

After condemning Him of blasphemy, the chief priests and elders bring Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate in order to convince him that Jesus was worthy of death. Pilate eventually gives in to their persistent demands and delivers Jesus to be crucified. After Jesus had died, His body is prepared and laid in a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, a just man who was a secret disciple of Jesus.

Luke 23:1-12: The chief priests and elders have finished their condemnation of Jesus, declaring Him to be guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death (Luke 22:63-71). They then take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, since Rome did not allow them to execute criminals (John 18:31). Knowing that Pilate would not be interested in accusations of offenses against the Jewish religion, they accuse Jesus of crimes that would get the attention of Roman officials, such as attempting to undermine Roman authority over the people. When Pilate discovered that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod, the king who had jurisdiction over that region. However, when Jesus would not perform or even speak to Herod, the king became bored and sent Jesus back to Pilate.

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

Once Pilate had received custody of Jesus after being sent back by Herod, he called the accusers (the chief priests and rulers) back to discuss Jesus' case. He acknowledged their accusations that Jesus was "perverting" the people (the Greek word means "to turn away" – meaning that Jesus was attempting to undermine Roman authority over the people). However, Pilate declared that neither he nor Herod could find any truth to this claim. They could not find any reason that Jesus should die.

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*. 17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

"I will therefore chastise [punishment intended to instruct] him, and release him" – Pilate does not seem to be willing to send an innocent man to his death, so he makes an effort to release Jesus. He states that he will "chastise" (punishment by scourging to serve as a deterrent to further disobedience to Roman authority) Jesus and set Him free.

"For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast" – It was a Jewish custom to release a prisoner at Passover (John 18:39), and the Romans traditionally honored this custom in the interest of public relations. Pilate saw this custom as his opportunity to release Jesus.

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas: 19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

"And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas" – At this point Pilate is hearing the accusations in public before a crowd of observers. The chief priests and elders did not want to see Jesus released so they had persuaded the people to choose another prisoner to be that year's customary release (Matt. 27:20; Mark 15:11). Matt. 27:16 states that Barabbas was a "notable" (well known) prisoner, likely notorious for his crimes. Perhaps this is why they chose Barabbas – simply because they knew his name.

"Who for a certain sedition [insurrection] made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison" – We are told that Barabbas was guilty of being involved in an insurrection against the Romans and committing murder (Mark 15:7). John 18:40 adds that Barabbas was also a robber. The bottom line is that they chose to release a very guilty and sinful man instead of our innocent and righteous Savior. This pictures the reality of our salvation when Christ our innocent Savior bears our sins so that we, the guilty sinners, could go free.

20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify him.

"Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them" – Pilate still wants to release Jesus and protests their decision (v. 22; Matt. 27:23; Mark 15:14). Pilate's desire to release Jesus was likely intensified by the warning his wife sent to him about a dream that she had of Jesus (Matt. 27:19).

"But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him" – The chief priests and elders stubbornly refuse to entertain any alternative but to crucify Jesus. At this point Pilate realizes that the people were going to riot if he did not do as they wanted and he washes his hands in front of them as a dramatic way of declaring that he was not responsible for this miscarriage of justice (Matt. 27:24).

Verses 22-43: Pilate surrendered to the will of the people and gave the command to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Jesus is led to Calvary along with two other criminals who were also condemned to die, where all three are crucified with Jesus in the middle. One of the criminals repents, recognizing that they were suffering justly but that Jesus was innocent, and asks Jesus to remember him in the kingdom. Jesus acknowledges the man's faith and assures him that he will also be in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

"And it was about the sixth hour" – Luke used the Jewish method of reckoning time, which measured the day as the number of hours since sunrise. Thus, the sixth hour would be at noon.

"and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour" – This darkness began at noon and lasted until 3:00 pm. Some have suggested that this was a solar eclipse, but this is not possible for at least two reasons: 1) no solar eclipse lasts three hours; 2) the Passover always fell during the full moon, meaning that the moon was on the opposite side of the earth and could not have eclipsed the sun. This was a supernatural darkness with supernatural meaning. We are not told the geographical extent of the darkness.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

The darkness signified the judgment of God being poured out on His Son. Matt. 27:45-51 tells us that it was at the end of the three hours of darkness that the veil of the temple was torn in two, coinciding with the death of Jesus. The veil was the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place where the ark, which represented the presence of God, stood. Only the high priest could enter the most holy place and only on the Day of Atonement, illustrating man's restricted access to God. The fact that the veil was torn from top to bottom showed that it was not man but God Who had done it. The torn veil also signified that the way to God was now open through the blood of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross (**Heb. 4:16** "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.").

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice" – Of the seven things that Christ said on the cross, the two that seem to have come at the end is "It is finished" (John 19:30) and what Luke quotes Jesus as saying next. It seems likely that what Jesus cried out with a loud voice was "It is finished," signifying that His suffering was complete and salvation had been accomplished for mankind.

"he said, Father, into thy hands I commend [to place; to entrust] my spirit" – Jesus did not passively ask for His Father to take His spirit, which is what we would do when waiting for death. Instead, Jesus placed His spirit in His Father's hands, entrusting Himself into His Father's care. Jesus had declared that He was in control of when He died (**John 10:17-18** "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father").

"and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [to breathe one's last breath]" – Jesus was in control of the exact moment of His death.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

This centurion was the man in charge of the soldiers performing the crucifixion and was in the position of being able to observe everything that transpired. He had likely seen many crucifixions and was familiar with the way crucified men behaved. It was safe to say that this crucifixion was unlike any that he had seen. Observing the way that Jesus had behaved and died, as well as the darkness and the earthquake, gave him the distinct impression that Jesus was a righteous man, unlike most people that he had seen crucified. Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 tell us that the centurion had become convinced that Jesus was the Son of God.

Verses 48-49: Luke records the emotional anguish expressed by onlookers, who beat their breasts before leaving. Jesus' disciples and the women that followed Him also stood watching at a distance.

50 And, behold, *there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:* 51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.*

"And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just" – Luke introduces Joseph as a "counsellor" (a member of the Sanhedrin) but distinguishes him from the other Jewish leaders by describing Joseph as a good and just man.

"The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" – Joseph was not a part of the conspiracy to destroy Jesus.

"he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews" – Luke lists the city of Joseph's birth, identifying it as "a city of the Jews." Since "Joseph" was a popular name, the city of one's birth was often used to further identify people, such as Jesus being called "Jesus of Nazareth."

"who also himself waited for the kingdom of God" – Luke wants us to see Joseph favorably, adding another righteous characteristic of Joseph. He was someone who was looking forward to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. This may have been because he was a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38) and had believed Jesus preaching that "the kingdom was at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Luke is providing us with context so that we understand Joseph's motivation in the next verses.

52 This *man* went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

Under Roman law, prisoners sentenced to death forfeited the right to burial but if the family asked for the body, it was usually granted. It appears that Jesus' mother had not asked for the body, perhaps because she was drained emotionally. The twelve disciples had distanced themselves from Jesus and did not come forward. Despite being a secret disciple of Jesus, Joseph's desire that Jesus have a proper burial compelled him to summon the courage to approach Pilate and ask for the body (Mark 15:43).

53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

"And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen" – John's gospel tells us that Nicodemus, the one who came to Jesus by night (John 3:1-21), brought burial spices and helped Joseph prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39-40). The spices were distributed between layers of linen as they wrapped the body according to Jewish burial custom.

"and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid" – Joseph, being a rich man, apparently had this tomb hewn for the use of himself and his family but it had not yet been used. Jesus' burial there was a fulfillment of **Isa. 53:9a** ("And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death").