

Death on A Cross

The Crucifixion of Christ

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30)

Part 21 of the series – Three Years That Changed the World

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ When I embarked on this study - “Three Years That Changed The World”, primarily focusing on the Gospel of John – I knew that this chapter (John 19) would be the most difficult of them all as it describes the detail of the death of Jesus on the cross.
- ✓ It also brings to mind – who is responsible:
 - The Jewish religious leaders
 - Pilate
 - The Roman government
- ✓ While it’s true that all 3 groups listed above played a significant role in the actual crucifixion itself, the real reason all of this took place was God’s predetermined plan to create a way for Jesus to take on the sins of all those who would believe in him and create a path of redemption through his shed blood on the cross they crucified him on.
- ✓ Jesus was not a victim, and his death was not because of any scheme of man, but because the Father willed it so.

Introductory Remarks - continued

*“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge**; and **you**, with the help of wicked men, **put him to death by nailing him to the cross**. **But God raised him from the dead**, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” (Acts 2:22-24)*

*“Now, fellow Israelites, **I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders**. But **this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer**. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:17-21)*

Introductory Remarks - continued

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so, he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:7-10)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (II Corinthians 5:21)

“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.” (John 19:1-3)

- ✓ Some translations use the word “scourged” instead of “flogged” and the meaning is as hideous and cruel as it sounds:
 - The person would be stripped of their outer garments and bound to a post
 - The person would be whipped with the end consisting of leather strips/thongs with jagged pieces of bone or metal attached to their ends
 - It was as horrible as it sounds, often (after an unlimited number of lashes per Roman law) thrashing the flesh and exposing muscle tissue, bones, veins and in some cases, internal organs.
- ✓ It is almost unbelievable, that after finding Jesus innocent, Pilate would allow such a harsh punishment, but history does not favor him as a just man.

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- ✓ The soldiers were allowed to add to the mockery by creating a crown made of some type of thorny branch and placed it on Jesus’ head.
 - This was not normal protocol for Roman soldiers to do when crucifying a criminal, but in this case, they seemed to enjoy it.
 - The sharp spikes (thorns) were intentionally driven into Jesus’ scalp
- ✓ They placed a robe (perhaps one of the soldier’s cloaks), along with a reed in Jesus’ hand (as recorded by Matthew) implying royalty and kingship. All their actions were a form of open mockery and completely undeserved by Jesus.
- ✓ They even slapped Jesus in the face and Matthew records they spit on him

“Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that **I find no basis for a charge against him.**” When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, **“Here is the man!”** As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, **they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”** But Pilate answered, **“You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”** (John 19:4-6)

- ✓ Pilate did not have to allow such cruelty to continue but he did nothing to stop it
- ✓ It is as ironic as it is sad that Pilate once again declares Jesus to be innocent but still parades him out in front of everyone with intentional mockery and declares; **“Here is the man”** or **“Behold the man!”** Pilate will one day regret this!
- ✓ The religious leader's contempt for Jesus seemed as bloodthirsty as the Roman soldiers and shouted – **“Crucify! Crucify!”**
- ✓ Pilate, even knowing the Jews lacked the authority to perform a crucifixion, seemed to be losing control and effectively said; “you crucify him”, I find no fault in him.

“The Jewish leaders insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” (John 19:7)

- ✓ The religious leaders reminded Pilate that they had already judged Jesus according to their law, found him guilty and his crime was punishable by death.
- ✓ Based on Roman occupational law there was an allowance for the occupied people to follow their own laws if they didn't conflict with Roman law.
- ✓ The crime (blasphemy) and punishment (death by stoning) was based on an Old Testament law (Leviticus 24:16). There was no conflict here, other than the demand to crucify Jesus. The Jewish form of capital punishment was stoning and not crucifixion, so it was up to the Roman authorities to complete the death sentence.
- ✓ Both the Old Testament prophets and Jesus own words declare his death to be completed by crucifixion and not stoning. Thus, crucifixion was to be the punishment, and Pilate (although reluctant) would ultimately authorize it.

“When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid,” and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” (John 19:8-10)

- ✓ Pilate’s wife (who was unnamed in Scripture, but later Christian tradition and apocryphal writings name her Claudia Procula or Procla) had a dream and strongly encourage Pilate to not have anything to do with Jesus.

“While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.” (Matthew 27:19)

- ✓ The Romans in general were superstitious people and the thought that Jesus might possess “divine powers” might have been the reason John writes that Pilate “**was even more afraid**”.

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- ✓ This question by Pilate “**Where do you come from?**” is an interesting one:
 - He already knew Jesus was a Galilean (Luke 23:6-6) so its doubtful he was inquiring about an earthly location.
 - More than likely, this inquiry had to do with whether Jesus was truly from the “realm of the gods” which is something he would have considered a possibility
- ✓ Jesus chose to remain silent and if we follow the prophecy in Isaiah 53 (specifically verse 7) that makes complete sense. Also, Jesus had already told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. (John 18:36-37)
- ✓ Although Pilate had the right to release Jesus – he certainly lacked courage to do so

“Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” (John 19:11)

- ✓ As powerful as Pilate thought he was, he was simply an instrument in God’s hand to complete His will. There was nothing Pilate could do to stop this.

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” (John 10:17-18)

- ✓ Although Pilate was fully accountable for his actions, he was reminded that God controlled these circumstances.
- ✓ There was another who should have been even more afraid than Pilate. His actions were considered a “**greater sin**”, and this person (although unnamed) was probably **Caiaphas**. If he remained unrepentant, I would not want to be him on judgement day, for he handed Jesus over to Pilate to be murdered by crucifixion.

“From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).” (John 19:12-13)

- ✓ Pilate continued his attempt to rid himself of this responsibility, but the religious leaders wouldn’t stand for it
- ✓ To let Jesus go (they claimed) was tantamount to being disloyal to Caesar
- ✓ This put Pilate in a real conundrum, and his options were to remain loyal to Rome or take the side of a Jew and one (in his mind) who lacked any significance.
- ✓ Pilate brought Jesus out, he sat on the “judges' seat” and (as we will see) makes the official” decision to have Jesus crucified. There is no stopping this now.

“It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So, the soldiers took charge of Jesus.” (John 19:14-16)

- ✓ The clock was ticking and the religious leaders knew they needed to get this finished
- ✓ Pilate then said to them something they didn't want to hear; **“Behold your King”**
- ✓ John is the only Gospel writer who mentions this incident, perhaps it was Pilates way of mocking the Jews as Jesus stood before them beaten, bloodied and completely helpless.
- ✓ They wanted nothing to do with Jesus and in what looked like a frenzied mob, they shouted – **“Take him away! Crucify him!”**
- ✓ Ironically, they reject the “King of Kings” and instead swear their allegiance to the king of their enemy. As such Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified.

“Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. **So, the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross**, he **went out to the place of the Skull** (which in Aramaic is called **Golgotha**). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.” (John 19:16-18)

- ✓ As the soldiers took charge of Jesus, we are told by John that Jesus carried his own cross. At some point, a man identified as Simon of Cyrene (by the other 3 gospel writers) was compelled by the soldiers, to take the cross from Jesus and carry it for the remainder of the trip to Golgotha (place of the Skull).
 - Simon (possibly a Greek speaking Jew) was probably visiting Jerusalem from another country – possibly North Africa.
 - We aren't told why he was compelled to carry the cross, and the assumption is made that Jesus may have been too exhausted to continue carrying it
- ✓ The final location where the crucifixion took place was a hill called **Golgotha**

“Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. **So, the soldiers took charge of Jesus.** Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). **There they crucified him,** and **with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.**” (John 19:16-18)

- ✓ Neither of the 4 Gospel accounts record (at the time of the crucifixion itself) the nails being driven into Jesus’ hands and feet. We know that it happened for 3 reasons:
 - The soldiers oversaw the crucifixion, and this would be the consistent method of how a person was crucified.
 - The Old Testament speaks of his hand and feet being pieced (Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 22:16)
 - After rising from the dead, Jesus shows Thomas and the other disciples his wounds (specifically his hands and side) and Thomas verifies this to be Jesus.
- ✓ The two men who were crucified with Jesus (Identified as robbers, Matthew 27:38) may have been accomplices of Barabbas.

“Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross.” It read: **JESUS OF NASARETH, KING OF THE JEWS**. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in **Aramaic**, **Latin** and **Greek**. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” Pilate answered, “**What I have written, I have written**.” (John 19:19-22)

- ✓ The Romans were known for affixing a placard/sign to the cross of the person who was crucified to identify the crime for which they had been condemned for.
- ✓ Were not told why Pilate chose to write these specific words; “JESUS OF NASARETH, KING OF THE JEWS” but despite the objection of the religious leaders, that is precisely what was written. Perhaps it was way of getting back at the religious leaders for cornering him into ordering the death of Jesus
- ✓ To ensure everyone read the sign he published it in **Aramaic**, **Latin** and **Greek**

“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” **This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “*They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*” So, this is what the soldiers did.”** (John 19:23-24)

- ✓ This activity of stripping the clothes from the one being crucified was a part of the customary cruelty of those times and the executioners would typically divide those spoils equally among themselves.
- ✓ Although the soldiers were acting out of pure selfish motives, their actions were a fulfillment of what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 22:18:

“All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. ***They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.***”

“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” (John 19:25-27)

- ✓ Luke (in his gospel account, Luke 23:44-49), along with Matthew and Mark, alludes to a “small group” of followers who stood at a distance from the cross and **that group was probably different than these four women who are mentioned here:**
 - Mary the mother of Jesus
 - Mary’s sister who was Salome
 - Mary the wife of Clopas (she is the “other” Mary who stayed with Mary Magdalene at Jesus’ tomb)
 - Mary Magdalene (the same Mary who had seven demons cast out of her (Luke 7:37-50))
- ✓ These women (specifically Jesus’ mother) were close enough to hear Jesus speak

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- ✓ There is no mention of Joseph (Jesus’ earthly father), and the assumption is that he was no longer alive, otherwise he would have been there as well. This would make John (the disciple whom Jesus loved) as the only man among this group of women at the foot of the cross.
- ✓ Jesus’ half brothers were not believers yet (that happens after the resurrection), so Jesus entrusts the care of his mother to John the Apostle.
- ✓ From this point forward Mary (the Mother of Jesus) will not only be cared for by John, but he is identified as her “son” and she is identified as his mother. This doesn’t lessen Mary’s purpose as the virgin who gave birth to the Son of God, but it shows the continual care that Jesus has for those he loves. (John 13:1)

“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:28-30)

- ✓ This is another proof of Christ’s deity for he knew this was the only remaining prophecy to be fulfilled:

“You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you. Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.” (Psalm 69:19-21)

- ✓ The soldiers didn’t know they were fulfilling scripture, as their true reason for giving him this sponge soaked with vinegar was to deaden the pain and prolong his suffering
- ✓ Now that the work of Jesus (making payment/redeeming the sins of those who will believe) was completed, he declares – “It is finished”

Why The Cross

Understanding the Consequences of our Sin

Romans 3:10

As it is written; there is none righteous, no, not one

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ
our Lord

Understanding the Consequences of our Sin

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

John 3:16-18

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God

Understanding the Consequences of our Sin

Then the soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail King of the Jews! They spat on Him and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him”

(Matthew 27:27-31)

Understanding the Significance of the Cross

- Christianity is a *religion* based on *atonement*
 - *Religion* is simply defined as a set of beliefs and practices held by a human community.
 - *Atonement* is a doctrine contained in both the Old and New Testament and found in the teachings of Judaism and Christianity.

Understanding the Significance of the Cross

- **Atonement** is a doctrine contained in both the Old and New Testament and found in the teachings of Judaism and Christianity.
 - ❖ It is the process by which sins are forgiven or pardoned
 - ❖ It is how we are reconciled to God. To be **at-one-ment** with Him.

Understanding the Significance of the Cross

1 Peter 2:21-25

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Understanding the Significance of the Cross

Romans 5:10

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life

II Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him

Jesus was our ransom

Matt. 20:28, I Peter 1:18-19, I Timothy 2:1-6, Galatians 3:13

- Which is best defined as delivering someone from captivity by paying a price or to buy back/redeem
- *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of a broken law by Himself being made a curse for us. His death was a ransom price paid for our deliverance”* **William Evans**

Jesus was our ransom

Matt. 20:28, I Peter 1:18-19, I Timothy 2:1-6, Galatians 3:13

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. **For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.”** (I Timothy 2:1-6)

Jesus was our propitiation

(I John 2:2, Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17)

- Which is best understood to mean that Jesus was our covering
- *“The death of Jesus Christ is set forth as the ground on which a righteous God can pardon a guilty and sinful race without in any way compromising His righteousness”* **William Evans**

Jesus was our propitiation

(1 John 2:2, Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17)

- For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)
- “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26)

Jesus was our substitute

(Isaiah 53:6, I Peter 2:24-25, 3:18, II Corinthians 5:21)

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- He became the “Passover Lamb” in which “the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all”
 - *Only Jesus could be the proper substitute because He knew no sin*
 - It was Christ’s death that reconciled us to God (Romans 5:10, II Corinthians 5:18-19, Col. 1:20)

Jesus was our substitute

(Isaiah 53:6, I Peter 2:24-25, 3:18, II Corinthians 5:21)

- “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Corinthians 5:21)
- “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (I Peter 2:24-25)

“Now it was **the day of Preparation**, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because **the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath**, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. **But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.**” (John 19:31-33)

- ✓ The Jews didn't want to violate an Old Testament law and as such they wanted to speed up the death of Christ by requesting his legs to be broken. This process keeps the person hanging on the cross from using their legs to prop themselves up to breathe

“If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

- ✓ They came upon Jesus, found him to already be dead, and as such didn't break his legs

“The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.” Psalm 34:19-20)

“Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.” The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. **These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”** (John 19:34-37)

- ✓ This is further evidence that Jesus was in fact dead and some give emphasis (due to the mixture of blood and water) of Jesus dying of a broken heart
- ✓ There are plenty of interpretations and applications of John’s words, but the most important takeaway (for me) is that Jesus was **a real human** who died **a real death**.

*“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. **They will look on me, the one they have pierced,** and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”* (Zechariah 12:10)

“Later, **Joseph of Arimathea** asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was **accompanied by Nicodemus**, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there” (John 19:38-42)

- ✓ We know that Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man (Matthew 27:57) and had the means to properly bury Jesus in a tomb that was fit for a King.
- ✓ We also know that Joseph (a member of the Sanhedrin) was a good and upright man who did not consent to the decision to murder Jesus (Luke 23:50-51) and also became a follower of Jesus (Matthew 27:57). Nicodemus also participated in the burial of Jesus and like Joseph, he too became a follower of Jesus.

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- ✓ It is highly likely that Joseph or Nicodemus did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead (even though Jesus said he would), otherwise they would not have prepared his body so thoroughly for burial.
- ✓ The tomb was Joseph’s own tomb (Matthew 27:60) and as customarily done, was carved out of rock and sealed by rolling a large stone in front of it. This is where they laid Jesus to rest (on Friday) and the three-day clock begins (Matthew 12:40)