Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus was obedient even unto death! The religious leaders, who were not obedient in any way or fashion to God or to faith, were only concerned with their ritual needs. Thus, not wanting dead bodies defiling the Shabbat and Passover, they asked Pilate to hasten the death that could have taken more than two days, by breaking the legs of those being crucified so they could no longer breathe and quickly die. Because one had to force one's self upward to take a breath, this would not be possible with broken legs and as a result, the prisoner would suffocate. Then, they could take them down and bury them quickly and not defile their holy day—not God's Holy Day, but their holy day. Yet, when they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they did not break His legs and as a result, a prophecy was fulfilled that the Perfect Sacrifice would be unblemished in body too. But, just to make sure, the soldiers speared Him in the heart where the cardiac sack was ruptured and water and blood flowed out. Thus, there is no doubt that Jesus was dead, not sleeping, and not in a comma to wake up later, as one does not wake up from a lacerated heart. This also fulfilled the prophecy that His bones will not be broken and His heart they will pierce. Then, one of Jesus secret disciples, a prominent Jewish leader who feared what others might think, went to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body and to place Him in his new tomb that had never been used. Thus, he had Jesus taken from the cross and placed in the tomb along with Nicodemus' gift of an expensive burial with spices and aloe in accordance with Jewish customs. This was near the garden outside of the city wall. So now, Jesus is dead and buried for our sins.

## **Contexts and Background**

In this passage, Friday is here, death, Good Friday, but Sunday is coming! His task on earth was fulfilled, and His life's mission finished. Jesus demonstrated His love as man did his worst, and then God showed Himself by doing His best. The redemption and salvation of humanity is accomplished, grace is availed, and the object of our faith would be at hand and resurrect in three days—on a Sunday! And, so it was that His mission to redeem our souls was accomplished. The eternal God still remains eternal, as He proved when He rose from the grave to proclaim our call to tell the world (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 27: 45- 66; 28: 18-20; John 15:9-13; Rom. 5:12-21)! Jesus was hung on the cross where He paid our debt of sin, suffering the ultimate punishment on our behalf. In Matthew, Jesus cries out, *Eloi, Eloi, Iama sabachthani?*—which means, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Luke records Jesus' uttering of His last and final cry, possibly no more than an agonized whisper; *It is finished. Father! Into Thy hands I commit my spirit* (Luke 23:44-46; John 19:30). This quote from Psalm 22 foretells the entire crucifixion, as Jesus emphatically communicates the depth of His suffering!

### **Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings**

- Day of Preparation. Here, refers to the events before the celebration of the final day of the Passover week, where the meals were prepared and the lambs slaughtered for the sacrifice; Jesus becomes our Lamb (Matt. 27:17; Luke 2:41; 22:1-38; John 19:1-16; Acts 12:3-4)!
- Special Sabbath / high day. Referring to the Sabbath that occurs during the Passover week so that all work must cease by sundown. The Passover is a week-long celebration and most people ate the prime meal on Thursday evening; the day of Preparation was Friday, for the Sabbath was celebrated on Saturday. The religious leaders were overzealous in the ceremonial law but not obedient in the thing that really mattered to God (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21).
- Bodies left on the crosses. Romans would let the bodies remain and rot for months as a deterrent for others. However, they respected the emperor's birthday and local holy days and allowed their removal and burial before sunset. The Jews needed to have them removed as per the Law because it would defile the land; centuries later, germs, bacteria, and viruses were discovered that spread disease. By burying bodies quickly, the health of the community was maintained. This is why Jews were not affected by plague (Deut. 21:22-23; Josh. 8:29; Matt. 27:35).
- Legs broken. Because it was nearing Passover, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves to expedite
  their deaths. But, when the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead. Jesus was on the
  cross for only three to six hours, and His quick death surprised even Pilate. The reason that Jesus was
  already dead was because of the degree of trauma He endured from the torture and flogging administered

before He went to the cross. Matthew's record that Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggests the possibility of a catastrophic, terminal event (Matt. 27).

- Already dead. This was a surprise as crucifixions usually lasted all day—sometimes, several days or even longer when the person was just tied to the cross and not spiked to it. To prolong the suffering even more, they would place a small "sedile," a seat to rest in the middle of the cross. But, Jesus was severely beaten prior to the crucifixion, something most others did not go through, so His body was spent. The general method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifracture, which was to break the person's leg bones. That way, they could no longer lift themselves up to breathe, so they would die from asphyxiation. The normal death of crucifixion is not because of trauma or blood loss. It is by suffocation due to the body, in shock, being unable to move so as to prop one's self up to breathe; however, Jesus may have died from other complications due to His heinous ordeal. Jesus would have been pushing Himself upward to avoid the pain and lowering Himself to take a breath (Matt. 27: 45- 66).
- Pierced Jesus' side with a spear. This was a "hasta" lance made of ash wood staff and a pointed iron head, about three and a half to six feet long. The solders, to make darn sure Jesus was dead and make sport oh Him or out of rage or sport, thrust a lance—a spear—into His side. The probable path of the spear would have been the right cross-section of the thorax, at level of plane (logical direction of impact from physics) piercing His heart (1 John 5:6-8).
- Blood and water. They pierced His heart through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the
  pericardium sac, and into the heart, where blood and water flowed out. This is also evidence that Jesus
  was not only God, but also a real human being and not some avatar or manifestation that the Gnostics
  proclaimed. Our Lord died from a broken heart caused by our sin (John 7:37-39)!
- The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony / witness is true. Perhaps speaking of John himself, this meant something valid in a court; it was a legal term for both Jews and Romans, here meaning to be an agent with the full authority of the one who sent Him. The application for us is that bringing a testimony is essential to knowing, eternalizing, and showing our faith; it is the active demonstration of the Gospel working in us. Christ is the One who gives us grace, forgiveness, our lives, purpose, and salvation; so then, how shall we display it (Deut. 17:6; 19:15)? Our faith is based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, and valid testimonies. Faith is still trusting what we cannot see and believing our God (John 1:7; Rom. 1:16-32; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14-26)!
- May believe. This is about faithfulness to the One who sends. It also meant one who testifies in a court of law or before an official on behalf of someone else, like a lawyer or a diplomat would do today. Isaiah used this term to state how true believers would testify about God to evil nations at the end of days. This proves Jesus was not in a coma, not mostly dead, but completely dead (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; John 1:6-18; 3:22-36; 10:41; 20:21).
- Scripture would be fulfilled. Three, prime, messiah prophecies as well as others were fulfilled (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Psalm 34:20, and then all of Psalm 22; Isa. 53:5-9; Zech. 12:10)!
- Not one of his bones will be broken. The bones of a sacrifice could not be broken. This is quite a minor miracle as Romans always broke bones.
- One they have pierced. The people who disobey Him hurt God's heart with sorrow and God literally has His heart pierced to remove our sorrow of sin (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7)
- Joseph of Arimathea. He was a wealthy member of the Jewish ruling council who had enough fondness for Jesus to be a follower, but not enough to go against his family and colleagues; he is not mentioned again outside of this account in the Gospels. But giving Him his tomb was a drastic, expensive, far-reaching testimony from Joseph to them. Arimathea was a small town about twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. To be wealthy then, as today, meant you had prominence and influence in society; this is evident for him to have gained Pilate's ear. This act of kindness—to give Jesus an honorable burial—would have been a big risk for him. He could possibly have been kicked out of his synagogue and family, perhaps even lost his wealth. Jesus must have touched him very deeply (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57; Luke 23:50-51).
- Nicodemus. See John 3:1-15 Study, He was perhaps a wealthy, highly educated, and important religious and perhaps civil leader too. He had to keep his reputation and appease his supporters and colleagues. In

Luke, he did not agree with Jesus' condemnation. He may have had an inner feeling that his thinking was not enough—perhaps even pretentious—and wanted something deeper and more meaningful and Jesus seemed to have all the answers. His dilemma was how to get to know Him without alienating his community (Luke 23:51; John 3:1-15).

- Myrrh and aloes. His intent was devotion and gratefulness to Jesus for Who He was and what He did. The translation of seventy pounds is a Roman measurement not corresponding to pounds today. It was still was a lot of value, seventy ounces (John 12:3).
- Wrapped it. The time and care was taken for our Lord with spices, strips of linen, and the shroud, which was a large sheet. This act shows reverence and honor. It usually was the women who took care of the bodies. This was an Egyptian practice picked up during their captivity prior to the Exodus. Bodies were wrapped in a shroud and long strips of cloth were woven very tight with also a tight woven shroud or wrapping placed over all that to keep the body straight during rigor mortis. This is another proof he was dead, because a live person would not be able to breathe with that over his face. It is not known how much was done for Jesus because of the haste for the Passover; note that the ladies came back Sunday to finish (1 Kings 13:30-31; Isa. 53:12; Mt 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 11:38-57).
- Jewish burial customs. For Jews, dead bodies had to be buried as soon as possible and outside of the city, while Romans allowed their enemies to rot in public and they burned (cremated) their heroes. The Jewish practice prevented disease and honored God's Law. To not be buried would be horrific to a Jew. Normally, crucified criminals were dumped into a common grave and the family was not allowed to mourn for them (2 Chron. 16:14).
- Garden. Referring to Gethsemane, the pristine prayer spot with an elaborate structure like a big arbor and hanging garden plants in the garden valley where olive oil was made from the olives of nearby groves where Jesus was betrayed the previous day (2 Sam. 15:23; 1 Kings 2:37; 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4-12; Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 13:19; 21:37; John 19:41).
- New tomb refers to one just finished or never used. This would have been both a great expense and a
  great honor. Normally, the crucified were left unburied or buried in shallow, common graves without care.
  Burying the dead was an important Jewish custom and great care normally went into it, especially to keep
  the smell down in a very hot climate and to remain ceremonially "clean." This would also make the tomb
  unique and thus not mistaken for another one (Num. 19:16-18).
- According to physiologists, Jesus did not die from suffocation as most victims of crucifixion did. Rather, He had cardiac rupture or cardio respiratory failure, associated hypovolemia, hyperemia, and an altered coagulated state. Also, friable (brittle), non-infective, thrombotic vegetations could have formed on the aortic or mitral valve, and been aggravated by His state of exhaustion and the severity of the scourging. Jesus died of heart failure! This is evidenced by the presence of water, which is caused by the shock and constriction of the cardiac tissues being filled by fluid from the pericardium. Some scholars debate over whether Jesus died from the spear, from a heart attack, or of suffocation. To put to rest this controversy—the wound was far away from the abdominal midline, even though some suggest that the spear killed Jesus, and that the water was urine. The Greek word for water and urine are not the same. But, the important aspect is not how Jesus died, but that He died for you and me!

# **Devotional Thoughts and Applications** For more insights see The Crucifixion of Jesus!

Jesus was crucified, the most form of torture ever conceived, inflicting the most atrocious torment and pain imaginable upon a person. Jesus walked up to it and endured it when He could have easily walked away. When they offered Him the drink of *gall* that would have helped ease His suffering, He rejected that cup so He could fulfill the cup of suffering for us as He agonized on the cross! What we see here is that Jesus was continually obedient as He paid our debt of sin. He chose to endure through the most heinous suffering a person could experience! Jesus models for us how to handle suffering and injustice and what is important and what is not. We must be set apart to be promoters of our Lord's Kingdom and Grace, and to live a life of distinction, a life that honors Christ and motivates and encourages others.

Do you understand the importance, relevance, and impact of the *Cross*? The cross—that symbol of torture and punishment—turned into an enduring icon of redemption and love! The cross is pivotal for the real Christian faith. Without it, there would have been no redemption or real faith, as the substance of our faith would have been absent. The cross is central to who Jesus is and what He did for us. If you take away the

cross, you no longer have a faith; you have a mere religion based on superstitions and man's creative ingenuity. The cross represents atonement—our being forgiven of our debt of sin by our Lord's shed blood. This is the heart and core of our faith. There is no Christianity without the cross! Jesus carried the sins of those religious leaders, the sins of those soldiers, and our sins to the cross. Such an enormous, incredible gift of grace! If only we will accept it by faith! If only we would be willing to pursue that faith into the depths of His Word and precepts in order to be better in our character, in our maturity, and in our witness (Psalm 22; Matt. 32-37)!

# The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive guestions see Inductive Bible Study):

- 1. What does this passage say?
- 2. What does this passage mean?
- 3. What is God telling me?
- 4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
- 5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
- 6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
- 7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
- 8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
- 9. What can I model and teach?
- 10. What does God want me to share with someone?

#### **Additional Questions:**

- 1. What is the most heinous thing you ever witnessed? Do you understand the importance, relevance, and impact of the *Cross*?
- 2. How do you see Jesus demonstrating His love? How do you see man at his worst here? How do you feel that as we do our worst, God shows Himself by doing His best?
- 3. Why do you suppose the religious leaders were so jealous and hated our Lord so passionately?
- 4. How does hypocrisy show insincerity and hate? How does this affect people who are both inside and outside the church?
- 5. What does it mean to you that our faith is based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, and valid testimonies? How is real faith still trusting what we cannot see and believing our God?
- 6. What do you think Joseph's motivation was to give Jesus his tomb, knowing he could possibly lose his place in his family and synagogue?
- 7. Christ is the One who gives us grace, forgiveness, and our life, purpose, and salvation; so how can you better display it?
- 8. Can you describe the depth of Jesus suffering? How does this impact you and the call He has given you?
- 9. How does the fact that our Lord and Savior died in your place affect you? Your walk in Him? Your relationships? Your ministry? Your work? Or?
- 10. Do you fully realize what Jesus did for you? What can you do to more fully understand the depth of His sacrifice on your behalf?
- 11. Is there a distinguished reality of the Lordship of Christ versus the menagerie of living life according to the lies of our and the worlds desires?
- 12. Is your deepest desire in life and pleasure in living dedicated to please Christ? Can you take a hard look at your life and see how others see you, how God sees you?