

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written
for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MATTHEW 27²

Jesus Brought before Pilate

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. 2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

The Suicide of Judas

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus[a] was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 4 He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent[b] blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." 7 After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.[c] "And they took[d] the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set,[e] on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, 10 and they gave[f] them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Pilate Questions Jesus

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Barabbas or Jesus?

15 Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Jesus[g] Barabbas. 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus[h] Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"[i] 18 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. 19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." 20 Now the

¹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

² All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" [j] All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

Pilate Hands Jesus Over to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; [k] see to it yourselves." 25 Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 So he released Barabbas for them, and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, [l] and they gathered the whole cohort around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and after twisting some thorns into a crown they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

32 As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; [m] 36 then they sat down there and kept watch over him. 37 Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

38 Then two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by derided [n] him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. [o] He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, 'I am God's Son.' " 44 The rebels who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

45 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land [p] until three in the afternoon. 46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." [q] 50 Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. [r] 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54 Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" [s]

55 Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, [t] and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The Burial of Jesus

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who also was himself a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard[u] of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." [v] 66 So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Footnotes

- 27.3 Gk *he*
- 27.4 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *righteous*
- 27.9 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *Zechariah or Isaiah*
- 27.9 Or *I took*
- 27.9 Or *the price of the precious One*
- 27.10 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *I gave*
- 27.16 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) lack *Jesus*
- 27.17 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) lack *Jesus*
- 27.17 Or *the Christ*
- 27.22 Or *the Christ*
- 27.24 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *this righteous blood or this righteous man's blood*
- 27.27 Gk *the praetorium*
- 27.35 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add *in order that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."*
- 27.39 Or *blasphemed*
- 27.42 Or *is he unable to save himself?*
- 27.45 Or *earth*
- 27.49 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood*
- 27.50 Or *gave up his spirit*
- 27.54 Or *a son of God*
- 27.56 Some ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *Joses*
- 27.65 Or *Take a guard*
- 27.65 Gk *you know how*

GOSPEL COMPARISON³

Pericope	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Jesus Delivered to Pilate	15:1	27:1-2	23:1	18:28
The Death of Judas		27:3-10		
The Trial before Pilate	15:2-5	27:11-14	23:2-5	18:29-38
Jesus or Barabbas?	15:6-14	27:15-23	23:17-23	18:39-40
“Behold the Man!”	15:17-20a	27:28-31a		19:1-15
Pilate Delivers Jesus to be Crucified	15:15	27:24-26	23:24-25	19:16
Jesus Mocked by the Soldiers	15:16-20a	27:27-31a		19:2-3
The Road to Golgotha	15:20b-21	27:31b-32	23:26-32	19:17
The Crucifixion	15:22-26	27:33-37	23:33-34	19:17b-27
Jesus Derided on the Cross	15:27-32a	27:38-43	23:35-38	
The Two Thieves	15:32b	27:44	23:39-43	
The Death of Jesus	15:33-39	27:45-54	23:44-48	19:28-30
Witnesses of the Crucifixion	15:40-41	27:55-56	23:49	19:25-27
The Burial of Jesus	15:42-47	27:57-61	23:50-56	19:38-42
The Guard at the Tomb		27:62-66		

PERSPECTIVES

Matthew closely follows Mark’s text and order. He adds two pericopes: The Death of Judas (vv.3-10), and the Guard at the Tomb (vv. 62-66). He also adds that Judas repented before he died something not found in the other gospels.

27:1-2 Jesus Brought before Pilate

The council to condemn Jesus occurs in the early hours of daylight so he can be transferred to Pilate in the early part of the day when the Romans conducted meetings. They “*handed him over*” implies that Jesus was now in the custody of the Romans which is a literal fulfillment of Jesus prophecy (20:18-19).⁴

Pilate was the fifth Roman governor of the province of Judea from 26-36 CE.⁵ Tradition is split on Pilate:

- 1) Egyptian and Syrian churches viewed Pilate as an unwilling participant in the death of Jesus. The Coptic church even made Pilate a saint.
- 2) The western church picture Pilate as bearing full responsibility for Jesus death. He is presented as an unjust judge, weak-willed at best, and evil at worst.

Matthew is closer to the second view. Pilate ignores his wife’s dream, condemns Jesus with no evidence, and after his death agrees to post a guard. Washing his hands does not make him innocent.⁶

27:3-10 The Suicide of Judas

There are three other early Christian accounts of Judas’ death: Acts 1:16-20; and two fragments assigned to Papias. The commons elements are money from Judas purchases land near Jerusalem and that

³ Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

⁴ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵ Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV Version, pp. 1717-1720

⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

property was known as the field of blood; the death of Judas fulfils scripture; and Judas comes to a bad end and dies.⁷

v. 3 Judas, “*he repented*”, what does this mean? Only Matthew has Judas repenting. Unlike Pilate, Judas declares his guilt over innocent blood; and Judas takes responsibility for his betraying action and its outcome.⁸

Matthew relates the story of Judas last interaction with the chief priests and elders and subsequent suicide. It is quite clear at this point in the story that what Judas had done would lead to Jesus’ crucifixion and death. Judas is characterized as the one who betrayed Jesus. He is filled with remorse. Oddly he returns to the people who paid him and confesses that he has sinned. “*I have betrayed innocent blood.*” The enormity of his sin has dawned on him, and he is now confessing. To their eternal discredit, the chief priests, the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people, view Judas as a tool that has served its purpose and could now be discarded, not as a man in desperate spiritual need.⁹

27:11-14 Pilate Questions Jesus

Note: at the heart of the Roman action is the charge ““This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” It is also the title of the sign on the cross.

Mark 15:2-5	Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14	Luke 23:2-5	John 18:29-38
15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.	When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. 2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.	Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus[a] before Pilate. 2 They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man inciting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.”[b]	
2 Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” 3 Then the chief priests accused him of many things.	11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. 13	3 Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered, “You say so.”	33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?”

To claim king of the Jews, corresponding to Messiah, would be treasonable to the Roman authorities.¹⁰

The Roman trial reads more like an informal meeting than a trial. The overall focus on the passage is culpability for Jesus execution. Pilate does not conduct a real trial and seems afraid of the Jewish authorities and the crowd. The effect is to highlight the innocence of Jesus and the fault of the Roman representative and the guilt of the Jewish authorities.¹¹

v.11 “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” The Jewish authorities have interpreted the religious charge of blasphemy and the title of Messiah, as *King of the Jews*, so Pilate could have an actionable charge.¹² Pilate’s question is identical in all four gospels, it is the first thing he says to Jesus and the word *you* is emphasized.¹³

⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁸ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁰ Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV Version, pp. 1717-1720

¹¹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

¹² Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹³ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

Jesus' response "You say so." Saying yes or no would have been more easily understood. Yes, and Jesus' claiming kingship on earth which is sedition against the emperor. No and Pilate and the Jewish authorities could have had a discussion. "You say so." Means yes, he is king but not in the same meaning as you hold for that word.¹⁴

Jesus uses "You say so" three times in Matthew: when Judas asks who the betrayer is (26:25); when Caiaphas asked whether he was the Christ (26:64); and now with Pilate. In all three cases the person asking Jesus a question should have already known the answer.¹⁵

In all three accounts of Jesus' trial in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus does not say anything more to Pilate. It astonishes Pilate that Jesus is not arguing or begging for his life. That is what he expects of prisoners.¹⁶

27:15-23 Barabbas or Jesus?

Pilate is not taken in by what the Jewish authorities are saying about Jesus. He knew they were not motivated by the security of the Roman state. Unique to Matthew, Pilate's wife sends him a message as he is seated on the judgement seat, not to be involved with Jesus whom she describes as a *innocent man*.¹⁷ Note: intervention through a dream, involving a pagan.

The crowd is manipulated by the chief priests and elders. When Pilate offers Jesus and Barabbas for clemency the crowd is whipped up to ask for Barabbas and for Jesus to be crucified. The crowd knew the form of execution Jesus would receive and affirmed it. When Pilate asks, "*But what evil did he do?*" They replied with *crucify him*. There is no reasoning behind it. It is mob hysteria demanding death.¹⁸

27:24-26 Pilate Hands Jesus Over to Be Crucified

Asking a Jerusalem mob to choose between a revolutionary and a religious leader for clemency they chose the man of violence. Pilate's ploy had failed. Washing his hands if the affair Pilate tells the crowd he is innocent of this man's blood.¹⁹ It is a highly cynical move.²⁰

v. 25 "His blood be on us and on our children!" is perhaps the most notorious, and blood-stained sentence in Matthew and perhaps the gospels. The crowd must have believed Jesus was guilty because no one would assign responsibility on their children for an unjust killing. Their statement has the blessing and encouragement of the Jewish authorities. They appear to have been happy to relieve Pilate of his responsibility.²¹

v. 25 Is a declaration of responsibility – in effect, we acknowledge our involvement even though our Roman governor will not. It may also be a prophecy of what will happen to Jerusalem in 70 CE with the fall of the temple.²²

v. 25 This statement represents Matthew's condemnation of Israel for the death of Jesus.²³

The verse has been greatly misused throughout the centuries to justify horrific behavior toward Jews. The crowd did not have the authority to bind themselves and subsequent generations of Jews to Jesus death. They could not bind God to punish them. The evils perpetuated against Jews is not justified in Scripture.²⁴

¹⁴ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁵ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁶ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁷ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁸ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

¹⁹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

²⁰ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

²¹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

²² Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

²³ Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV Version, pp. 1717-1720

²⁴ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

It is relevant that Jesus and all of the first Christians were Jews. The writer of the Gospel could not have meant that punishment for the mob's outrageous behaviors should fall on every single Jew for the rest of time.²⁵

27:27-31 The Soldiers Mock Jesus

Here Jesus is an entirely passive object. The irony in the scene is that what the Roman soldiers are mocking Jesus about will shortly become true.²⁶

Matthew and the gospel writers do not dwell on the dreadful treatment of Jesus as a condemned prisoner. He is scourged and crucified. Popular piety today often does. For an ancient audience who knew only too well how prisoners were treated very few words were needed to communicate how Jesus' life ended.²⁷

What Matthew does tell us are three things: the division of Jesus' clothes; the inscription over his head; and the mockery before and after he is hung on the cross.²⁸

27:32-44 The Crucifixion of Jesus

This haunting passage depicts Jesus as the suffering servant in the OT:²⁹

Matthew	OT References
34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall	Psalm 69:21
35 they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots;[m]	Psalm 22:18
38 Then two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.	Isaiah 53:12
39 Those who passed by derided[n] him, shaking their heads	Psalm 22:7, Lamentations 2:15
40-44 "mockery"	Psalms 22:7; 22:9; 69:9
45 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land[p]	Amos 8:9
46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"	Psalm 22:1
48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink.	Psalm 69:21
51 The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.	Ezek 37; Zech 14:4-5
53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.	Ezek 37; Zech 14:4-5

One of the values of relating the Wisdom of Solomon to this scene in the Gospels is that it may help to explain—without falling into the trap of harmonization—why Matthew and Mark differ from Luke at the point of the centurion's confession (l. 4): the "righteous / just / innocent [δικαιος] person" and "son of God" belonged within the same theological environment, being virtual equivalents. The First and Second Evangelists chose one of them, and Luke the alternative. None is less nor more historical. However, determining which sense the Evangelists wish to convey is not always easy. Did they mean to reproduce what foreign military would likely have said under such circumstances ("narrative logic," again)? Or was he / were they voicing the Gospel writers' Christian convictions about Jesus?³⁰

²⁵ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

²⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

²⁷ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

²⁸ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

²⁹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

³⁰ Eugene E. Lemcio, The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew's Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming 2023)

	Wis Sol 2:12–20	Matt 27:38–54// Mark 15:27–39	Luke 23:35–47
Who? (subject/source)	unknown figure	Jesus	Jesus
What? (event)	ridicule at abusive event	ridicule at crucifixion	ridicule at crucifixion
for Whom? (object)	[Jewish readers]	[Jewish-Christian readers]	[Gentile-Christian readers]
against Whom? (object)	“righteous (or just) man is <u>God’s son</u> ” [ὁ δίκαιος υἱὸς θεοῦ] (18)	“Truly this man was <u>God’s Son.</u> ” [υἱὸς θεοῦ] (Matt 27:54//Mark 15:39)	“This man was <u>innocent</u> ” <u>(or just, or righteous).</u> ” [δίκαιος] (47)
by Whom? (agent)	hedonist, Lawless ungodly	Centurion and those with him	Centurion ³¹
Why? (reason/cause)	threat to way of life	threat: religious-political	threat: religious-political
How? (means)	verbal & physical attack	condemnation by authorities	condemnation by authorities
Result	insult, torture, death intended	death	death
So what? (significance)	a known paradigm	known paradigm embodied	known paradigm embodied
When? (time)	unspecified	Passover	Passover
Where? (place)	unspecified	Jerusalem—Calvary	Jerusalem—Calvary

Matthew follows Mark closely. Matthew’s account has echoes of the OT, they are shown to us as fulfillment of the OT scriptures, and we are led to understand that everything that happened that day was furthering God’s purpose, God’s will.³²

v.34 When offered a drink to dull his senses Jesus refuses. He wanted to come to his supreme moment fully aware.³³

v. 35 “And when they had crucified him”. Matthew does not describe crucifixion. He uses a single word to tell what was done. His audience was all too familiar with the Roman practice. No additional words were necessary. Popular Christian piety today expands on the details of crucifixion. But the Synoptic gospels do not. What mattered to the NT writers was that in his death Jesus dealt with our sins. They try to bring out the meaning of his death and leave their readers to work out for themselves that crucifixion was a horrible way to die.³⁴

The charge against Jesus is posted on a sign above his head.³⁵

- “The King of the Jews.” (Mark)
- “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” (Matthew)
- “This is the King of the Jews.” (Luke)
- “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” (John)

The irony is that the statement is true.³⁶

vv. 39-40 Jesus is mocked by three groups of people: the passersby, the chief priests, and those crucified next to him. That the chief priests and their supporters came out to watch Jesus die signals their complete rejection of Jesus by official Judaism. It is an indication of the depth of their hostility toward Jesus.³⁷

³¹ In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ trial, Pilate’s wife who regards Jesus thus (27:19). A Gentile, and spouse to the man embodying the presence of enemy military-political authority, she is granted a dream—the same word in Greek that is the medium of revelation, both to Joseph (1:20, 2:13, 19) and to the Magi (2:12). Did the First Evangelist intend for her to be ranked among the confessors? Eugene E. Lemcio, *The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew’s Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming 2023)

³² Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

³³ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

³⁴ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

³⁵ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

³⁶ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

³⁷ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 691-732

v. 42 “He saved others; he cannot save himself.” This statement is profoundly true. The man who had saved others cannot save himself if his death is to bring salvation for others. He has to choose not to save himself to save others.³⁸

v. 42 “He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.” This sarcastic statement, “*He is the King of Israel?*” Reflects the believe that kings do not get arrested and crucified. They have armies and win battles and conquer the Romans. This man on the cross cannot be the King of Israel, because his behavior does not fit what the elite expects from a King.³⁹

v. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’ Reminiscent of Psalm 22:8⁴⁰, the mockers bear witness to the fact that Jesus put his trust in God, and even though he claimed to have a special relationship with God, God was not rescuing him.⁴¹

27:45-56 The Death of Jesus

Note: The core elements of commonality in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) in the death of Jesus are: the land was dark from noon to three in the afternoon;

In Mark and Matthew Jesus cries “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” that is, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” before he expires and dies;

Mark 15:33-39	Matthew 27:45-54	Luke 23:44-48	John 19:28-30
33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land[g] until three in the afternoon.	45 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land[p] until three in the afternoon.	44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land[l] until three in the afternoon, 45 while the sun’s light failed,[m] and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.	28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.
34 At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”[h] 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” 36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah	46 And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” 48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait,	46 Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. 47	30 When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³⁸ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

³⁹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁴⁰ Psalm 22:8 “Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver— let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

⁴¹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

<p>will come to take him down.” 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.</p>	<p>let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”[q] 50 Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.[r]</p>		
<p>38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.</p>	<p>51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.</p>		
<p>39 Now when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he[i] breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”[j]</p>	<p>54 Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”[s]</p>	<p>When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.”[n]</p>	
<p>40 There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, 41 who followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him, and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.</p>	<p>55 Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph,[t] and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.</p>	<p>48 And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. 49 But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.</p>	

Matthew does not depict Jesus’ death as the glorious death of a martyr. We hear nothing of Jesus’ valor or faith. Vv.32-50 do not encourage or inspire, but rather depict human sin and its frightening freedom in the unfathomable divine silence. There is terror in this text. The mockery and torture of Jesus portray the depths of irrational human depravity.⁴²

⁴² Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

The patient silence of God leads the Son to cry out feelings of abandonment, powerfully convey the frightening mystery of God's seeming inactivity in the world. The divine absence, harken to portions of Job and the speech out of the whirlwind or Isaiah. "Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior." (Isaiah 45:15)⁴³

The absence/silence of God in vv. 45-50 is now counter pointed in vv. 51-4 with an explosion of the supernatural. The Matthean signs are first eschatological: darkness, end of the temple, resurrection, and conversion of Gentiles. Second, they occur only after Jesus has died. Before his death Jesus' passivity is matched by God's. The mystery is why God is tardy to respond to Jesus torture and death. Why must the torment and death come first? Whatever the answer is to that eternal question, the sequence cannot surprise for Jesus own teaching says that tribulation and suffering precede vindication and victory.⁴⁴

To explore the possibility that the First Evangelist has constructed the derision at the Cross to match the questions put to Jesus by Satan during the Temptation. Are the two testings about the nature and role of sonship meant to frame the entire narrative?⁴⁵

Temptation 1 (Matthew 4)	Temptation 2 (Matthew 27) ⁴⁶
"If you are the Son of God . . . , " (v. 3)	"If you are God's Son, come down . . ." (v. 40)
"If you are the Son of God . . . , " (v. 6)	"for he said, 'I am God's Son'." (v. 43)
	"Truly this man was God's Son." (v. 54)

All three synoptic gospels tell us that there was darkness over all the land from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3 PM). We should understand the darkness as a supernatural event leading up to the time when the Son of God breathed his last.⁴⁷

The loud cry and these words are from Psalm 22. In Mark, they are in Aramaic and in the Psalm and Matthew, Hebrew. Speaking loudly, Jesus wanted these words to be heard. Translating them is easy. Understanding what they mean in this context is a more difficult problem.

- Some modern commentators reject them because they are so different than everything else Jesus says in the Gospels;
- Some think Jesus was reciting a psalm in his final moments, and he actually said the entire psalm that ends with praise for God; and
- Others think Jesus actually felt abandoned at his final hour, but of course God had not actually abandoned him.

It is better to face the mystery honestly and to accept that this was part of the putting away of sin. We do not understand what Jesus as a human encountered in his last hour as he confronted sin and God's wrath. It may have been that in working out salvation for sinners, the hitherto unbroken communication between the Father and the Son was broken. And Jesus experienced that broken link as abandonment.⁴⁸

Jesus also cried out "My God, my God!" showing he may have felt abandoned, but he also retained his trust in God. It is possible also that the bystanders misunderstood Jesus last words and though he was crying for Elijah, which sounds similar to God in Hebrew.⁴⁹

v. 50 Jesus gives out a loud cry and "gave up his spirit". Implying a voluntary act by Jesus.

⁴³ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁴⁴ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁴⁵ Eugene E. Lemcio, The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew's Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming 2023)

⁴⁶ Eugene E. Lemcio, The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew's Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming 2023)

⁴⁷ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁴⁸ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁴⁹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

v. 51 The tearing of the Temple curtain may symbolize that the separation of the Holiest of the Holy space from the rest of the Temple was now open up to everyone not just priests. Or that religion would never be the same now that Jesus the Messiah had died for sinners. The earth quake shows the cosmic dimensions of the event.⁵⁰

vv. 52-3 The reference to the opening of the tombs is unique to Matthew. He is telling his readers something about salvation, it is the death of Jesus that triggers the resurrection of the saints.⁵¹

The centurions conclude, after crucifying and watching Jesus die and what occurs afterwards, that Jesus' true identity is that he was "God's Son". This is the gentile response to the crucifixion. Before the resurrection.⁵²

vv. 55-56 The women who have followed and supported Jesus from Galilee have stood watch over his crucifixion and death. He names three, "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph,[t] (Joses) and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."⁵³

27:57-61 The Burial of Jesus

Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four gospels in connection to the burial of Jesus. Though the crucifixion drove many of Jesus followers into hiding it appears to have brought Joseph out of the shadows to ask for Jesus body. He must be prominent because he has access to Pilate, has the means to bury Jesus, and can move swiftly before sun down. At the same time Matthew mentions that "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" were there to see where Jesus was buried.⁵⁴

27:62-66 The Guard at the Tomb

The posting of the guards at the tomb, unique to Matthew, reflects apologetics meant to refute the Jewish polemic against Jesus and the resurrection.⁵⁵

The apologetic tale of the guard at the tomb refutes the criticism of 28:15. That is it rebuts the Jewish slander against the disciples by showing how they could not have stolen the body. There was a guard and the disciples had fled.⁵⁶

The imagined exchange between Jewish non-believers and Matthew could have been imagined as⁵⁷:

Matthew: Jesus rose from the dead and his tomb was empty. (28:6)
Opponent: Did Jesus really die?
Matthew: A Roman guard kept watch over him; surely, he was dead before they released his body to be buried. (27:36)
Opponent: Was there a mix up on the tombs?
Matthew: The women saw where Jesus was buried. (27:61)
Opponent: The disciples seeking to confirm Jesus prophecy about resurrection stole the body.
Matthew: The disciples had fled, they were nowhere near the grave. (26:56)
Opponent: Then someone else stole the body.
Matthew: A large stone was rolled in front of the tomb. It was sealed and Roman soldiers were guarding it. (28:62-6)
Opponents: The soldiers fell asleep.
Matthew: They were bribed to say that. (28:12-15)

⁵⁰ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵¹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵² Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵³ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵⁴ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

⁵⁵ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., An Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 200-202

⁵⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁵⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

Psalm 2:1 asks, “Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?” The theme of human impotence versus divine will/power runs throughout the OT. It is part and parcel of 27:62-6. Jesus opponents take every precaution to prevent proclamation of the resurrection: they seal the tomb, they post a guard. But their efforts are futile. Psalm 2:4 “He who sits in the heavens laughs;”. Human beings cannot oppose earthquakes, angels, and the power of God.⁵⁸

This passage only appears in Matthew. It is controversial because it is often assailed as an invention of the early church to address the claim that Jesus body had been stolen from the tomb. It is also possible that Jesus enemies did post a guard to make sure his body was not stolen so his disciples could claim that Jesus had “been raised” as he had prophesied. Plate’s response is to give them a guard for the duty. By posting the guard, Jesus’ enemies actually reenforced the truth of what was to occur.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 882-885

⁵⁹ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 691-732

REFLECTION

Matthew’s unique contributions to the Pasion Story

- The Death of Judas (vv.3-10)
- Pilate’s wife (v.19)
- “His blood be on us and on our children!” (v. 25)
- “The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.” (vv.52-53)
- The Guard at the Tomb (vv.62-66)

The Beatitudes

How do we interpret Matthew’s Passion Story in the context of The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11)?

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11)	Where do you find this passage reflected in Chapters 26-28?
3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.	
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.	
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.	
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.	
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.	
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.	
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	
11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely[b] on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.	

What were Jesus' eschatological expectations going to the cross?

- “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (24:30-31 30)
- “When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.” (25:31-33)
- “for this is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (26:28-29)
- “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (26:64)

Is Jesus a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins?

- “you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (1:21)
- “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.” (20:28)
- “for this is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (26:28)

How does this ending reflect YHWH's will?

- “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want.” (26:39)
- “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” (26:42)

Is Jesus abandoned on the cross?

- “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (27:46)

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,
for the witness of your apostle and evangelist,
Matthew, to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace
which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;
and we pray that, after his example,
we may with ready wills and hearts obey
the calling of our Lord to follow him;
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun

SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



The Inspiration of St. Matthew, Caravaggio, 1602

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly class for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Prior Slow Religion Classes include the Gospel of According to Mark (2021-22), the Foundations of Christian Faith (2020-21), the Holy Spirit (2020), the Gospel According to John (2019-20), and Paul's Letter to the Romans (2017-8).

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