

so they could each have a piece. After saying a blessing, he took the bread and said, “This is my body, given for you. Eat it and remember me.” They ate their bread together. Then he passed around a cup of wine and said, “Everybody drink from this cup. It is my blood that is the new covenant which is poured out for many people for the forgiveness of all their sins.” (This “meal” became known as the Lord’s Supper.)

During the rest of the meal, the disciples started arguing among themselves about who would be in the various positions of power under Jesus when he became king. James and John, the fishermen who were brothers, thought they were the best and asked Jesus to let them sit at each side of him when he was on his throne. The others got angry when they heard what James and John had asked.

Jesus called them together and said, “You know the Gentile rulers are arrogant and like to show their power over all the Jews. But you shouldn’t have this kind of attitude. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man didn’t come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

Jesus then said to the group that one of them would betray him. His disciples were stunned and stared at each other. John was sitting next to Jesus and asked him quietly who the traitor was.

Jesus replied quietly that it was the person to whom he would give a piece of bread after he dipped it in the dish they were sharing. Then he gave a piece of bread to Judas Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, an evil spirit entered him, and Jesus told him to go do what he was going to do.

None of the other disciples knew what was happening. Judas was in charge of the disciples’ money, so some of them thought he was going to buy something for the festival or to give alms to the poor. But in reality, Judas had made a deal with the Pharisees to have Jesus arrested that night when the crowds that followed him would not be around. He offered to identify Jesus in exchange for 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus Gives a New Command and Predicts Peter's Denial

After Judas left, Jesus said to the others, “I will be with you only a little longer — the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. You can’t come where I’m going. But if you love me, keep my commands. And now I’m giving you a new command: Love one another in the same way I have loved you. It is by your love for each other that people will know you are my disciples. The greatest love is to sacrifice your life to save others.”

Peter asked, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “You can’t follow me now where I’m going, but you will come later.”

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

Jesus replied, “Really? I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times! Tonight, all of you will leave me as the prophet Zechariah predicted when he wrote, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will scatter.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

Jesus continued discussing his departure. “Don’t worry. I’m going to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house. I will come back and take you to be with me.”

Thomas said they didn’t know where he was going, so they did not know the way. Jesus responded:

I am the way and the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you know my Father as well. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing the work. Those who believe in me will do what I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I’m going to the Father.

God will give you another advocate, the Spirit, to help you and be with you forever. The world won’t understand anything

about this invisible Spirit, but it will be in you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but I won't leave you as orphans — I will come to you, and you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. The Spirit will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

I am the true vine; you are the branches, and God is the gardener who cuts off dead branches and prunes the living branches so they will produce more fruit. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must stay connected to the vine. You can't bear fruit unless you remain in me; apart from me you can do nothing. Bear much fruit to show you are my disciples. I have chosen you to produce fruit that will last.

If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. A servant is not greater than his master, so if the world persecuted me, it will persecute you. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: "They hated me without reason." I leave with you my peace. In this world you will have trouble, but don't be discouraged — I have overcome the world!

Jesus said Satan, the prince of this world, was coming for him, but he said nothing more. They all left the upper room and went to the garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives, just outside the city walls.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

When they got to the garden, Jesus was very sad. He told his disciples to pray for him as he withdrew further into the garden with Peter, James, and John. He told the three men to stay with him and watch for anything that might come their way. Then he went further into the garden and prayed to God, saying "If it's possible, take this cup away from me. But do what you must, not what I want."

He returned to his three disciples several times, and each time they were sleeping and not watching. He said to Peter, "Can't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so you don't fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Each time Jesus retreated into the garden to be alone, he prayed, "Father, if this cup can't be taken from me, I will do it." Finally, he

came back to all the disciples and told them, “The hour has come — the Son of Man will now be delivered into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let’s go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Judas Iscariot had just shown up with many men armed with swords and clubs, along with servants of the chief priests and the elders of the people, in anticipation of an armed struggle. Judas had arranged to give the men a signal to indicate who they were to capture: he would give Jesus a kiss. Judas came to Jesus and kissed him with the traditional greeting for a rabbi.

The armed men then stepped forward and seized Jesus. Peter moved quickly to defend him. He pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest.

Jesus told Peter, “Put away your sword. Those who use the sword will die by the sword. If I wanted to, I could call on my Father, and he would send hundreds of angels to rescue me. But for the Scriptures to be fulfilled, this must happen.” And Jesus healed the ear of the servant.

Jesus turned to those who came to arrest him and said, “Am I leading a rebellion so you have to bring swords and clubs to capture me? I sat in the Temple courts teaching, and you didn’t arrest me. But this is happening to fulfill the writings of the prophets.” Seeing what had happened, all his disciples scurried away, deserting him.

JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

It was in the middle of the night, and Jesus was taken to meet with the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas, the high priest, was there with all the teachers of the law and the elders. They were looking for solid evidence against Jesus to justify putting him to death, but there was none. Finally, two members said that Jesus claimed he would destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.

Caiaphas asked Jesus if this was true and if he was going to respond to the charge. But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “By the order of the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Jesus replied, “You have said so. But I tell you: from now on you

will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

When Caiaphas heard this answer, he tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! We don’t need any more witnesses! We have heard this blasphemy. What should we do?”

The others answered, “He must die!” They spit in his face and hit him with their fists. Others slapped and mocked him, saying, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

Judas was with them and saw what was happening. He realized he had done an evil thing and was filled with remorse. He brought the 30 pieces of silver back to the chief priest and said he had sinned by betraying an innocent man. When those in the Sanhedrin said they didn’t care, he threw the coins into the Temple, left the area, and committed suicide.

The chief priests picked up the coins and said it was against the law to put the money into the treasury because it was blood money. So they used the money to buy a field as a burial place for foreigners. The prophet Jeremiah had predicted this when he wrote centuries earlier, “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by some of the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field.”

While all this was happening, Peter had followed Jesus from a distance after the arrest in the garden. Peter went into the courtyard of the high priest and sat down with the guards to see what would happen. A servant girl came to him and said he had been with Jesus.

But Peter denied it and said she didn’t know what she was talking about. He went out to the gateway of the courtyard, and another servant girl saw him and told others that she had seen him with Jesus. But Peter denied it again and swore he didn’t know who Jesus was.

A little while later, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “I’m sure you are one of them; your [Galilean] accent gives you away.” Peter cursed loudly and swore he didn’t know the man. Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said Peter would disown him three times before the rooster crowed, and he left and wept bitterly.

JESUS FACES PILATE

By Friday morning, the chief priests and all the elders of the Sanhedrin had finished the religious trial and made plans for having the Romans execute Jesus. They tied him up and handed him over to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the charges they are bringing against you?" But Jesus didn't respond to any of the charges, just as he had remained silent before the Sanhedrin. The governor was amazed that Jesus didn't defend himself.

It was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time, a well-known revolutionary named Barabbas was being held as prisoner because he had killed somebody during an uprising against the Romans. When the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. (Pilate knew they wanted Jesus dead out of their own self-interest.)

The governor asked, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

The crowd answered, "Barabbas."

Then Pilate asked, "What should I do with Jesus, the one who is called the Messiah?"

The crowd answered, "Crucify him!"

While Pilate was listening and speaking from his judge's seat, his wife sent him a message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man. I had a disturbing dream about him last night that still upsets me."

Pilate wondered why the crowd wanted Jesus dead. He said they should deal with him themselves, but the religious leaders said they weren't allowed to put a man to death. The Jewish leaders insisted, "According to our Law, he must die because he said he was the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was afraid and went back inside the

palace and spoke to Jesus. Pilate told Jesus he had the power to either release him or crucify him. Jesus said, “You would not have any power over me unless it was given to you from above.”

Pilate asked Jesus why his own people wanted him killed. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. I was born to be a king and bring the truth about the world.”

Pilate replied, “What is truth?”

Finding no fault in Jesus, Pilate wanted to free him, but the Jewish leaders said that if he let Jesus go, he was no friend of Caesar — there was only one king, and anybody who claimed to be a king was opposing Caesar. The leaders also said Jesus was perverting their religion — his teachings were stirring up the people. Besides, they would not have turned him over to Pilate if he wasn’t doing something wrong.

When Pilate heard Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to be questioned by Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the time. Herod had jurisdiction over the affairs of Galilee and was glad to finally meet Jesus, who had become famous in that area of Palestine. But Herod could find no fault in Jesus and sent him back to Pilate.

When Jesus had returned, Pilate turned to the crowd and asked, “Why do you want him crucified? What crime has he committed? Herod and I find no fault in him.”

He said he would have him flogged and released, but the crowd kept shouting, “Crucify him.” They wanted Jesus to suffer the death penalty.

Pilate said to them, “Here is your king.”

The people responded, “We have no king except Caesar.”

Pilate was disgusted and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I’m innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility!”

The people answered, “His blood is on us and our children!”

TORTURE AND EXECUTION

Later Friday morning, Pilate released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers so he could be tortured and executed. The soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the rest of the soldiers around him. They stripped him naked, put a robe on him, and

twisted together a crown of long thorns and pushed it on his head. They knelt in front of him and mocked him by saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” They spit on him, beat him, and hit him on the head again and again so the thorns went in further and further. They took off the robe, put his own clothes back on him, and led him away to be whipped brutally and then be nailed to a cross.

Jesus was forced to carry his cross through the streets. The cross became too heavy for him, so a Jewish immigrant from Africa carried it the rest of the way. A large number of people followed them, including women who cried loudly for him.

On a hill outside the city walls called Golgotha (meaning *place of the skull*), Jesus was nailed to the cross. Two common criminals were crucified with him. Huge nails were driven through his hands and feet, and the cross was lifted up high for all to see. Above his head was the written charge against him: “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” It appeared in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. The Jews wanted the sign to say that he *said* he was the king of the Jews, but Pilate said he wrote what he wanted it to say.

While he hung on the cross, Jesus was offered a form of wine but he refused to drink it. The Roman soldiers who were there claimed his clothes by casting lots. (This fulfilled another prediction about the Messiah.)

Some of those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You said you would destroy the Temple and build it in three days — save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!” The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders also went up the hill and mocked him. They said to the crowd, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself! If he is the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross now, and then we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said he was the Son of God.”

One of the two men who were being crucified next to him also insulted Jesus, saying, “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal said, “We are getting what we deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he turned to Jesus and said, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replied, "Truly, you will be with me in paradise today."

Many of his followers watched from a distance. Some of them expected a miracle to happen. Jesus spoke to the few who were at the foot of the cross: his mother Mary, his aunt, Mary Magdalene, and John. While he hung there, Jesus told John to take care of his mother. He also said to God, "Forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS

It was around noon when the three crosses were placed in the ground. The skies turned dark for the next three hours. At three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you left me?" Shortly after that, he said, "It is finished. God, I give you my spirit."

At that point, the earth shook, the skies stormed, and the thick curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. A guard who was watching Jesus was terrified and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" Those who were watching wailed when they saw what was happening and left the scene in anguish.

It was getting late on Friday and the Jewish leaders didn't want bodies left on a cross during the Sabbath. They asked Pilate to have their legs broken (this hastens death by suffocation) and the bodies taken down. Soldiers broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus and saw he was dead, they didn't break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus's side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water (this indicates death had occurred). These things fulfilled two predictions about the Messiah: "None of his bones will be broken" and "They will look at the one they pierced."

As evening approached, one of Jesus's followers, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, got permission from Pilate to take Jesus's body. Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night, went with Joseph to bury the body in a new tomb that had been cut into a wall of rock in a garden. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and the two of them wrapped Jesus's body with the

spices in strips of clean linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. They rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away while Mary Magdalene and another Mary sat at the tomb. They had come to see where Jesus was buried so they could come back after the Sabbath and anoint the body. Since it was late in the day and the Sabbath was starting that evening, they didn't have time to anoint the body.

Less than 24 hours had elapsed from when Jesus met with his disciples for the last meal Thursday night and when Jesus was buried before the Sabbath started Friday night. On the Sabbath, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to see Pilate again. They told him that Jesus had said he would rise from the dead on the third day. In order to make sure the tomb was secure and the disciples wouldn't steal the body and say he was alive again, they asked for Roman guards to protect the tomb. Pilate ordered guards to secure the tomb — a seal was placed on the stone in front of the tomb opening, and guards were posted to ensure it was not disturbed. As this was happening, the Jews were observing the Sabbath while Jesus was dead in the sealed tomb. He was 33 years old when he died, and his ministry had lasted only three years.

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LIFE AFTER DEATH

JESUS RETURNS FROM THE GRAVE

Before dawn on Sunday morning, several women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. It had been about 40 hours since he died Friday afternoon. They weren't aware that Roman guards had been assigned to protect the grave, and they wondered how they would roll away the stone. But when they got to the tomb, the stone had been rolled away. When entering the tomb, they didn't find the body. There had been an earthquake earlier in the morning and an angel had rolled back the stone. The guards were so afraid of the angel that they ran away.

As the women wondered what happened, two men in bright clothes came into the tomb. As the frightened women bowed to them, the angels said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus isn't here; he has risen! Remember how he told you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

Mary Magdalene was one of the women who came to the tomb, and she began crying as she wondered where Jesus was. A man came up to her and asked why she was crying. She told the man, "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where he is." She thought she was talking the gardener — she didn't realize the man

was Jesus. She said, “Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go to him.”

Jesus said her name, “Mary,” and she recognized his voice.

She cried out, “Teacher!” She hugged him passionately, and she knew he was not a ghost. Jesus told her to tell the disciples that he was alive and would see them in Galilee.

The women ran to tell the 11 disciples that Jesus was alive, and Mary said she had seen him. The disciples didn’t believe the women — what they said didn’t make sense to them. Peter and John ran to the tomb and entered it. They saw just the strips of linen lying by themselves but didn’t see Jesus, so they still didn’t know what had happened.

Several Roman guards went to inform the Sanhedrin what had happened. The chief priests and the elders gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them to say that his disciples had come in the night and stolen the body while they were asleep. Since sleeping on the job and leaving one’s post were capital offenses for Roman soldiers, the Sanhedrin promised to bribe the governor if he found out about it. The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed, and the story about how the disciples stole the body was widely circulated among the Jews.

SIGHTINGS OF JESUS

The Road to Emmaus

Later that day, two men who had followed Jesus were walking to Emmaus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were discussing the things that had happened when Jesus came up and started walking with them (they didn’t recognize him). Jesus asked, “What are you talking about?”

They stood still and looked down with sad faces. One of them asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who doesn’t know what has happened in Jerusalem the past few days?”

Jesus asked, “What things?”

They replied, “What happened to Jesus of Nazareth, a powerful prophet for God and the people. The chief priests and our rulers