

Matthew, chapter 27

“And when they had crucified Him”—The King reigns over His Kingdom from His Cross

I | INTRODUCTION / CONNECTIONS / CONTEXT

1 / Let’s remember that Matthew has been chronicling the events that transpired in this last week of Jesus’ life beginning with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem in **ch 21** to the cries of the crowd “**Hosanna to the Son of David!**” [King] and the fulfillment of **Zechariah 9.9**: “**Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you...’**”

2 / So Matthew is keeping to his theme he has established from the beginning of his narrative: *Jesus Christ is the King of Israel*. This is **the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven** that Jesus has been proclaiming by His preaching, expounding in His teaching, illustrating in His parables, and demonstrating in all the miraculous signs and wonders He has performed. AND, all of this is pointing to the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven which will be revealed when He comes again to bring it to fruition.

3 / Furthermore, as we have seen and will see in these last lessons [**chs 26-28**], especially in these ‘passion narratives,’ which focus sharply on the accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion ... in every statement that is made, every response Jesus gives, and in every detail of the crucifixion story—*Jesus is exercising His sovereign majesty and glory as our King!* Even when it appears He is weakest, and when He willingly and voluntarily yields Himself to the death He died, *He is reigning in authority, control, and power to secure His predestinated work of redemption—the salvation of His people from our sins.*

4 / What Matthew is describing here—and what we are witnessing—is what John saw in his Revelation visions of the Conquering King in **Revelation 5.1-7**, “**a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...,**” which is itself the fulfillment of **Daniel 7.13-14!** *So, how does Matthew here—even in Jesus’ crucifixion account—proclaim that Jesus, the King, reigns over His Kingdom...even from His Cross?*

II | ch 27.1-14 | The Jewish leaders deliver Jesus over to the Roman governor Pilate to be crucified

1 / **vv 1-2** | These Jewish leaders have had Jesus on trial all night—ever since they arrested Him in Gethsemane last evening. They have already concocted their charges in their informal ‘hearings’ they have conducted in Caiaphas’ palace and before Annas. What Matthew describes here is the formal hearing they convened before the Sanhedrin—their ‘Supreme Court’ of religious leaders. And, having satisfactorily [to themselves] charged Him with a capital crime deserving death, **they bound Him and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate the governor.** They need Pilate to put Jesus to death because by Roman law under their occupation, they were not permitted to execute capital punishment. **See John 18.31.**

2 / **vv 11-14** | I’m taking this paragraph out of its written order because this paragraph concludes the opening paragraph [we’ll come back to Judas here in a minute...]. So Pilate asks Jesus to answer the charge which had obviously been given to Him by the Jews: “**Are you the King of the Jews?**” [**Luke 23.1-5**]. If they can hang this charge on Jesus from a political angle, it will make Him a rival king to Caesar. And Pilate can’t survive if he allows it to pass... However, Jesus doesn’t answer in His own defense according to **Isaiah 53.7**. This, too, is a demonstration of Jesus’ Kingly sovereignty and authority over His own death. He had come to die this death [**John 10.18**], and He must give Himself to His mission, His Kingdom, and His elect sheep-subjects He has come to redeem to God for His people.

3 / **vv 3-10** | Now, back to Judas—Matthew inserts this paragraph to show the ruinous and fatal end that Judas suffered because of his treacherous betrayal. *BTW, Matthew uses this word for ‘deliver over’ or ‘betray’ fifteen times here in chs 26-27.* Judas ‘betrayed’ Jesus to the chief priests; they ‘deliver over’ [same word] Jesus to Pilate; and Pilate will ‘deliver over’ Jesus back to them and to the executioners. This whole story is one of dark, evil, demonic **betrayal** of the King of the Kingdom by all of these wicked perpetrators. *Yet, Jesus reigns over them all to turn their evil into good—our salvation—and to fulfill all the Scriptures that have said it had to be this way!*

III | ch 27.15-31 | Pilate succumbs to the demands of the Jewish leaders ... orders Jesus’ crucifixion

1 / vv 15-18 | Pilate is not only inconvenienced by this abrupt imposition on him, but he is also sorely conflicted with anxiety by what he knows is a project of malicious envy by the Jews [see v 18]. So, he tries to bargain with the mob: he had a custom to release one of their political prisoners to them at the Passover. There was a prominent prisoner in custody, Barabbas. **Mark 15.7** says that Barabbas was a **rebel who had committed murder in the insurrection...** So Pilate offers to release Jesus back to them—surely they would want their King back! But that ruse backfired [as we shall see...]

2 / vv 19 | But there was something else that was spooking Pilate: **Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of Him today in a dream.”** So, Pilate knows they have delivered Jesus to him out of their envy; he has already ascertained for himself that Jesus is not guilty of any offense, much less a capital offense; and now his wife is relating this out-of-this-world dream that she dreamed in the daytime. *Maybe they will ask for Jesus back and save him from this dilemma...*

3 / vv 20-23 | But the chief priests and elders have already ‘poisoned the well’ of the mob’s minds that Jesus must be **destroyed**. So, when given the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, **And they said, “Barabbas.”** Then all the back and forth: **Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? Pilate would have gladly given them Jesus, too. They all said, “Let Him be crucified!” And he said, “Why? What evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let Him be crucified!”**

4 / vv 24-26 | Pilate has a way out—he can stand his ground, do what he knows to be right, and not concede to the political coercion, strong-arming, and pressure of the mob. But Pilate is a spineless coward. And besides all the other inner conflicts he is suffering, he is already on shaky ground and a kind of ‘probation’ from Caesar for some previous administrative mishandlings he had called been back to Rome to give account for. So he attempted to publicly ‘wash his hands’ in innocence to absolve himself from any culpability ... and then the people willingly took all the responsibility: **His blood be on us and on our children!** And so it was—and they suffered everything Jesus had said they would suffer [see again chs 24-25]. **Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to be crucified.** The scourging itself was a severe punishment and often fatal in itself...

5 / vv 27-31 | The mockery and humiliation that Jesus suffered and endured continued. A whole battalion or cohort, ~600 soldiers, had a ‘field day’ with Jesus’ royalty: **And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on him** [probably one of their own uniform tunics], **and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him.** All of this mockery of His Kingship was an affront to His royal majesty—and their attempt to flaunt their supremacy over Him.

6 / *But here’s the thing Matthew—and we—know:* everything they are mocking in their arrogant rebellion against the King of the Kingdom of Heaven is, in reality, **the truth!** They themselves are witnessing and testifying to the very King and Kingdom they are mocking as a ‘flimsy farce.’

IV | ch 27.32-44 | Jesus is crucified under the mocking ‘charge’ of ‘King of the Jews’

1 / v 32 | Just as they were going out of the city to the scene of crucifixion, this Simon of Cyrene was coming into Jerusalem for the feast via one of the main travel routes. Jesus was exhausted and depleted of physical and emotional strength after the long evening of discourses with His disciples the previous evening, agonizing in Gethsemane, His mock trials, and especially from His scourging—too weak now to carry His own cross. The Roman soldiers ‘conscripted’ him into service—to drag the crossbeam of the cross. Condemned criminals were required to carry their own crossbeam to their own execution [the upright cross members were already planted at the execution site]. Like Mary, Simon is now memorialized for his service. He became well-known in the Christian community along with his sons, Alexander and

Rufus [see **Mark 15.21**]. We can only speculate from the way they are spoken of with such familiarity that they also became faithful disciples and familiar characters to Gospel readers from this experience.

2 / vv **33-37** | The place of crucifixion was outside the city so as not to ‘defile’ the ‘sanctity’ of Jerusalem, especially during a holy feast occasion. This was just another expression of their rejection of Jesus, putting Him to more humiliation and shame [**Hebrews 13.13**]. “...they came to a place called **Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull)**.” Several more acts of cruelty, insult, and violence took place to add to Jesus’ mockery—all of which also fulfilled centuries-old prophecies: [1] **they offered Him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when He tasted it, He would not drink it [Psalm 69.21];** [2] **And when they had crucified Him, they divided His garments among by casting lots [Psalm 22.18];** [3] **And over His head they put the charge against Him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”** *NOTE: keep in mind as we’ve already said, that they did all these things to mock who He is really is—to ridicule, insult, humiliate, and make fun of His Messianic claims ... but in so doing, they were only affirming who God had prophesied He would be and who God had provided Him to be for our redemption! They did it out of mockery, but God provided even in their mockeries a testimony and witness to the Gospel of our salvation!*

3 / vv **37-44** | The plan had been to execute three criminals that day—we can assume Barabbas would have been the third had Jesus not taken His place [see **Isaiah 53.9, 12**]. The gathered spectator mob now all joined in with the mockery, even the passers-by who were coming in and out of the city. Again, their insults were in the terms of the twisted narratives that the chief priests and elders had been circulating, all of which were spun to make them look good and justify their public actions: **“You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross ... He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”** *AND AGAIN, even though these charges were all taken out of the context in which Jesus had said them, there is an irony in them all—they meant it all for evil, but God worked it out for good! Jesus had come to be all of these—Son of God, King of Israel, Savior—but if He had saved Himself from this foreordained death which He, Himself, had foretold in detail, He could not have accomplished the substitutionary atonement and redemption by which we are saved!*

4 / Just one more narrative note here: Matthew shows us the unanimity and ‘group-think’ that had infected the whole mob mentality who were swept up in their murderous frenzy: **“those who passed by; the chief priests with the scribes and elders; the robbers who were crucified with Him also reviled Him in the same way”**; also the squads of soldiers who had been assigned to this crucifixion offered their own taunts and jeers both by what they said and what they did...

V | ch 27.45-54 | Supernatural physical phenomena and spiritual transactions accompany Jesus’ death—signs of His Kingdom sovereignty and accomplished Gospel mission

1 / Now we come to the narrative that describes the climactic moments during which **“The Great Transaction”** was made—when the Lamb of God was slain, the once-forever perfect, spotless, sinless Sacrifice was made for our sins, our sin payment was made in full, and our eternal redemption was accomplished! Much of it transpires and transacts between God the Father and God the Son [and also God the Holy Spirit {see **Hebrews 9.14**}] ... and other signs are also manifested in the world of physical observation to show us what had been transacted in the spiritual world...

2 / v **45** | **Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour [3pm]**. Darkness has always in the Scripture been a manifestation of the Presence of God when He comes in His wrath, displeasure, and judgment. Here, this supernatural, physical darkness phenomenon is a testimony that God is judging sin. Yes, He is judging the sins of the people for crucifying His Son, but more, God is judging our sins in the Person of Christ! *“Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in, when Christ the mighty Maker died for man, the creature’s, sin.”* Darkness is also a description of being separated from God who is Light.

3 / vv 46-49 | **And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabacthani?”** that is, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** This is from the well-known **Psalm 22.1**. Along with **Psalm 69**, these two Psalms are cried out by David as laments in his own extremities. These are real experiences—suffered in their own times. David suffered his as a representative prophet of the Messiah, foreshadowing the sufferings of **The Son of David** when He would come in His own time to fully suffer them in the fulfillment of the eternal plan of God. *Such is the marvel and wonder of God’s sovereignty in every detail of the purposing, predetermining, provision, prophesying, and fulfillment of His eternal New Covenant.* There is no way we can perceive, understand, comprehend, or adequately explain what all transpires in the eternal transactions of the Triune God—we can just read what God is willing to reveal, know it happened, and rejoice in what God is willing to tell us. What we do know is that God is NOT displeased with Jesus Christ and He is NOT rejecting Christ in any way. BUT what God IS displeased with IS our sin. He cannot look upon our sin with any acceptance or pleasure. He MUST condemn, judge, and punish our sin by putting it away from Himself and out of His sight. And since Jesus Christ has now in some way inscrutable to us just taken our sin upon Himself and assumed personal responsibility for committing them, He must assume also the punishment that our sins deserve. As Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5.21**, **For our sake He [God] made Him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.** We can’t figure that out—we just know He did. That’s why Jesus addresses God, not in His customary expression of intimate union and fellowship as **“Father,”** but as the Holy, righteous, and just Judge of sin, **“My God, my God...”** Those around Jesus mistake His appeal to God [**Eli or Eloï**] as calling for Elijah. They again offer Jesus the sour wine potion, and this time He takes it because He knows He has fulfilled His Kingly mission [**contrast v 34**].

4 / v 50 | **And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit.** Yes, physically, Jesus died from the physical effects of the crucifixion—but even the physical effects were the eternal spiritual prescriptions of God’s New Covenant redemption—and Jesus voluntarily, willingly, and sovereignly reigned over every detail and execution of them all. They *‘killed’* Jesus as the Scriptures repeatedly affirm—but they did NOT *‘take His life’* from Him. **“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may 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 I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father”** [**Jn 10.17-18**]. Jesus voluntarily breathed His own last breath and **yielded up His [own] spirit.** **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”** [**Lk 23.46**]. **“It is finished!”** [**Jn 19.30**].

5 / vv 51-54 | Three more physical/spiritual phenomena occur: [1] **And, behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom** [to show that we now have access to the Presence of God, our sins having been atoned and fully paid for—and put away forever!]; [2] **And the earth shook, and the rocks were split;** [3] **The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.** All of these are physical evidences of the spiritual work that had been accomplished! Even the Roman [Gentile] centurion and the attending soldiers bore witness to the Divine act they had helped to perpetrate: **“Truly this was the Son of God!”** [see also **Mark 15.39; Luke 23.47**]

VI | ch 27.55-66 | **Jesus is buried—attesting to His real death—and preparations are made for His resurrection**

This section bears witness to the reality of Jesus’ death—and prepares us for the astounding miracle of His resurrection: the women disciples observe Jesus’ burial, marking the tomb [**vv 55-56, 61; Luke 23.56**]; Joseph of Arimathea comes to claim Jesus’ body, prepares it, and entombs Him in his own private sepulcher [**vv 57-60; Mark 15.43; Luke 23.51-53; Isaiah 53.9**]; the chief priests and Pharisees request and are granted a military guard to ‘secure’ and seal the tomb with watch guards [**vv 62-65**]...

“It’s Friday...but Sunday’s a-coming!”

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

I want to add here just a couple supplemental notes that will help explain and reinforce the significance of the lesson theme: ***“And when they had crucified Him”—The King reigns over His Kingdom from His Cross!***

These are taken from Daniel M. Doriani, Matthew contributor in the ESV Expository Commentary ...

On verse 37:

“Next, according to custom, the soldiers place the charge against Jesus over His head: ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews’ (Matt. 27:37). Perhaps Pilate means to sneer at the Jews; this certainly instills terror of Rome’s wrath, broadcasting that such torment is the fate of Caesar’s rivals. But Jesus *is* King of the Jews, and, ironically, He reigns from the cross. From the cross, He fulfills a king’s central duties, protecting His people and delivering them from harm. He atones for their guilt and vanquishes sin and its power. He defeats their prime adversaries, sin and death, all from the cross.”

And, in his ‘Response’ comments on this same section, Matthew 27.32-44, [with an inserted quote from D. A. Carson’s Matthew commentary]:

“The crucifixion, when joined to Jesus’ death and resurrection, reveals the centrality of the cross as the time and place at which Jesus atones for sin. From a biblical perspective, ‘the curse on Jesus at the cross fulfills all OT sacrifices; it is a curse that removes the curse from believers—the fusion of divine, royal prerogative and Suffering Servant, the heart of the gospel, the inauguration of a new humanity, the supreme model for Christian ethics, the ratification of the new covenant, and the power of God.’ The silence of Jesus on the cross also presents his moral excellence: his self-control, his endurance, his submission to the Father, his willingness to suffer for his flock.”