...

What explains the transition from the temple saying to Christology? **Why does the prophecy about the temple raise the issue of Jesus' status as Messiah and Son?** The text assumes a knowledge of Jewish tradition. Zech 6:12 predicts that 'the Branch' will 'build the temple of the Lord'. And 2 Sam 7:13–14—given messianic sense in both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the NT—foretells a royal figure who will build for God a house and be God's 'son'. [ICC, Matt]

“...during Jesus' day did the Jerusalem Sanhedrin have the authority to carry out a death sentence? A negative answer may be presupposed by the synoptics, for after the Sanhedrin finds Jesus worthy of death it passes him on to Pilate. Jn 18:31 is also consistent with Josephus, *Bell.* 6:126 (Roman permission for a Jewish sentence of death), 303 (after being chastised a prophet is brought before the Roman governor), *y. Sanh.* 18a, 24b (forty years before the temple fell the power to pass death sentences was removed), as well as with the Roman habit of keeping capital cases under its own jurisdiction. Acts 6–7 does indeed relate a Sanhedrin session which ended in stoning, and Josephus, *Ant.* 20:200, tells us that James the brother of Jesus was stoned after a sentence from the Sanhedrin. But in the latter instance the high priest was deposed for his deed; and the former probably records a mob action which Luke assimilated to the trial of Jesus; that is, the Sanhedrin (mentioned only in Acts 6:12, 15; cf. 26:10) originally played no role in the story. This still leaves Philo, *Leg. ad Gai.* 39 (death for unlawful entry into the Holy of Holies); *m. Sanh.* 7:2 (the stoning of a priest's daughter for adultery; cf. Jn 7:53–8:11); and *b. Sanh.* 48b (this refers to executions by the Beth-Din). The prudent guess seems to be that although exceptions were allowed for a few specific religious cases (profanation of the temple—as in Acts 21:27–31—and maybe adultery), the Romans generally reserved the right to decide cases of life and death. [ICC, Matt]

And the priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his clothes; (Le 21:10).

“There are interesting parallels to our text. After the humiliated Job, in T. Job 33:3–9, declares that his throne is in the upper world, Elihu accuses him of speaking 'out in boastful grandeur' of his 'imaginary estate'. In b. Ḥag. 15a Metatron is punished because he has sat in heaven and given rise to the opinion that there might be two divinities (cf. 3 En. 16:1–5). And Aqiba's interpretation of Dan 7:9, according to which there are two thrones in heaven, one for God, and one for David, is rebuked as a profaning of the Shekinah [ICC, Matt]

“The full Sanhedrin normally met in their special meeting hall in the temple, the Chamber of Hewn Stone. In this case, many members of the Sanhedrin hold a secret night meeting without advance notice in the high priest’s home, though they are investigating what they will claim is a capital offense. At least according to later Pharisaic legal ideals, such a meeting was illegal on all these counts: capital trials had to meet during the day, and only after a day had intervened might the court render a verdict. Pharisaic laws forbade executions at feasts except for the most heinous crimes. But the priestly aristocracy would pay little attention to Pharisaic scruples, and they had to hurry before Jesus’ popularity with the crowds forced his release or made him more of a hero. [BBC]

“Jesus’ statement here is a claim to be not only a mortal messiah but the cosmic ruler of Daniel 7:13–14, the embodiment of Israel’s call, the one who would come in glory and reign forever; the phrase “from now on” is especially offensive, because he thereby claims this role in the present, which would imply that he is their judge rather than they being his judges. “Power” was one Jewish title for God. [BBC]

“The chief literary feature of 26:57–68 is its irony. The authorities pass judgment on the one who will some day pass judgment on them. They, by seeking false witnesses, and the high priest, by rending his robe, disobey Moses, whereas Jesus, by refusing an oath, lives by his messianic Torah. The authorities mock Jesus’ claim to be the Davidic Messiah, the fulfillment of OT hopes, while their very actions bring to pass in Jesus prophecies about Isaiah’s suffering servant. They accuse Jesus of blasphemy and yet it is they who blaspheme the Son of God. Lastly, those who accuse Jesus of saying that he will destroy the temple of God and in three days build another themselves help fulfill that prophecy; for by handing him over to Pilate they are creating the circumstance that makes it possible for the temple of his body to be raised in three days. So the Sanhedrin has everything backwards. All it does is ironic. And it ignorantly acts against its own true interests. This is crystal clear to the reader. It will not, however, be evident to Jesus’ persecutors until the *parousia*. [ICC, Matt]

❑ Trials: Pilate (2x)

And early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate. (Mk 15:1).

And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” 3 And Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He answered him and said, “It is as you say.” 4 And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, “I find no guilt in this man.” 5 But they kept on insisting, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place.” 6 But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. (Lk 23:2).

*They *led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. 29 Pilate therefore went out to them, and *said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" 30 They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." 31 Pilate therefore said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," 32 that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die. 33 Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate *said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and *said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. (Jn 18:28).*

13 Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, 14 said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; 15 no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. 16 I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" 17 (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).

18 And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"— 19 who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

20 Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. 21 But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

22 Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. 25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will. [Luke 23.12ff; NKJV]

7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

8 Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, 9 and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" [John 19]

"The visit to Pilate would be early in the morning, because Roman officials met the public only from sunrise to noon.

23:3–4. Pilate apparently understands Jesus' claim in a religious rather than a political sense and therefore does not feel that it comes under Roman civil jurisdiction. Further, Pilate's relationship with the priestly aristocracy is known to have been strained.

23:5. A Galilean had led the tax revolt of a.d. 6; Judeans also tended to view Galileans as inferior to themselves, although much of Galilee was urban and in touch with the larger Mediterranean culture, as Jerusalem was.

23:6–7. Herod Antipas would be in Jerusalem for the feast and was probably staying at the old Hasmonean (Maccabean) palace. Pilate had the authority to try Jesus if he had committed a crime in Pilate's area of jurisdiction; but sometimes the right of extradition was allowed, and Antipas might thus be free to try Jesus for a crime committed in Galilee. By refusing jurisdiction, Pilate could take the matter off his own hands. [BBC, Lk]

"But a conversation with Jesus had convinced Pilate that He was a harmless enthusiast. He did not claim to be a king in the ordinary sense. [ICC, Luke]

"Pilate regards the matter as one of religious law, hence to be tried in a Jewish court if the person claims to be Jewish and so submits to a Jewish court's jurisdiction; this was Roman practice throughout the empire (also, e.g., Acts 18:14–15). Pilate is also known not to have been cooperative when dealing with Jewish religious matters; unless the situation got out of hand, he did not need to cooperate as long as his patron Sejanus controlled the emperor Tiberius in Rome. ... On October 18, a.d. 31, Sejanus, Pilate's political sponsor in Rome, fell from power, and Pilate had much to fear from any bad reports about him. But Jesus' trial may well have taken place before a.d. 31, and the accusation of 19:12 would be a fearful one even with Sejanus in power: the emperor Tiberius was suspicious of the least talk of treason, and a delegation to Rome providing the slightest evidence that Pilate had supported a self-proclaimed king **could lead to Pilate's beheading**. Philo tells us that Pilate also backed down much earlier in his career when the Jewish leaders threatened to petition the emperor against him.

The priests charge Jesus with claiming to be a king, which is a charge of treason against the emperor. (Herod Antipas was exiled for simply **requesting** the title, which an earlier emperor, Augustus, had granted Herod the Great.)

18:36–38a. The idea that Jesus’ kingdom is not based on military or political force is repeated throughout the Gospels, but Jesus’ Jewish hearers never grasp that meaning in his words (after all, why call it a “kingdom” if it was nonpolitical?). Pilate hears the term “truth” and interprets Jesus in another sense: a philosopher or some other teacher. As an educated Roman, Pilate may have known that many philosophers portrayed themselves as ideal rulers; although he probably had little attachment to philosophers himself, he would have viewed them as harmless. No one could be more nonrevolutionary in practice than a Cynic or Stoic philosopher, no matter how antisocial Cynic teachings might be. “Truth” in Old Testament and Jewish tradition was God’s covenant integrity; the concept was much more abstract to Greek ears and perhaps impractical to many Romans... [BBC]

“He uses a light word to express the terrible *flagellatio*, in order to excuse the injustice to his own conscience, and to hide his inconsistency from them. It is no punishment, but a chastisement to warn Him to be more circumspect in future. But the priests would see that a judge who was willing to inflict this on an innocent person could be induced by further pressure to inflict death. Scourging was sometimes fatal [ICC, Luke]

“The vain Attempts of Pilate to avoid Sentencing Jesus to Death. Comp. Mt. 27:15–26; Mk. 15:6–15. Pilate’s first two expedients had failed: (1) telling the Jews to deal with case themselves; (2) sending it to Herod. He now tries two others: (3) to release Him in honour of the feast; (4) to scourge Him and let Him go. Roman dislike of a gross injustice to an innocent person possibly influenced him; but perhaps the chief motive was the superstitious fear, produced by his wife’s dream and confirmed by Christ’s bearing and words. Jn. states that he again and again declared Jesus to be innocent (18:38, 19:4, 6). [ICC, Luke]

□ Trials: Herod

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been at enmity with each other. [Luk 23.8ff]

“Pilate was trying to avoid settling a difficult case. The mention of Galilee (5) gave him his opportunity. He knew well enough that Jesus had committed no crime, and **he seems to have deliberately played with the Jews as he tried to frustrate their intention.** But when the situation showed signs of getting out of control, he was prepared to sacrifice an innocent person in order to keep the peace. For the moment, however, he could buy time, and possibly support, by sending Jesus across to the ruler of Galilee, Herod Antipas. Herod is

presented as a frivolous person, hoping to see some amusing tricks performed by one whom he probably regarded as some kind of magician. To such a person Jesus had nothing to say. ... Pilate was not necessarily trying to get the case officially transferred to Herod. **He may simply have been seeking backing for his own opinion.** Some of the Jewish leaders must have gone across to Herod's residence to ensure that he heard their side of the case. [NBC]

"No more than Pilate does Herod want to take the responsibility for dealing with Jesus. Both believe they are dealing with a domestic Jewish power struggle that they would rather avoid, and in this shared perception, they move beyond a longstanding mutual hostility. Herod vents his personal hostility against an uncooperative Jesus but wants no further responsibility for him. Pilate must decide the fate of Jesus. [WBC]

"The purpose of the verse is to show that both Herod's own interrogation of Jesus and the accusations brought against him did not lead Herod to condemn Jesus, but merely to despise him and mock him; the charges were not to be taken seriously. [NIGTC]

❑ **Crucifixion – As Humans Saw It**

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. 19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews." ' "22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. 24 They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

"They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" 29 Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. 30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. [John]

33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him,

"THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

39 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." 44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." And having said this, He breathed His last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." 48 And all the multitudes who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts. 49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things. [Luke]

Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" 35 Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" 36 Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down." 37 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. 38 Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, 41 who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. [Mark]

"The "sixth hour" began before noon, the "ninth hour" before 3 p.m. Jesus dies around the time of the evening offering in the temple. Stories were told of catastrophes occurring at the deaths of pious rabbis, especially those whose intercession had been vital to the world; but the biggest point of these signs is that judgment is imminent. Darkness had signified judgment in the past (Ex 10:21–23) and would in the future (Is 13:10; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:2, 10, 31; 3:15; Amos 5:18; 8:9; Zech 14:6).

15:34. Jesus' cry is an Aramaic quotation of Psalm 22:1, **which was sometimes recited at this time of day in prayer** but receives special significance when Jesus prays it. The first line would evoke this whole psalm of the righteous sufferer—and its hope of divine vindication. (Jesus probably quoted the psalm in Hebrew, as in Matthew; Mark uses the Aramaic form because the saying was transmitted in an Aramaic milieu. “Eli” could be mistaken for “Elijah” much more easily than “Eloi”; cf. 15:35–36.)

15:35–36. Members of some circles of Jewish tradition believed that Elijah was sent like an angel to rescue famous teachers, in addition to his role in the time of the end.

15:37. Crucifixion generally killed by asphyxiation: one became too weary to keep pulling one's frame up on the crossbeam, the diaphragm was increasingly strained, and eventually one became unable to breathe. But death usually took a few days—much longer than the few hours Jesus suffered.

15:38. The holy of holies, which the priest could enter only once a year, was the ultimate symbol of God's dwelling place. God's rending the veil meant that he was now available apart from the temple system and that the old temple order stood judged and abolished.

15:39. A non-Jew might use a phrase like “son of God” with reference to a pious philosopher or, more commonly, a hero whose father was a deity; but in Mark's Gospel, “Son of God” means much more than that (14:61). Because Romans viewed the reigning emperor as a son of the deified Augustus, the centurion might be recognizing Jesus not only as “king of the Jews” (15:26) but also as a rival to the emperor. Whatever the specific nuance intended, Mark's irony (cf. 15:29–32) is plain: only a Gentile is impressed by Jesus' death.

15:40. The women followers were much less likely to be indicted than male followers, but they were still courageous to show up at the crucifixion. The epithet of James, “the Less” (NASB, KJV), is better translated “the younger” (NIV, TEV, NRSV), as the usage of the word in the ancient papyri indicates.

15:41. By the standards of the religiously strict, it would have been scandalous for women (especially married women) to travel with an entourage of male disciples; apart from members of the Hellenized aristocracy, Palestinian Jewish women were expected to limit their public activity, keep their heads covered and fulfill their domestic duties. The idea of women patrons (sponsors) is elsewhere known, though again it is striking that these women traveled with Jesus. In this one verse Mark hints at an aspect of Jesus' ministry that potently challenges the social order, especially if these women “followed” as disciples, which they presumably did. [BBC, Luke]

“Pious women of Jerusalem normally prepared a solution like this one and offered it to those being executed to dull their pain (cf. Prov 31:6–7); Jesus chooses to endure the full force of the agony of crucifixion. Myrrh is said to have had narcotic effects.

15:24. Roman soldiers customarily divided the executed criminal's apparel.

15:25. The third hour began shortly after 8:30 a.m. and ran till shortly after 9:30 a.m. (The exact time of hours would vary according to the time of sunrise from which they were reckoned, hence according to the season of year.)

15:26. The charge was often posted above the head of the person being crucified. The claim to be a king would be sufficient to incur Roman wrath; ironically, however, Jesus is called not a royal pretender but “King of the Jews,” perhaps reflecting an anti-Jewish sentiment of Pilate or his agents. [BBC, Mark]

“Condemned criminals normally carried their own cross (the horizontal beam, the *patibulum*, not the upright stake) to the site of the execution... Several stakes, at most about ten feet high, stood in Golgotha ready to be reused whenever executions occurred. On the top of the stake or slightly below the top was a groove into which the horizontal beam of the cross would be inserted after the prisoner had been fastened to it with ropes or nails. [BBC, John]

19:25–26. The evidence is disputed as to whether relatives and close friends were allowed near crucifixions; they probably were. In either case, the soldiers supervising the execution would have looked the other way in practice if they had no reason to forbid it; the prerogatives of motherhood were highly respected in the ancient world. Because Jesus may not be elevated far above the ground, Jesus’ mother and disciple can hear him without being extremely close to the cross.

19:27. Jesus makes an oral testament in front of witnesses, which makes it binding, and formally places his mother under his disciple’s protection, providing for her after his death. Dying fathers could exhort sons to take care of surviving mothers (which they normally would do); for a disciple to be accorded a role in his teacher’s family was a great honor to the disciple (disciples sometimes called their teachers “father”). A primary responsibility which Jewish custom included in “honoring one’s father and mother” was providing for them (cf. 1 Sam 22:3) in their old age. Jesus’ mother is probably in her mid to late forties, is probably a widow and lives in a society where women rarely earned much income; she is therefore officially especially dependent on her eldest son, Jesus, for support, although after his death her younger sons would support her.

19:29–30. “Sour wine,” consisting of wine vinegar mixed with water, was often used by soldiers to quench their thirst.

19:31–33. Those bound with ropes often survived on the cross several days. The dying man could rest himself on a wooden seat (Latin *sedile*) in the middle of the cross. This support allowed him to breathe—and prolonged the agony of his death. When the soldiers needed to hasten death by asphyxiation, they would break the legs of the victims with iron clubs so they could no longer push themselves up; the skeleton of a crucified Jewish man recovered in 1968 confirms this practice attested in ancient literature. Romans would have allowed the bodies to rot on the cross, but Deuteronomy 21:23 and Jewish sensitivities about the sabbath require that these executions be speeded up, and Romans accommodated Jewish wishes particularly during the crowded festivals. (Josephus declares that Jewish people always buried crucifixion victims before sunset.)

19:36. Although John here could allude to Psalm 34:20, he probably refers instead to the Passover lamb (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12). Jewish law (second century or earlier) stipulates the maximum corporal punishment for breaking the Passover lamb’s bones.

19:37. Although a late rabbinic passage interpreted Zechariah 12:10 messianically, the passage itself seems to refer to God’s having been pierced by the people of Jerusalem (before the coming of Jesus one would have assumed a figurative sense, “pierced with sorrow”). [BBC, John]

“Now Jesus’ kingship was plain for all to see, on the placard nailed to the cross as Pilate’s last taunt to the priests. The crowds mockingly called him the Messiah, the king of Israel; only a Gentile would speak of a king of the Jews. **The jeers of the priests and people at the crucifixion are the strongest possible proof that Jesus did indeed claim to be king and Messiah and saviour.** Otherwise, the bitter mockery would have had no point. The sign that they demanded (32) was an impossible one. **If Jesus was to save us, as suffering Messiah, then he could not save himself from the cross.** When he did give them a far greater sign, the sign of the resurrection, they still would not believe. That is why earlier in his ministry Jesus gave the answer that he did to the Pharisees (8:12). **Faith would see a sign in everything that he did; unbelief would never be convinced by any sign.** ... Darkness at noon was a symbol of God’s judgment (Am. 8:9). What sort of darkness it was, we do not know. It might have been one of the blinding sandstorms of the area. It could not have been an eclipse of the sun, as Passover occurred at full moon. The darkness seems to have pictured God’s wrath not just directed at those who had rejected his Son but also at the sin which Jesus was bearing at that moment for us, as our sin-offering. Why else would Jesus have cried aloud, in the words of Ps 22, that God had deserted him? (34). **We cannot conceive what this separation meant to one who from before all eternity had known no separation from his loving Father; yet it shows, as nothing else, how terrible is sin.** ... Perhaps, along with the soldiers’ mockery there was some sympathy, for one soldier gave Jesus a drink from his rations of wine vinegar, egg and water. **Jesus had refused the wine mixed with myrrh, perhaps he accepted this second drink (Jn. 19:30) to gain the strength to make his last great cry of triumph ring out.** After this Jesus gave a loud cry and died. According to John, Jesus’ final words were ‘It is finished’ (Jn. 19:30). The Roman officer in charge of the execution squad heard and realized that the one who cried out like that, and died as he died, must be the Son of God (39). (The Greek could mean ‘a son’ but it makes little difference; he was a soldier, not a theologian.) The early church saw in these words the confession by a Gentile that Israel had failed to make [NBC, Mark]

"The verb *teleo* (to finish) was used in the first and second centuries in the sense of 'fulfilling' or 'paying' a debt and often appeared in receipts. Jesus' statement, 'It is finished' could be interpreted as 'Paid in full'.." [EBC]

□ Burial

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; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 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. 41 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. 42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby. [John, NKJV]

And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 54 And it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. [Luke]

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. 59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 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. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' 64 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."

65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard. [Matt]

"The large, royal-size amount of spices would not have been all used in the wrapping of the body; most would likely have been used as a 'bed' (like sand was used in common graves). The amount is substantial (commentators call it a 'royal' amount), but not impractical: if the spices were oils, they would be between 10-15 gallons; if dry powder (most likely, according to Brown), it would be the volume of 15-20 sacks of sugar or flour (this would fit in a medium-sized gym bag today). There is no need to assume that the body was 'smothered' in these ingredients. Some oils were needed for the cleaning process ("*Shab* 23:5 and early citations of *Sm* indicate that the corpse was 'anointed and washed,' i.e. it was first smeared with oil to remove the dirt and then washed to cleanse it of the oil." [*Sema*:98.n3]) and some would likely have been burned by Nicodemus in 'royal tribute', as was done in Jeremiah 34.5 ("*you shall die in peace. And as spices were burned for your ancestors, the earlier kings who preceded you, so they shall burn spices for you and lament for you, saying, 'Alas, lord!'*").

"The amount of spices that he is reported to have brought appears to us staggering in quantity. One hundred *livtrai* is the equivalent of 65.45 pounds (hence the NEB rendering, "more than half a hundredweight," the latter being a British measure of 112 pounds). Lagrange thought that an error must have arisen in the tradition and that the original quantity will have been much less (503), while Dodd thought it "an extravagant touch introduced by the Evangelist". There is no need for such suggestions. The family of Nicodemus appears to have been enormously wealthy, and the bringing of huge amounts of spices at royal funerals was familiar to Jews. It is related in 2 Chron 16:14 that when

King Asa was buried he was “laid on a bier which had been heaped with all kinds of spices skillfully compounded; and they kindled a great fire in his honor.” That was eclipsed in the funeral of Herod the Great; according to Josephus (*Ant.*17.199) five hundred slaves bore spices in the funeral procession as they followed the army to the king’s burial place. More closely related is the action of the proselyte Onkelos, who is recorded as having burned **eighty** pounds of spices at the death of Gamaliel the elder. When asked why he had done so, he replied, citing the words of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, king of Judah: “You shall die in peace, and with the burnings of your fathers (the former kings) who were before you. Is not R. Gamaliel far better than a hundred kings?” (Str-B, 2:584. The incident is dated ca. a.d. 40–50). One may imagine the Teacher of Israel, a contemporary of Onkelos, echoing, “Is not Jesus far greater than all other kings?” The Evangelist thus continues the theme of the kingship of Jesus into the account of his burial.” [WBC, at John 19.38ff; Cited on the ThinkTank]

“Jewish people did not burn dead heroes, as Greeks and Romans did, or mutilate them for embalming, as Egyptians did. Bodies were wrapped in shrouds, sometimes expensive ones, especially prepared for burials. Jewish sources are emphatic that none of these actions may be undertaken unless the person is clearly dead; thus those burying Jesus have no doubt that he is dead. Here strips of linen rather than a full shroud are used, perhaps because of the imminent approach of the sabbath at sundown. . . . White linen garments were worn by Jewish priests, by some other ancient priests (devotees of Isis) and by angels in Jewish tradition (e.g., 2 Macc 11:8); they were also wrappings for the righteous dead. [BBC, John]

“The priestly aristocracy, ever politically astute, takes no chances, and despite the sabbath and festival they obtain an audience with Pilate to secure the tomb. It is unclear whether Pilate here provides them with Roman guards or tells them where the tomb is and permits them to post some of their temple guard; the guards’ fear of Pilate’s reprisals (28:14) indicates that they are probably Roman guards whom Pilate has put at the chief priests’ (28:11) disposal. The seal on the stone would make any tampering obvious. That the Jerusalem authorities would have acted thus on the sabbath indicates their special interest in the case as well as the selectiveness of their piety. [BBC, Mt]

Session Four: The First Easter and the Meaning of the Week

❑ The First Easter, the Resurrection, and the Appearances

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; 4 and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 “And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.” 8 And they departed quickly from the

*tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus *said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.” 11 Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ 14 “And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” 15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day. [Matt]*

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 “He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” 8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. [Lk]

Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. [John]

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to

her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. 19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” 24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” [John]

“The witness of women was worth little in Judaism; that Jesus first appears to a woman would not have been fabricated and shows us how Jesus’ values differ from those of his culture. Even the later church did not always maintain Jesus’ countercultural stance, and they would hardly have chosen such initial witnesses in an environment where this account would reinforce pagan prejudices against Christians.

20:11. Jewish people took the first seven days of mourning so seriously that mourners could not wash, work, have intercourse or even study the law. Jewish culture was serious about expressing rather than repressing grief. That the body is missing and thus people are prevented from bestowing final acts of love would be regarded as intolerably tragic; even tomb robbers usually left the body behind.

20:14. In Jewish tradition, angels could appear in different forms. Jewish traditions in Pseudo-Philo also speak of God changing the appearance of some Old Testament human characters so they would not be recognized, and this evidence might reflect more widespread Jewish tradition.

20:15. Gardeners were at the bottom of the social scale, and a gardener there would have tended to the gardening, not to the tomb itself. But Mary has no better guess concerning his identity. (That he could be a tomb robber does not occur to Mary; tomb robbers were unlikely to come during the mourning period, when visits to the tomb were still frequent, and he would have reacted with more fear or hostility at seeing her if he were one.)

20:16. “Rabboni” means “my teacher” and is more personal and less formal than the title “Rabbi.”

20:17–18. The verb translated “Touch me not” (KJV) is a present imperative and is probably better translated “Stop clinging to me” (NASB). **The reason she must release him is that she must go testify for him in the short time remaining in view of his coming ascension**—despite the cultural opposition to sending a woman to testify to such an important event and one so impossible for unbelievers to accept. [BBC, John]

“The disciples had almost been arrested with Jesus. They remained under the fear of death at the hands of the Jews (i.e., the Jewish authorities), so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. (What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost!) Jesus passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the doors were locked, He came and stood among them (cf. v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. **But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body** (cf. v. 27). His first words, “Peace be with you!” were a conventional greeting similar to šālôm in Hebrew. But the words were now invested with a deeper and fuller meaning (cf. 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7).

Seeing the wounds in His pierced hands and side, they were overjoyed (though at first they were frightened, as Luke stated [Luke 24:37-44]). What a change from their fear and despondency!

20:21-23. Jesus then recommissioned the disciples as His apostles: He was sending them as His representatives, as the Father had sent Him (cf. 17:18). They were sent with His authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-49). For their new commission they needed spiritual power. So He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God’s creative work in making Adam (Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection “breathing” was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (Eph. 2:8-10). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later. Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31-34). **Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts.** Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven’s terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus’ sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is not forgiven. [BKC, John]

“Wounds were sometimes shown as evidence in court; here their function is to identify that it is the same Jesus who died. In much of Jewish tradition, the dead would be resurrected in the same form in which they died **before** God healed them, **so that everyone would recognize** that the person who stood before them was the same one who had died. [BBC, John]

- “1. Resurrection itself is not described. Like all beginnings, whether in nature or in history, it is hidden from view.
2. The manifestations, while confined to disciples, were made to disciples who were wholly unexpectant of a Resurrection. The theory that they were visions or illusions, arising from intense and unreasoning expectation, is contrary to all the evidence that has come down to us. On the contrary,
3. They were received with doubt and hesitation at first, and mere reports on the subject were rejected.
4. The evidence begins with the visit of women to the tomb very early on the first day of the week, and the first sign was the removal of the stone from the door of the tomb.
5. Angels were seen before the Lord was seen.
6. He was seen on various occasions by various kinds of witnesses, male and female, both individuals and companies, both skeptical and trusting.
7. The result was a conviction, which nothing ever shook, that [it was] “the Lord own indeed” and present with them. [ICC, Lk]

❑ The Week – As God Saw It

A Changing of the Guard: from the Jewish Nation to the Jew-Gentile Church

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

The New Covenant of Jeremiah

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (Jn 14:16)

I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 Jn 2:26)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God (1 Co 2:12)

The Sacrifice of the Lamb of God

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Pe 1:18).

The Atonement Day

“..and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Heb 9:12)

The Forsaking of the Son

The Cry of Dereliction

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Ga 3:13).

A Substitutionary Death

and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; (1 Pe 2:24)

[S]o Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many (Heb 9:28)

*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.
6 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. (Is 53:5ff).*

A Display of Beyond-us Love

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro 5:8).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:2)

The Vindication of the Righteous Son

The gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead (Ro 1:3)

And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. (Ac 2:24)

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission (Heb 5:7).

“That these “cries and tears” were accepted by God is evidenced by the observation, He was heard because of His reverent submission (eulabeias). To this also Psalm 22 bears reference in that its latter half are the words of One who has emerged from suffering in triumph and praises God for that (cf. Ps. 22:22-31). In fact the psalm's first note of triumph has already been quoted (i.e., Ps. 22:22 in Heb. 2:12). Thus the “reverent” Sufferer was indeed saved from death, and this by means of rising from the dead. Hence too the Resurrection furnishes the decisive proof of God's acceptance of Jesus' sacrificial activity. [BKC]

The Promise of Life to All – the Second Adam's Legacy

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Co 15:44)

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Co 15:21)

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (Jn 7:37).