

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

April 25, 2021

“Hope When We Fail?”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

The New Building is a GO!

One Service, One Pastor, One Worship Leader, One Big Building Project... All for Unity at Alêtheia!

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The timing: They were in the Upper Room from early evening until about midnight. They travelled to the Garden where Jesus prayed until nearly 4am. His trial began at about 4:30, the rooster crowed at about 5:30, He was delivered to Pilate at 6am.

MATTHEW 26:69-75 ~

John knew the High Priest... He “Spoke to the doorkeeper, and brough Peter in” (John 18:16). Peter went over to a “Charcoal fire” [ἀνθρακιά (än-thřä-kē-ä), from ἄνθραξ (än-thřäx)] and was “Warming himself” (John 18:18, Mark 14:54, 67, Luke 22:56).

Peter was in no danger at the moment, but that could change quickly.

We see Peter’s gradual downward spiral that started with such a little thing...

After the first confrontation Peter moved away from them, which was further away from Jesus and closer to an exit.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

An “Oath” is ὄρκος (hōr-kōs), the name of the god of oaths who will punish perjury (Hebrews 6:16, Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12).

Jesus the Galilean and specifically as the Nazarene (Matthew 2:23). This sets us up for the 3rd encounter and the title is tied to Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

It was no mystery to any of them that both Jesus and Peter were Galileans.

To curse is καταθεματίζω (kā-tā-thē-mä-tē-dzō)...

To swear is ὀμνύω (ōm-nū-ō)...

MATTHEW 27:1-10 ~

Pontius Pilate was appointed as Prefect over the province of Judea by the Emperor Tiberius in 26 A.D. He was fired in 36 A.D. His capital and primary residence was in Caesarea, not Jerusalem.

He kept Caiaphas on for his entire 10-year tenure... It worked for him.

Some villainize Judas (Dante’s Divine Comedy), while others go to the opposite extreme (Gospel of Judas). Most think he was condemned, as confirmed by suicide.

Remorse is not repentance. Judas tried to fix his error and confessed to a crime that could have seen him stoned to death. He threw the silver into the Temple and left (Zechariah chapter 11).

Then Matthew quoted Jeremiah which has to do with a future hope... All things are possible with God.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

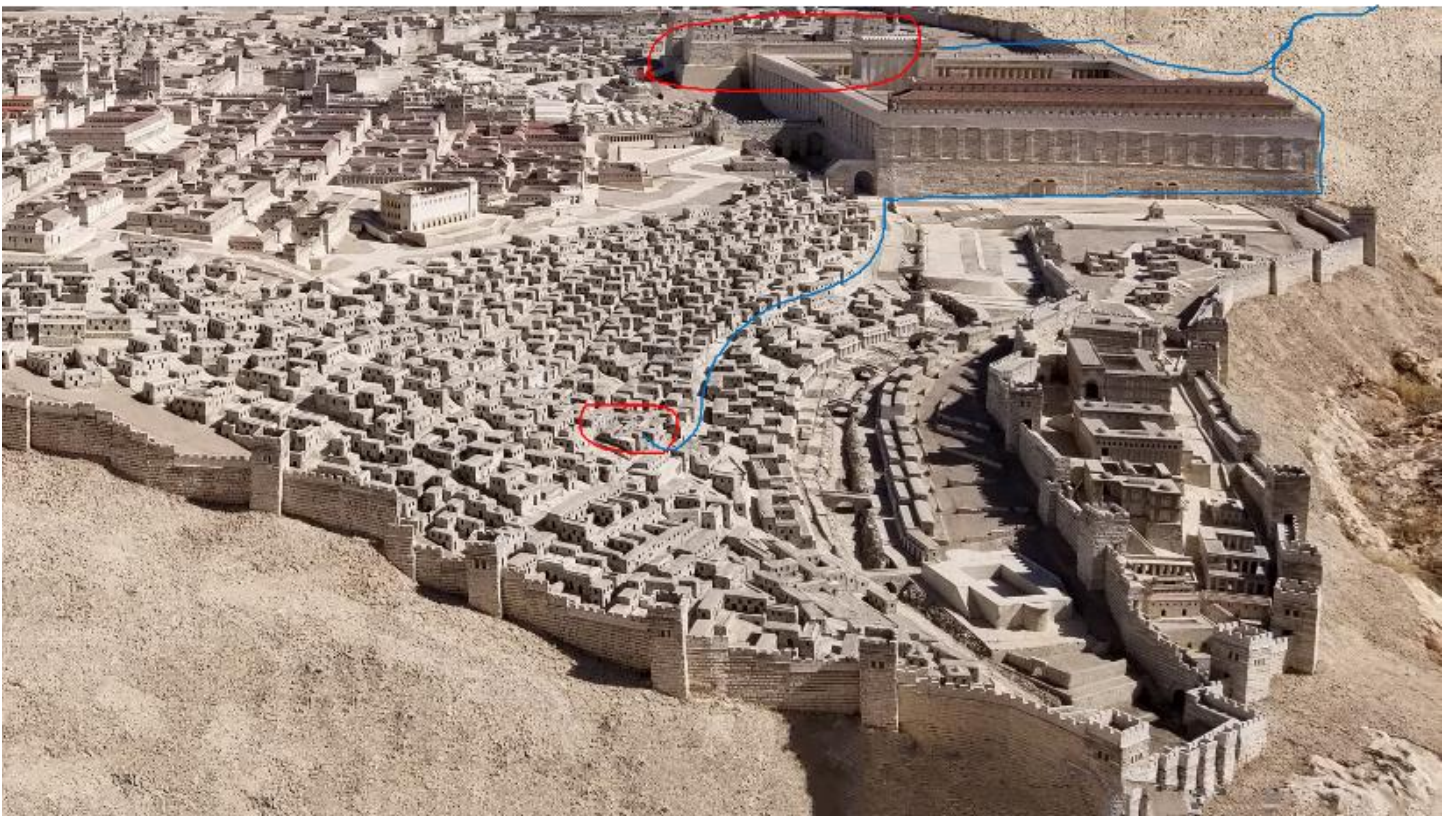
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Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship





We left off with Jesus being led away from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Palace of the High Priest. As the large party came back into the city, the Romans would have continued west, returning to the Fortress Antonia, while the rest of the party would have peeled off heading south, south-west to the Palace of the High Priest.

For timing of these things, we know for sure that the Last Supper was in progress by early evening, and we know that Jesus was being led away to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate at first light, in what for us, would be the next morning.



One of the misunderstood elements of fasting is that for ancient people it wasn't really about going hungry, it was about not eating. What does that mean? They had no T.V., no video games, no personal books - neither e-books, nor physical copies (of course you couldn't read anyway), no cell phones, no movie theatres, no yard to keep up, no window shopping in the evening, no sports to speak of, no mountain bikes or snow skis... In short, day-to-day, there was no entertainment at all!



Except, the interaction with others. The main time in which that entertaining interaction took place was while sharing a meal together, especially the evening meal. Supper back then, and in many Mediterranean countries even today, would last several hours. And how much more so, when it was a festive occasion, or holiday. Fasting for them meant being isolated from distraction and therefore enabling a focus on God.

There was no bigger and momentous event to the Jewish people, than the evening meal at Passover. Add to that, the fact that Jesus knew it was His last opportunity to instruct His guys and fellowship with

them as a man. It's easy to recognize that this was a long evening.

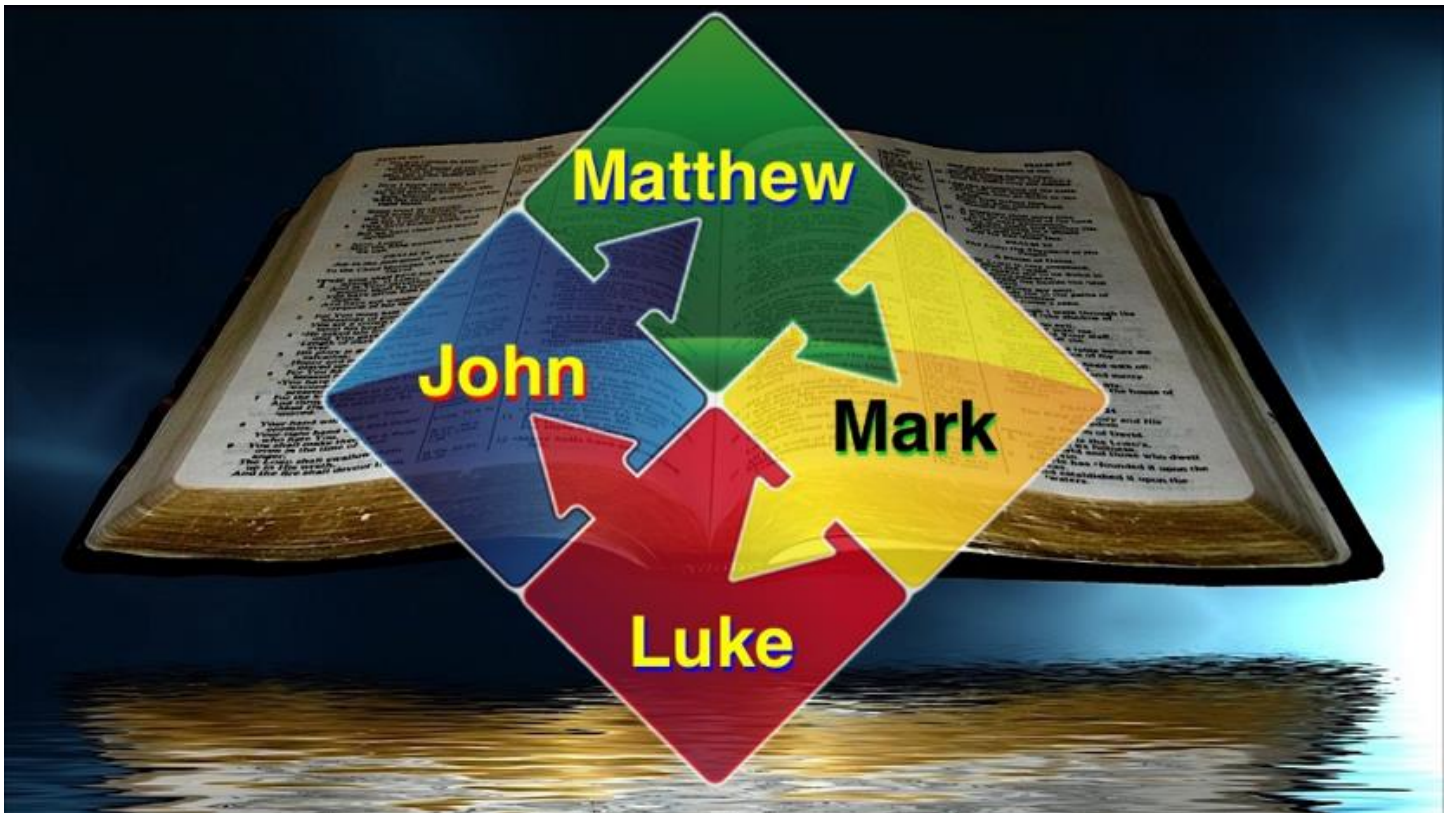
They gathered, Jesus washed the feet of each one of the 12 Apostles, He gave lengthy instructions to them, and He conducted a full Passover meal. There was a minimum of four cups of wine each, there was a lot of food, and there was a lot of friendly interaction. It would be perfectly reasonable to imagine them leaving the Upper Room no earlier than midnight.

The travelled a fair distance and were in the Garden for about 3 hours. No wonder Peter, James and John were unable to stay alert and pray. The arresting party probably showed up at about 4am. The kangaroo trial that started with Annas and then moved on to Caiaphas most likely started at around 4:30am, and finished just before it started getting light.



Matthew 26:69-75, 69Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” 70But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” 71When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” 73A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” 74Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. 75And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a

rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.



All four Gospels tell this event and piecing them all together it paints a fairly vivid and relatively detailed story. Because of the way it is told in each Gospel we are to understand that the things going on here were happening at the same time as the inquisition was going on with Jesus.



Remember, the High Priest's Palace had a number of patios and courtyards separated by walls or shrubbery

or by elevation. This is a pretty steep slope. All of them and the Palace itself was surrounded by a much taller wall with gates that were guarded.



The Apostle John knew the High Priest, most likely through a family connection. He was granted access to the courtyards and “Spoke to the doorkeeper, and brough Peter in” (John 18:16). Evidently the two of them split up once inside and Peter went over where some of the arresting party had built a “Charcoal fire” and was “Warming himself” (John 18:18, Mark 14:54, 67, Luke 22:56). As an interesting sidenote, Greek for charcoal fire is ἀνθρακιά (än-thră-kē-ä), meaning from coal, which itself is ἄνθραξ (än-thrăx). We get the

name of the disease from that, as it causes black skin lesions.



Peter was keeping a low profile as he waited to see how things would unfold with his Lord. A servant-girl spotted Peter and confronted him. I love the way Luke tells this bit: Luke 22:55&56, 55After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. 56And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, “This man was with Him too.” She outed him in front of all the others who were also warming themselves.

Imagine. You're trying to fly below the radar and all at once everyone is looking at you. Peter was in no real danger as the Jewish Leadership presently had their hands full and were currently satisfied, but that could turn around in a hurry. It wouldn't take a whole lot to place Peter alongside Jesus as His right-hand man in this miscarriage of justice.



Matthew gives us a wonderful progression that is so typical of us humans. We begin the downward spiral a little at a time and things escalate from there. He failed to pray, then he followed at a distance, then he tried to go incognito, then when all eyes turned on him at the servant-girl's accusation Peter evaded answering.

Notice, he didn't fully deny Jesus the first time, he did it partially with "I do not know what you are talking about." Another, slightly bigger step in the wrong direction.

Another point is she identifies Jesus as the Galilean, setting us up for the next step.

Peter moved away from those folks and went into a courtyard further away from Jesus and closer to an exit. Now, another servant-girl took notice.

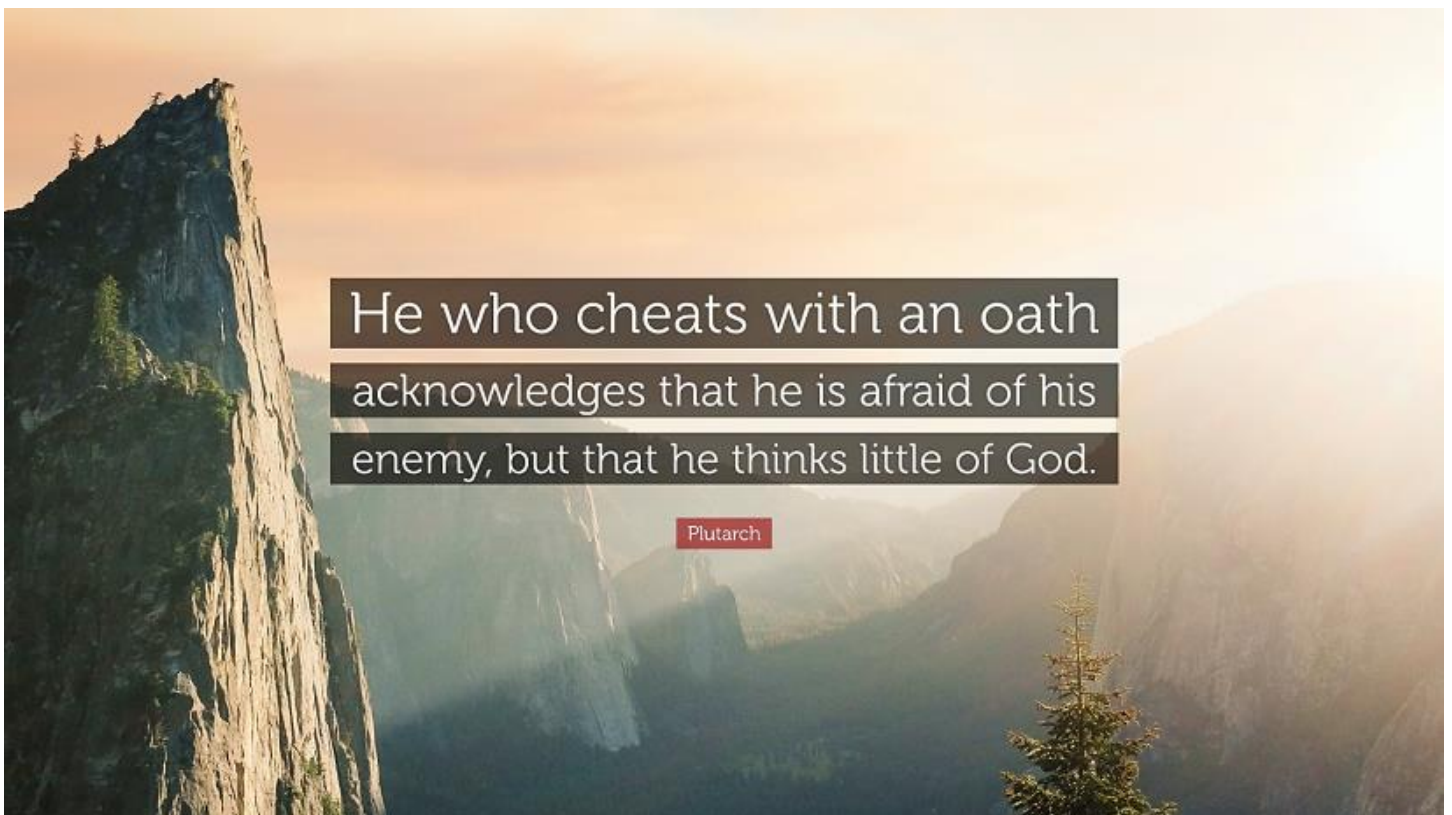


There are so many people who look for problems with the Bible in an effort to discount it so that they can feel

better about ignoring the Jesus it proclaims. In Mark it's the same servant-girl who found Peter in the outer porch, or courtyard and confronted Him again. In Luke's account it was a man who challenged Peter the second time and in John the second time is told as the first time and the first time is told as the second - the two are flipflopped. All of it is very easily harmonized into a single congruous story if we're looking for agreement, rather than looking for contradiction.

I read a lot and I write a lot... Been doing it for most of my life. When a person tells a story, time and space do not allow for every detail, so they make choices about what to share and what not to share. Peter was by the fire and a slave-girl confronted him. Peter was by the gate and the same girl found him and harangued him again. Mark tells us that bit. As she spoke up, the slave-girl at the gateway door confronted Peter. Matthew gives that part. As both women draw attention to Peter, others, including a man who more directly confronted Peter, enter the scene. Luke shares that bit. Because John started the whole exchange at the door, where he talked about getting Peter access to the Palace grounds, he put the gateway encounter first, instead of revisiting the gate later.

It's all about how you share a story, and four different people will share the same story differently, but that is a good thing, not a bad thing. As each storyteller gives us information the others left out. How one views the harmony says far more about their attitude and agenda than it does about the Bible's veracity.



He who cheats with an oath
acknowledges that he is afraid of his
enemy, but that he thinks little of God.

Plutarch

This time Peter denied Jesus more directly and added an “Oath.” “With an oath,” he said, “I do not know the man.” “Oath” is ὅρκος (hōr-kōs), the name of the god of oaths who will punish perjury. The idea was to swear, or affirm, your answer as honest by invoking something greater than yourself just as it describes in Hebrews 6:16.

Because it is an act involving a god, or the God, to show that you are being truthful, Jesus instructed Christians not to do that - He directly instructed Peter not to do that (Matthew 5:33-37). James 5:12 echoes the Lord's teaching on the matter. It is essentially, "God as my witness, I'm telling the truth," or "May God strike me down, if I'm lying." If you're a Christian, you shouldn't do that because you're making God testify to your honesty, which is presumptuous at best. And you're actually causing your truthfulness to be doubted even more.

An honest person doesn't need to get emotional and try to convince others of their honesty. Jesus said, "Let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil." We saw last week that the High Priest tried to get Jesus to take an oath and Jesus refused. Here Peter takes the same basic oath Jesus let pass.

I mentioned at the first denial Jesus was identified as a Galilean and here He is identified as "Jesus of Nazareth." It is technically Jesus the Nazarene. There is a tie-in with Old Testament prophecy in that title, which was mentioned back in Matthew 2:23. Suffice it

to say that the term here serves to amplify the holiness of Jesus for those in the know and it serves to strengthen the Galilee connection as Nazareth is a town in that area.

That leads us to the third encounter where it is pointed out that, like Jesus, Peter is also clearly a Galilean. It was his accent, his mannerisms, his demeanor, and clothing. It was no mystery to any of the Judeans that both Jesus and Peter were Galileans, just as the opposite was true as well.



It's a little difficult for us to imagine that there could be such obvious differences between people of the same

ancestry in the same small area. The old world is far different than the new. When I was in England, I had a Danish friend from Aarhus who taught me some of her language. Later, I flew a cross-country to Aalborg, Denmark, eager to try my Danish on the locals. They could not understand me. What was the problem! Two different dialects. These two towns are 60 miles apart and the local dialects are so different, I could not converse. Obviously, my lack of fluency had an effect, but it's crazy. The entire country of Denmark is only 200 miles long and less than that wide and there are 17 different Danish dialects. While they can all basically understand each other, they can tell instantly where someone is from.

The people in the courtyard were fully aware that Peter was from the province up the road.



In the third encounter, Peter went even further in his denial of Jesus. This time, “He began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” You cannot get more emphatic in your denouncement and denial of Jesus than that.

The normally loyal Peter has gone from evading the issue to taking an oath, to now calling down curses and swearing more dramatic oaths.

To curse is καταθεματίζω (kā-tä-thě-mä-tē-dzō), a hapax legomenon in the Bible. Only found right here. It is to simultaneously call down a curse upon himself if

he's lying and to call down a curse on those calling him a liar if he's not lying. It was extreme.

In addition, Peter began to swear. While similar to the oath in the second denial this is ὀμνύω (ōm-nü-ō), instead of ὅρκος (hōr-kōs). Whereas the ὅρκος, has more of a positive "I'm being honest, God as my witness," sort of vibe; ὀμνύω has a more negative "If I'm lying, may God strike me dead," feel.

Bottom line, Peter has pulled out all the stops in a quite animated, emotional, and dramatic denial of Jesus...



And just then... The rooster to crowed. Can you imagine? "He went out and wept bitterly." What a picture. Remorse, regret, shame.

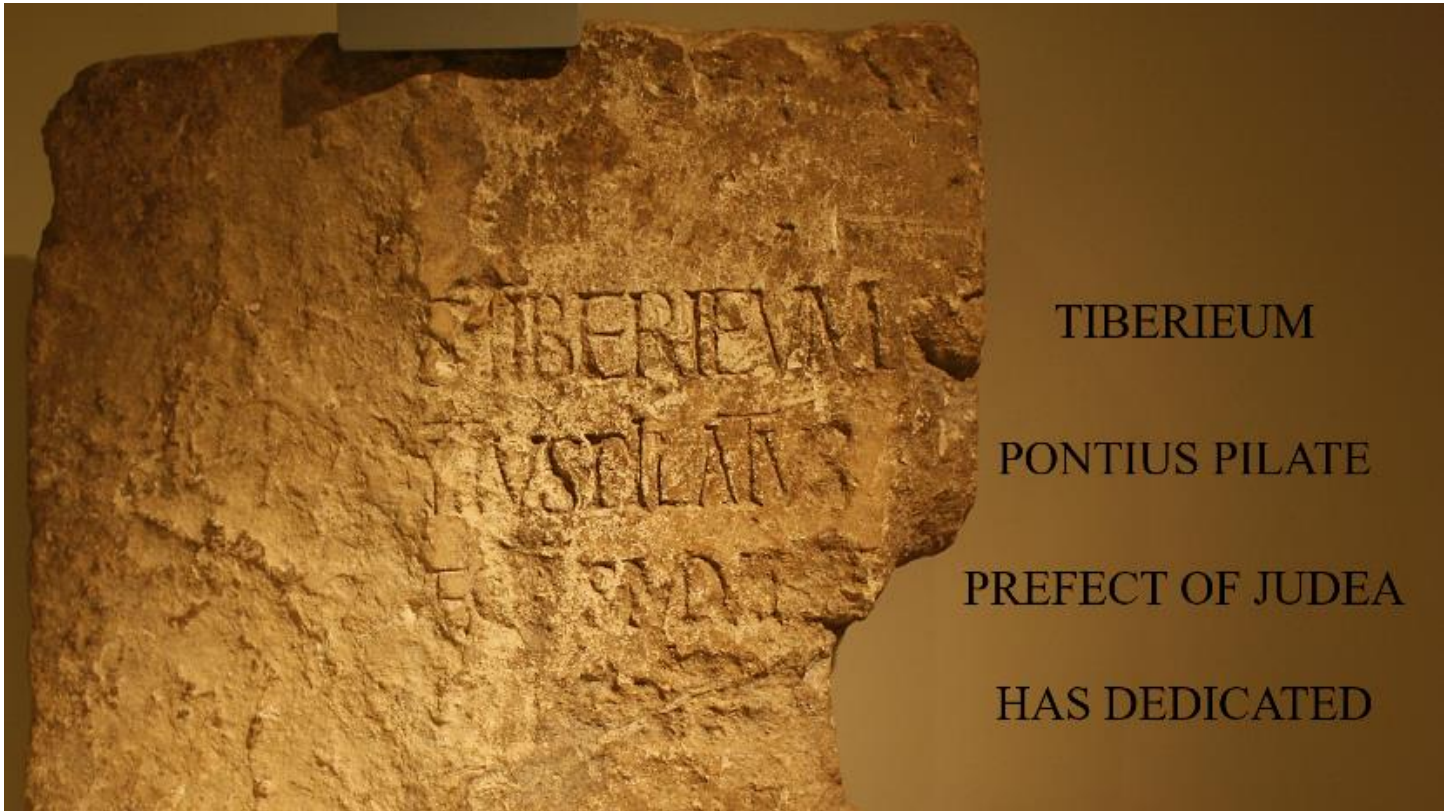


Matthew 27:1-10, 1Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; 2and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor. 3Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" 5And he threw the pieces

of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. 6The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.” 7And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. 8For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; 10and they gave them for the Potter’s Field, as the Lord directed me.”

Another big transitional bit, this time over two verses, to open up the 5th subsection. Roosters often crow at the crack of dawn, which can be in that twilight time up to an hour before the sun actually rises. That time of year in Jerusalem it’s about 5am. For the next 30 minutes or so, the Jewish leaders developed their strategy to ensure that Rome would agree with their verdict concerning Jesus. Then they bound Him, (not because He was dangerous, but because they wanted to make Him appear dangerous), and led Him away to the Governor’s court. They arrived to see Pilate as his first order of business that day promptly at sunrise - roughly

6am on what for us was a Friday. Jesus had been up for 24 hours straight at that point.



Pontius Pilate was appointed as Prefect over the province of Judea by the Emperor Tiberius in 26 A.D. A Prefect, in this case, was like a military governor. The province of Judea was essentially a sub-province of Syria. Rome appointed a military commander under the authority of the Legate in Syria to control the Jewish population.

His name Pontius was his “Nomen,” meaning his family name - we get our word nomenclature from this Latin word. It means that he was a member of the Pontii

family which was an important mid-level military family of Equestrian Rank. In other words, they were minor nobles, like the later European Knights, or even Barons.

His name Pilate, as he is most typically called, was his cognomen, or nickname. Like Judas Iscariot, the second name has to do with something unique about the person, or their father, or even grandfather. Pilate means an expert with the Roman throwing javelin. Either he, or his direct ancestor was well known for their prowess with that weapon.

He, like all the Roman governors, made his capital and primary residence in Caesarea, not Jerusalem. He lived in the palace built by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean coast.

Pilate was responsible to ensure the flow of taxes, goods and services as well as providing safe passage for commerce. In short, it was his responsibility to keep the economy going and the only way you can do that is to keep the peace. His military command acted mostly as a police force. In addition, he was the judge and would travel around the province and especially to Jerusalem to hear cases and dispense justice.

In general, if you were a Roman citizen, you could appeal his decision to the legate in Syria, or beyond him to the Emperor. The vast majority, like Jesus, were not Roman citizens and as such, there was no appeal. Pilate's judgement was final.

I mentioned before that Pilate kept Caiaphas on for his entire decade-long term as governor and that there is no way he would do that unless they had a very good working relationship behind the scenes.

A couple of quick proofs. It is well documented in historical documents that Pilate used Temple money to build a new aqueduct in Jerusalem. The Jewish people rioted when they found out and Pilate cracked down harshly enough that several Jews died. It is impossible that Pilate got the money without it being given to him by the High Priest and it is impossible that the issue was dropped by the people without some smoothing from the High Priest.

Another tidbit comes from the Bible. A few verses down from here we have Matthew 27:19, where Pilate's wife sends him a message about a nightmare, she had concerning Jesus. She's not particularly interested in

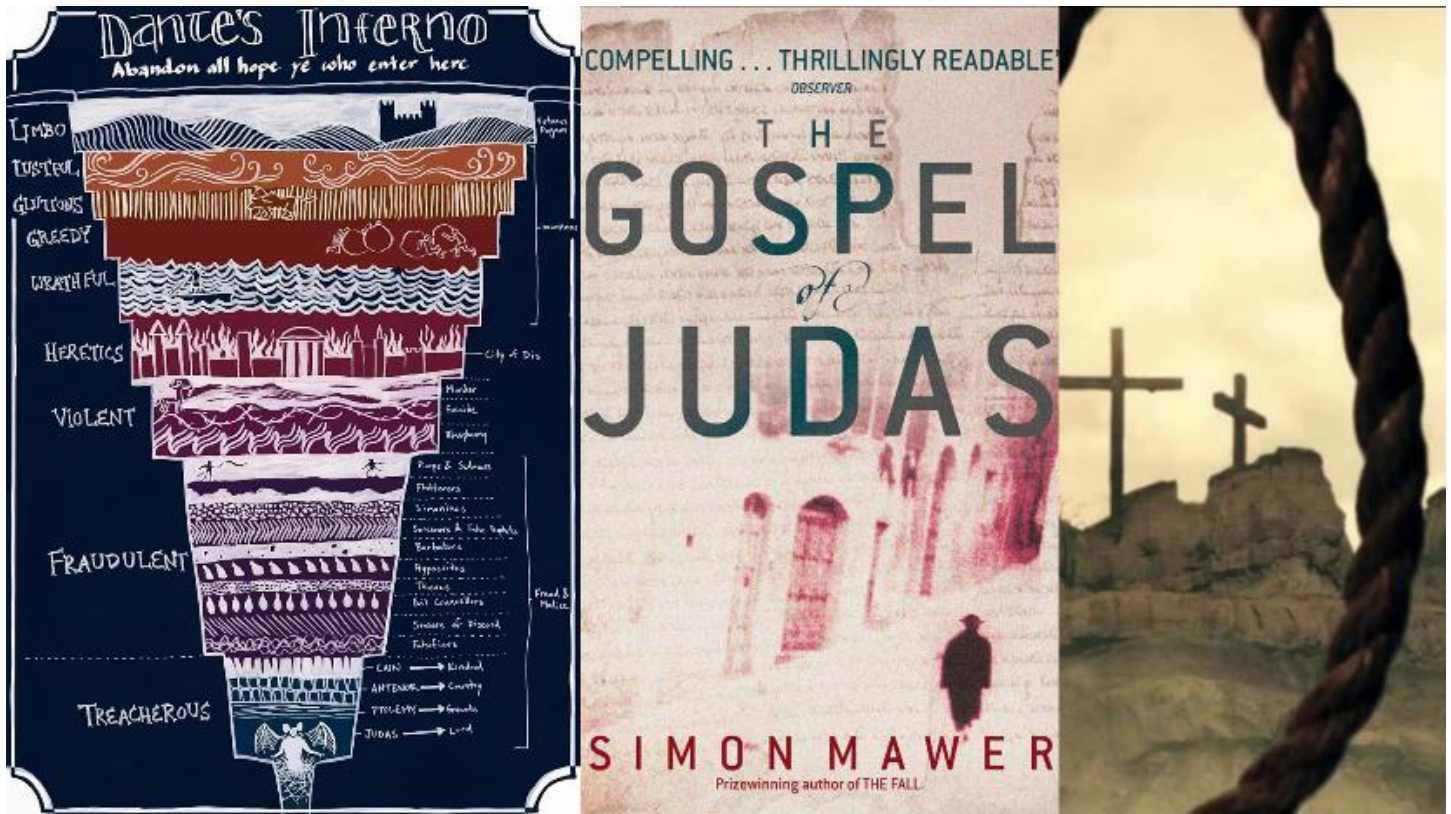
the Lord or His welfare, she's afraid of bad things happening to her husband and by extension to her if he continues to be involved. Get that. Pilate is already engaged with the High Priest in this arrest and now trial. She tells him to disengage - that he should have nothing to do with Jesus. Whatever's going on is between Jesus and His people - stay out of it. Given the Roman cohort sent with the arresting party and a whole bunch of other evidence it would be naïve to think that Pilate wasn't already involved before they showed up with Jesus early in the morning. We'll talk a bit more about Pilate as we progress.



Matthew now gives us Judas' reaction. This piece is told here as it frames this end of the 5th subsection's main event, which is the trial of Jesus before Pilate. While it starts with the ongoing events, by necessity, it actually covers several years.

Verse 8, tells us that as of the writing of this Gospel the field is still "Called the Field of Blood." In that sense, these verses take us from the day of Jesus' trial all the way to the date of Matthew's recording of the events.

Many details that we would love to have are left out. Chiefly among them is why? Why did Judas betray Jesus and why did he feel remorse and why did he commit suicide - why?



Some villainize the man. An example is Dante's Divine Comedy completed in Italy in 1320 A.D. In the first part, the Inferno, he wrote that the deepest, darkest, most horrible "Ninth Circle of Hell," was reserved for traitors, betrayers, and oath-breakers. Judas Iscariot is there receiving the most vicious torture of anyone in all of Hell.

Some go to the opposite extreme and believe that Judas was the greatest hero among the Apostles... The ancient Gospel of Judas, which was denounced by the Early Church, makes Judas the Lord's most trusted Follower, commanded by Jesus Himself to betray Him as was necessary to be condemned. Irenaeus the

student of Polycarp, who was the student of the Apostle John, condemned it as a newly written false gospel in about 190 A.D. Nevertheless, some hold to the idea, dumb as it is.

Most rightly believe it's more complicated, but nearly all believe that Judas died unsaved and therefore eternally condemned. That notion became fully entrenched by about 400 A.D. with Augustine's condemnation of suicide as the sin of self-murder. Thomas Aquinas in about 1250 A.D. extrapolated that to be an unpardonable sin, because it was a grave one without the possibility of repentance.

It wasn't until 1533 that the Catholic Church officially refused Christian burial for those committing suicide. Then in 1693 the Church made even attempted suicide a sin punishable by excommunication from the Faith.

Suicide is intensely selfish and as such it is a grievous sin - make no mistake about it, but is it unpardonable? Only to a legalistic mind. God judges the heart. It is blasphemous for any human to be so arrogant as to take up God's mantle and judge another's eternity. With God, all things are possible... With God, there's always hope.

Is it possible that Judas will be in Heaven with us? Perhaps. What I can say with certainty is that if God cannot forgive Judas's crimes, neither can He forgive ours. Let's take a closer look at what happened.



Once Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, He felt remorse. Remorse is not repentance. To repent means to recognize the wrongness of your path and to choose to go opposite of that into rightness. Remorse is regret and it means to be very sorry for what you did. Remorse is part of repentance - it's remorse that leads us to repentance. Remorse is the recognition that you were wrong, along with a desire to make that guilt

feeling go away, but not necessarily the final step in entirely changing course.



In my mind it's about 2/3 of the way to full repentance. What's missing? A change of direction. Well, Judas went to the highest Jewish authority, He returned the all the money paid to him, and confessed to a crime worthy of death under Old Testament Law. Who pleads guilty today? That sounds like the other 1/3 of repentance to me. It seems like a whole lot more than what Peter did - Peter went out and wept bitterly... Judas tried to fix his error and confessed to a crime that could have seen him stoned to death.

The High Priest and his cronies were fully implicated in Judas' crime as the ones who paid the fee. They couldn't take any action against him even if they had wanted to. They said to him one of those sayings that doesn't translate well into English, but the gist was, that's your problem, not ours.



Just like Pilate will do a bit later, they wash their hands of it, but it cannot be true. They may have actually thought that Jesus' blood was not their problem, not on their hands, but it was.



Judas then threw the silver into the Temple and left. I mentioned an Old Testament prophetic passage before and here another element of that prophecy comes into play and is here actually clarified.

It is Zechariah chapter 11 where God and the Jews agree that He will not shepherd them anymore and they decide to give Him 30 pieces of silver for His past work.

Verse 13 says, 13Then the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

What had mystified Jewish scholars was the fact that the money was thrown into the Temple, i.e., “The House of the Lord,” but to a potter. What was a potter doing in the Temple? Of course, we know that it has to do with God’s role as the Potter. Not only was He shepherding the people, He was their creator as the Potter as well.

Nevertheless, here we get the fuller revelation of the Prophecy. Jesus was valued at 30 silver shekels and in a sense paid off to leave the people alone. The money was thrown into the House of the Lord, but could not be kept there and so was given to a potter as the purchase price of his field.

4 months’ worth of wages seems like a low price for a field, but tradition has the field near the cursed valley where earlier generations had sacrificed their children... In Jesus’ time it was the sewage and refuse dump in the Valley of Hinnom, or Greek Gehenna, used metaphorically for the fiery Hell.



Then Matthew quoted Jeremiah which has to do with a future hope... Buy the field even though we're going into Babylonian captivity... Because in 70 years I, God, will bring you home and the land deeds will be valid again. Interesting that the Zechariah passage is about judgment, and then the Jeremiah passage is about the hope of future restoration.

All things are possible with God.