

# **“THE CROWN OF THORNS”**

***“The Week that Changed the World”***  
***A day by day account of the last week of the earthly life of Jesus.***

Roland Pletts



## **"THE CROWN OF THORNS"**



### **GOGOTHA "The Place of the Skull"**

The skull is still clearly visible just north of the Old City of Jerusalem.

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## **Introduction - THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS**

This is a record of events in the last week of Jesus' earthly life. The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John give accounts that vary in certain ways. I have tried to consider all scriptures and to fit them all together so as to get a full picture. I have also taken cognisance of recent research by eminent authors who have access to astronomical and complex calendar calculations. However, there are two important questions that must be settled. The first is; "On which day was Jesus crucified?" Tradition is that he died on "Good Friday." I have no problems with celebrating that day but was it the actual day? The second very important question is "How long was he in death and the tomb?" There are various scriptures that declare that Jesus would rise *on* the third day, *within* or *in* three days and *after* three days. How can all these be true? Jesus himself provided the definitive answer.

Jesus said he would be in the "heart of the earth" for Three Days and Three Nights. Matthew 12:40. He was *emphatic* about this period and quoted directly from Jonah 1:17. He also said he would rise on the third day *after* his death. How could he have been in the tomb three days and three nights and also rise on the third day? Was he mistaken or are we? These statements may be hard to understand but when we try and explain them away we move further and further from the truth. We should be very wary of discounting or changing the clear meaning of his words. This is how I believe it was fulfilled. It is fairly simple if we just accept it.

We have one fixed point of reference which is certain; Jesus rose early on the morning of Sunday probably just at sunrise. There are a very few who claim that he rose on Saturday. However, there is no credence in this statement for it contradicts the Gospel accounts that, if taken in context and without any preconceived ideas, imply very strongly that Jesus rose early on Sunday morning. There is a translation that claims the "first day of the week" was the Sabbath but this is rejected by all reputable versions and is in fact a misunderstanding of the Jewish idioms of the time. The first day of the "week" refers to the first day between the two Saturday Sabbaths, ie. Sunday. Jesus rose on Sunday which by the time of the apostle John was called the Lord's Day, the "day of new beginnings". (Rev 1:10, Acts 20:7) The Gospels do not tell the exact moment but the meaning is clear; it was *after* the Sabbath, very early in the *morning*. The women set out while it was still dark, there was a period of twilight just prior to sunrise, there was an earthquake, the stone was rolled away and angels met them with the good news "He has risen." The earthquake indicates the moment when he ascended from the "heart of the earth" with the earth violently shaken as it had when he died and descended. Jesus rose in the earthquake just as the first sun rays broke through. He is the "Sun of Righteousness". Malachi 4:2.

Notice also that he said "three days and three nights;" he put the days *before* the nights which is *not* the way the Jews counted. The day was the *first* day and he arose *after* the third night just at daybreak Sunday morning. It was a full night not half a night. To make the Gospel accounts mean anything else is to make them mean what they do not say. The meaning of "heart of the earth" in the context of his dying and death is significant. The Greek word "kardia" means thoughts, mind, feelings, midst; things that we feel deeply within our very heart in the midst of an experience. I believe it refers to both the dying and the actual period of death experienced by Jesus. Jesus put the days *before* the nights so he was not referring to a calendar but a specific period of time. The *first* day was the day on which he experienced the horror and agony of earthly death. It was after his trial, in the morning, that he was scourged and then crucified. His blood flowed at the hand of sinful man and he died. This day is included in the period.

I believe Jesus did what he said; he spent "*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" in the same way that Jonah experienced death within the belly of the fish. We can work backwards from Sunday to see how he accomplished this. He could not have died on Friday or Wednesday. If he died on Friday then at best he spent only two days and nights in the reality of death and the grave. If he died on Wednesday then he spent four days and nights in the experience. There are some scholars who say he died on Wednesday or even Tuesday but was only buried later but this is not true to the account. It could only have been Thursday. You may say "But Jesus died on Friday." This is the traditional view dating from about the third century. By that time the church had already abandoned its Jewish roots and had little understanding of the Jewish Feast Days and that there were two Sabbaths between his death and resurrection, not one.

There is another question which is also crucial to understanding these events and that is; "in which year was Jesus crucified?" It was a long time ago and there are conflicting traditions and many Professors and Historians disagree as to which year Jesus was born and consequently was crucified. The prevailing view is that Jesus was born between 8 and 1 BC and died around AD30 or AD33. The day on which he died, either a Friday or Thursday, will influence your view as to which year he died and therefore in which year he may have been born. In this presentation I will show that Passover was on Thursday in AD30; that is from Wednesday evening through to Thursday sunset Jewish time. I will also show that there were two Sabbaths, a Friday and a Saturday, between his burial and his resurrection, something Jewish people understood but Gentiles did not. I will show that AD30 is an acceptable year in relation to his death and also in the light of astronomical calculations and I will evaluate this. (See Appendix – page 66.)

## Chapter 1 – A brief outline from Wednesday to Sunday

Passover is on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. In Jewish time it started the evening *before* and went right through to the following evening which was then officially the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However it was celebrated in different ways. There were some who ate Passover on the first evening and many who ate it on the second evening. Passover AD30 was on Thursday; that is from Wednesday evening through to Thursday evening Jewish time.

**WEDNESDAY – Evening of 14<sup>th</sup> – PASSOVER EVENING** – Matt 26:17, Ex 12:6,14-18, Luke 22:1-7

- Jesus ate Passover on the “first” evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> - that was Wednesday evening.
- He was arrested and taken to Pilate early on Thursday morning. John 18:28, Matt 27:1, Mk 15:1
- Most people had not yet eaten Passover but ate it on the second night, Thursday evening. John 18:28

**THURSDAY – Day of the 14<sup>th</sup> - PASSOVER DAY – CRUCIFIXION**

- Jesus was crucified 9 am, suffered and died at 3 pm.
- He was removed from the cross because of the approaching “**High Day**”, John 19:31,42, Mark 15:42, and buried in haste before sunset.

**THURSDAY - Evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> - START OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

- This day was not the weekly Sabbath but the start of the first day of Unleavened Bread and a “High Sabbath” starting at sunset Thursday and going into Friday. Lev 23:4-7

**FRIDAY – Day of the 15<sup>th</sup> - The “HIGH SABBATH” of Unleavened Bread.** Jewish leaders requested a guard until 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

- This was the 1<sup>st</sup> day after the crucifixion. Matthew 27:62.

- There were two Sabbaths between his death and resurrection.

**SATURDAY - 16<sup>th</sup> - THE WEEKLY SABBATH**

- This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the crucifixion.

**SUNDAY - 17<sup>th</sup> - THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK -**

- This was the day after the weekly Sabbath. Mat 28:1
- This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after the crucifixion.

If Jesus counted the day on which he died, which would have been acceptable in Jewish thinking, then this is the fulfilment of three days and three nights spent in the "heart of the earth." The day on which he was sentenced, suffered and died was counted as the first day. During the whole day he was in the grip of death and died that afternoon. He said it would be three days and three nights; he put the day first. In other words he counted the day on which he suffered and died. He died at about 3pm and entered into the lower spirit realms on that day. His words to the thief "*Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise*" confirm this. It is the only way the words of Jesus could have been fulfilled and remain true to the Biblical account. Some people suggest that Jesus rose on Saturday night. However, he said he would rise on the *third day after* his crucifixion, not the third night. The scriptures indicate that he rose early in the morning. Why would he rise in the night? He is the "Day Star", the "Morning Star" of the dawn. He is called the Sun of Righteousness. (Mal 4:2) The sun comes up at dawn.

There have been many attempts to reconcile the scriptures concerning the last hours of our Lord. The Jews counted "days" from evening sunset to sunset the next day. It is well known that there were two different traditions as to when the Passover was kept. Exodus and Leviticus indicate these two different ways. In Exodus the Passover lamb was slain and eaten on the *evening* of 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan; the Jewish day started at twilight. In the days of Egypt the lamb was taken by each family, slain, roasted and eaten that very evening, the 14<sup>th</sup>. It was eaten in haste and nothing was left over to the following day, which was still the 14<sup>th</sup>. Exodus 12:6-11. So it was eaten on the "first" evening.

In Leviticus the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread the *following* evening which was the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> the first day of Unleavened Bread. Lev 23:4-8. In the days of the NT the Pharisees and many others slew the Passover Lamb *between* the two evenings of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and ate it on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup>. That

evening was also the start of seven days of Unleavened Bread the first day being a Holy Convocation or "High Sabbath" in which no work was done. Exodus 12:14-20. At the time of Jesus the temple was the centre of worship and people brought lambs to be slain there. Many of them therefore no longer slew the lambs at home on the first evening but the next day. Jesus kept the Passover as it was in Exodus on the *first* evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> but many people prepared it the following day, still the 14<sup>th</sup> and ate it that evening, the 15<sup>th</sup> at the start of Unleavened Bread. It was still Passover but eaten on the second evening. This was the difference. John 13:1. Unleavened Bread was referred to as Passover by many Jews.

Jesus ate it "in haste", went out to Gethsemane and was arrested in the early hours of the morning still the 14<sup>th</sup>. He was taken to Annas who sent him to Caiaphas at the High Priest's house. Luke 21:54. Despite the claims of historians, archaeologists and tour guides we do not know exactly where it was. It may well have been in the upper city very close to the temple precincts. The "multitude" that arrested him was comprised of chief priests, elders and captains of the temple. Luke 22:47,52. They took him to a house near the temple where the Council assembled. Mark 14:53.

It is evident that the proceedings took place when it was still dark. Mark 14:54-72. The cock had not yet crowed when the trial started. I have listened to cocks crowing. They generally start at about three o'clock in the morning, long before first light. This trial was held at night and was done "in haste". As soon as they were able the Council of Elders found him guilty and as soon as it was light they led him to Pilate. Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66, 23:1, John 18:13,24,28. It was very early in the morning. John made a strange claim when he said that Jesus stood before Pilate at about the sixth hour. This conflicts with the Synoptic Gospels which say he was crucified from the third to the ninth hour- 9am to 3pm. These Gospels recorded time in a Jewish manner counting the daylight hours from day break which was about 6am. So the third hour was in fact 9am when Jesus was crucified. John, however, did not calculate the hour in that way but used the Roman method counting it from midnight as we do today. When he said that Jesus stood before Pilate at about the sixth hour he did not mean 12 noon but early morning at about 6am. The trial was conducted "in haste" because Jesus could not be crucified during the "Feast" which started that evening at sunset and continued for the next seven days. Matthew 26:5.

The "multitude" had been primed as to what to do and shouted loudly to force Pilate into a hasty decision. However, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. This was not a long walk. Luke 23:6. Jesus did not spend a long time with him for although Herod had many questions Jesus refused to answer them. He was then mocked, arrayed in a purple robe and sent back to Pilate where upon

he was scourged. Luke 23:16 John 19:1. The Jews continued their shouting to intimidate Pilate who succumbed and passed sentence. Jesus was led away to crucifixion which took place at about 9am.

Later that afternoon the Jews asked Pilate that the legs of Jesus be broken because they did not want his body to remain on the cross on the "High Sabbath" which was due to start at sunset. John 19:31. It was the "Day of Preparation", not for the weekly Sabbath but the Feast of Unleavened Bread which started as a special High Sabbath day. Most people ate Passover on the first day of Unleavened Bread which was that very evening. Many Bible readers overlook that there were two Sabbaths between the crucifixion and the resurrection; the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread that followed immediately from Passover and the weekly Sabbath of Saturday. This was a special additional Sabbath something that every Jew knows but few Gentiles.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for the body of Jesus and laid Jesus in the nearby tomb. John 19:38-42. It was all done "in haste" because the Jewish Feast started at sunset. For most Jews the Passover was eaten on this night which was the First Day of Unleavened Bread, a holy day in which there was no work. Also, according to scripture, nothing of the Passover Lamb must remain. Jesus died on the day of Passover at the time of the afternoon Sacrifice. Not one bone in his body was broken and he was buried "in haste." John 19:36. He was the Passover.

The next day the Jewish leaders came to Pilate and requested that a guard should be placed on the tomb until the third day. Matthew 27:62-66. Scripture does not record the day on which they came to Pilate as being the weekly Sabbath. This day was not Saturday Sabbath but Friday the day "following the Day of Preparation", the First Day of Unleavened Bread lasting from the previous evening to sunset; a "High Sabbath." This was the first day after the crucifixion.

The day after this was the weekly Sabbath which was the second day after the crucifixion. The next day was the First Day of the Week, the third day after the crucifixion. Jesus rose on the third day after spending three days (daylight) and three nights in death and the grave. This perfectly fulfils the words of the Lord when he said it would be three days and three nights. If Jesus was crucified on a Friday then it would have been only 2 days and 2 nights. If he was crucified on Wednesday it would have been 4 days and 4 nights. He was crucified on Thursday and counting the day on which he suffered, died and was buried he was "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This saying comes from Jonah and corresponds to being in the "belly" of the fish. A careful reading of Jonah indicates that he was in "sheol" which is death and the grave for this period. The period cannot be

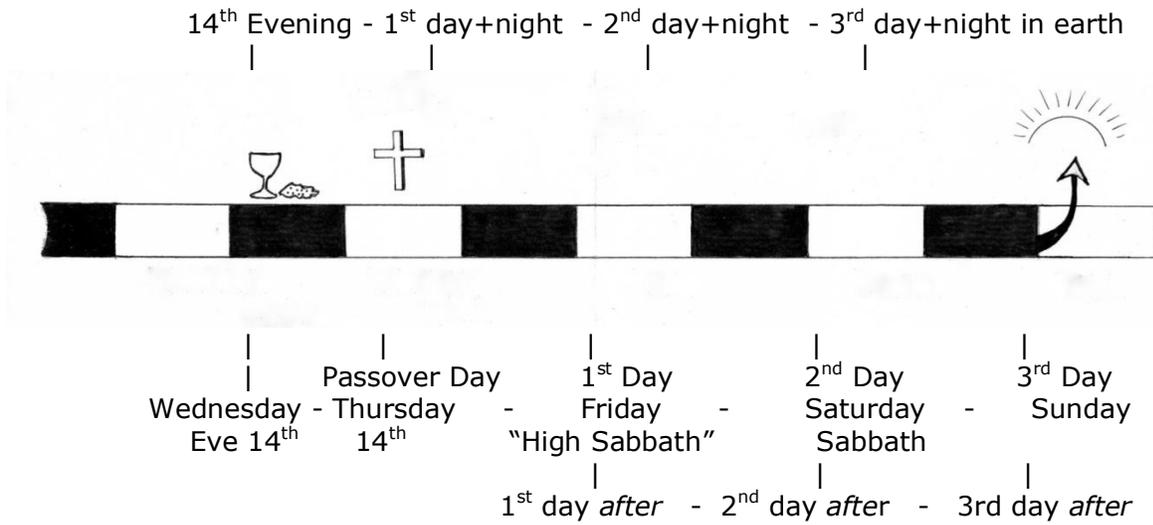
changed to mean anything else; it is a specific accurate period of time. Jesus spent a full three days and three nights in death and the grave.

It also fulfils the prediction that he would rise on the third day after crucifixion. The day on which Jesus died cannot be counted as the first day after the crucifixion. Friday was the *first day*, Saturday the *second day* and Sunday the *third day after* the crucifixion and the day He arose. Jesus ate Passover on Wednesday evening exactly in the middle of the final week which I will share more about. He was arrested shortly afterwards, was sentenced early in the morning, was crucified on Thursday at 9am and died at 3pm. His body could not be left on the cross because of the soon coming "Holy High Sabbath" and was buried "in haste" on Thursday and lay in the tomb from Thursday through the next day Friday and through the next day Saturday. He rose early on the first day of the week, Sunday: the third day after three days and three nights. By rising early on Sunday just before or at sunrise he also fulfilled the saying "within three days."

The First Day of the week, Sunday, was also the day of the "Wave Offering". (Lev 23:10-16) There was some conflict among the Jews about when this celebration should take place. The Pharisees taught that it should take place on the first day after the day of Unleavened Bread; the 16<sup>th</sup> Nisan. However, the Sadducees taught it should take place on the first day after the weekly Sabbath during the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. This would be variable and needed to be calculated. This is when Jesus fulfilled the Wave Offering by rising on Sunday the first day after the weekly Sabbath, as the Resurrection Wave Offering.

The next Feast was Shavuot, Pentecost. It was calculated from the Wave Offering, for both these feasts were linked to the early harvest and were actually considered one feast with fifty days between. Once again there was a conflict in the manner in which this calculation was made and the understanding of this is important to the fulfilment of Pentecost. If it was calculated from the day after the first Sabbath then its date was not constant. However, after the Diaspora the Rabbis linked the feast with the historical event of giving the law at Mt Sinai which was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the third month (Sivan). Ex 19:1. This was 45 days from Passover. According to the Rabbis God spoke to Israel 5 days later on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the third month, the traditional day that Shavuot was kept. Usually the Feast was therefore kept 50 days after the first Day of Unleavened Bread. Jesus spent 3 days in the tomb and then walked in Resurrection for a further 40 days. This would allow one week from his ascension to the coming of the Spirit and the start of the First Fruits Resurrection Harvest of believers through the age.

## THE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS



## Chapter 2 : THE EVENTS OF THE FINAL WEEK AND "THE LAST PASSOVER SUPPER"

Some time before this final week Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This miracle caused much animosity among the Pharisees. John 11:45-53. These scriptures give an insight into the thinking of the Jewish rulers especially their fear that there would be an uprising by the followers of Jesus and that the Romans would take away their position of leadership and destroy the nation. This was their mentality; they were focused entirely on earthly things and not the Kingdom of God. Caiaphas foretold that if necessary Jesus would have to die for the nation. In other words, in his thinking Jesus had to die to save the nation from being destroyed by the Romans. This was the core of belief held by the Jewish leaders and their motivation to put Jesus to death.

After Jesus raised Lazarus he withdrew with his disciples away from the crowds to a place called Ephraim. This was an opportunity for him to be with his disciples and to prepare for Passover and his coming ordeal. When the time came he "set his face as a flint" and started out on the road to Jerusalem; nothing would stop him. He came to Jericho and spent the night at the home of Zacchaeus an unlikely candidate for salvation. Luke 19:1,28. He was a tax collector yet Jesus came and showed him God's grace. From there Jesus made his way onwards and upwards to Jerusalem.

**SIX DAYS** before Passover Jesus came to Bethany. John 12:1. This was a Friday, the Sabbath eve.

**FRIDAY 8<sup>th</sup>** - He and his disciples probably arrived at Bethany in mid or late afternoon of Friday just before Sabbath started. It was a full day's travel and they were weary after the long walk up from Jericho.

**SABBATH 9<sup>th</sup>** - Jesus rested through Friday evening into the following day. Friday evening was a simple Sabbath meal prepared in advance. No work was done of any kind. It was a day of worship, prayer and fellowship for he was with the family he loved very dearly. Lazarus had recently been raised from the dead and they had a lot to share. I wonder what they talked about. It was the final period Jesus had to prepare himself for the week to come.

Sabbath ended at Saturday sunset and the family then made a supper for Jesus. Martha served. In the evening Mary took a pound of very costly ointment of spikenard and anointed his feet and wiped them with her hair. When visitors came to a home it was common courtesy to provide water to wash their feet. Often a servant would wash them and even the host would do so but here not only did Mary wash the Lord's feet but she anointed them with the most costly perfume and wiped them with her hair. The whole house was filled with the fragrance. Why did Mary make such an extravagant anointing on Jesus? This show of devotion was excessive and aroused criticism of her. For a woman to show such extreme devotion in public could be misconstrued and considered inappropriate. Judas was offended by this waste of money and asked why it was not sold and given to the poor. Evidently Judas did not really care for the poor but was a thief and wanted the money because he carried the money bag and had access to it. His criticism of Mary brought loving words from Jesus who acknowledged her devotion and defended her actions as having been done for his *burial*. John 12:1-8. Mary knew Jesus was about to die and wept at his feet and poured out her perfume of love and adoration.

Jesus shared evidently shared with the family about his soon coming death. I believe Jesus told them he was going to Jerusalem to die at Passover and Mary fully understood. As she washed and anointed his feet she did so for his burial. That perfume lingered with Jesus right through to the crucifixion when they drove in the nails.

At the end of Sabbath word went out that Jesus was there and many people came that evening to the house to see him and also Lazarus who had risen from the dead. Lazarus had probably kept a low profile after being raised so as to stay away from the "authorities" and many curious people. John 12:9.

**SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup>** - The next day Jesus prepared to go into Jerusalem. He sent two disciples to fetch a young donkey. He knew exactly where it was and probably prearranged this with its owner for he instructed the disciples to

say if asked, "The master has need of him." He entered Jerusalem riding on this young colt in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah. Zech 9:9, John 12:12-18, Luke 19:29-44. A great multitude heard that he was coming and gathered along the road with Palm branches to welcome him. They did this to fulfil the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles that looked forward to Messiah and his Kingdom. However, it was not the correct season to celebrate Tabernacles and this anticipation was premature.

When he got to the descent of the Mount of Olives many of the people began to sing his praise. Jesus did not rebuke them and in answer to the Pharisees' criticism, for they too were among the throng, he said that if the people held their peace even the very stones would cry out. When he had drawn near to the city he stopped and wept. This was not gentle tears rolling down his cheeks. He wept with great sobs of heart wrenching sorrow and foretold the dreadful things that would come to pass on the city he loved so much. Jesus went on to the temple and looked around and saw what was taking place and how it had become a market for merchants and money traders. It was now late and he went back to Bethany. Mark 11:11

This was the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the day Jesus entered Jerusalem and the day when the Passover lamb was selected for sacrifice. Exodus 12:3. The adulation of the crowd towards Jesus, especially when they shouted "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord," unsettled the Pharisees. Luke 19:38. In their minds they considered this to be the prelude for rebellion and a popular uprising which the Romans would deal with very harshly. Talk of Jesus being a king in their minds smacked on insurrection. They were preoccupied with their own status and blinded as to who Jesus really was. They now began to make plans to arrest Jesus.

**MONDAY 11<sup>th</sup>** – The following day as Jesus went into the city he was hungry. Evidently Jesus had not eaten breakfast and seeing a Fig Tree he came to it and looked for some fruit. I believe he was familiar with this Fig Tree for he had often walked this road. He knew where it stood and he purposely approached it to illustrate in real terms the parable of the Fig Tree. Luke 13:6. It was not yet the season for figs, however, there should have been the formation of the early crop, small hard knobs that nevertheless were edible and often eaten by peasants. There were no fruit and he rebuked the Fig Tree. Mark 11:12-14.

He then went to the temple and "cleansed it". Mark 11:15,16. The money changers and merchants had defiled the temple with their trade. Luke 19:41-45. Matt 21:12. After he visited the temple and seen what it was like he decided to drive them out and had made the whip the night before. Now he drove them out in great anger. It was a purposeful deliberate planned

action of devotion to His Father. Single handed he drove the merchants out of the temple with the words "My Father's house is a house of prayer but you have made it into a den of robbers." What judgment! After this he established himself in a strategic place and refused to let anyone carry wares through the courts. He came "suddenly" to his temple. Malachi 3:1.

From now on He was in the temple daily teaching and healing. Mark 12:35 Luke 19:47 20:1, 21:37, Matthew 21:14-17,23. Meanwhile the Pharisees sought a way to destroy him. In order not to impose upon the family at Bethany and to protect them from persecution it may be he slept somewhere at Mount Olives and in the morning came to the temple. Luke 21:37,38. Jesus gave a lengthy discourse on the Mount of Olives about the course of future events. Matthew 24:3 Mark 13:3.

**TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>** – After another day teaching in the temple he returned to Bethany this time to the house of Simon the Leper. Luke 22:1-6. This was two days before the day of Passover which he would eat on Wednesday evening. Mark 14:1 Matt 26:1-4. He was invited for supper and was anointed this time on his head. Matt 26:6. This was not the same anointing as Luke 7:36-50 which was earlier in his ministry. This earlier one was at the house of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the Leper and that woman was a "sinner" and not one of his regular followers. Some people think this was Mary Magdalene who anointed him near to his death. She too was criticized and again Jesus defended the action. So it seems the Lord was anointed three times, once early in his ministry and twice for his burial; once on his feet and once on his head. Both the latter times were done by women of faith who understood he was about to die. They both had great courage to do what they did in the face of inevitable religious and gender prejudice. It was the fragrance of their love that Jesus took to the cross and which must have comforted and strengthened him. He was anointed as King and Priest.

**WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>** – As I have said there were two customs; some people celebrated Passover on the *first* evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> and some celebrated on the *second* evening. Jesus sent two disciples, Peter and John, into the city to prepare for supper on the *first* evening. It does not say clearly that it was the Passover meal but it could only have been Passover and I believe it was. It held much significance for Jesus. Mark 14:14. He had looked forward to this supper with great anticipation. He told the two disciples to look for a man carrying a large jar of water. He would have been very noticeable for it was normally women who fetched water not men. Some researchers think this was a house of Essenes. However, some wealthy people had servants who did this task. Having found him the disciples were led to a large furnished upper room. It was evidently a wealthy family who lived here. They prepared the Passover and probably all the family helped. It may have

been the same upper room of Acts 1:13.

**WEDNESDAY EVENING 14<sup>th</sup>** – At sunset it became the Day of Passover and Jesus now ate the Passover meal that he had looked forward to with such anticipation. After eating, supper being ended, Jesus took off his outer garment and tenderly washed the feet of each disciple. This was usually the humble task of the household servant, sometimes one of the children or even the host himself. Peter protested that he needed to be washed all over but Jesus said his feet would suffice. Having done so, he put his robe on again. There followed a time of interaction when he revealed that one of the disciples was about to betray him yet he would not disclose who it was. Peter motioned to John who reclined close to the Lord to ask who it was and Jesus quietly replied it was the person to whom he would give a sop after dipping it. He gave it to Judas and said to him "*What thou doest do quickly*". Jesus was still in control of what was happening behind the scenes. He was working to his own schedule for he knew he must die on the morrow as Passover Lamb. He knew that Judas had already been to the Jewish hierarchy and agreed to betray him and his words now compelled Judas along the route he had chosen. Judas left immediately; there was a sense of urgency in him for he knew that Jesus knew what he was about to do. He went to the High Priest with the news that he had been found out and it was only now that he could lead them to him: now was the time to arrest Jesus with the least publicity, under cover of darkness, in the dead of night; there would not be another opportunity.

### **BEHIND THE SCENES**

What happened when Judas left the supper and went out into the darkness?

He went to meet with Caiaphas. This must have caused much concern and activity. Caiaphas called together the council, found witnesses and most important went to Pilate to discuss with him what they were planning. This is not stated in scripture but must have happened for a number of reasons. Caiaphas could not just arrive early next morning at the doorstep of Pilate without first warning him and attaining his approval. They needed his co-operation. He went to Pilate and prearranged the trial. The High Priest was the only Jewish official who could have had an audience with Pilate at this time of night.

He also forewarned Pilate of the charge they were to bring on Jesus, that of being a “king” and planning insurrection. Anything less would have been of no consequence to Pilate but such a charge would have to be dealt with immediately and so he agreed. The Jews also needed his ratification of the death sentence they wanted to pass on Jesus. Caiaphas and Pilate prearranged the early morning trial the night before because Jesus had to die that day before the seven day Feast.

Pilate must have shared this news with his wife for she was to have a disturbed night. She had probably already heard of Jesus from household servants for his “fame” had spread throughout the land.

All this had to be arranged in haste.

## **JESUS CONFIRMED THE COVENANT EXACTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FINAL WEEK**

After the meal was over and Judas gone Jesus now took some Bread and Wine and established the “new Covenant” with his followers. These were ancient symbols of Covenant. By doing this on Wednesday evening he fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel 9:27; *“In the midst of the week he shall confirm the covenant.”* Wednesday evening was in the exact middle of the final week of *seven days*; from Sunday morning entry into Jerusalem to his resurrection the following Sunday. It was also the exact middle of the final week of *seven years*, after his three and a half years ministry. (See my book *Covenant of Glory*.) Just as Daniel predicted, he “confirmed the covenant” with his disciples in the midst of the week. Before that day the 14<sup>th</sup> was over, he was “Cut off” by crucifixion and fulfilled the blood Covenant. It was during this last supper that he gave his final words of encouragement and teaching as well as his longest recorded prayer. After supper they sang the traditional hymns that were sung at Passover; Psalms 116-18.

## **GETHSEMANE**

Something terrible happened at Gethsemane. It means “Oil Press” and was a garden of Olive Trees where Jesus was “pressed” beyond all measure. It was here that the awful reality of what was about to take place came on him as he took upon himself the weight of sin for all mankind. He called Peter, James and John and said to them that he was in great grief and exceedingly sorrowful and asked them to pray for him. Then he went a little further and

fell in great agony and drops of blood-like sweat fell from him. For such a thing to happen requires extreme stress. In the face of the coming horror he was pressed in his utmost inner being. In prayer he cried to God the Father if it was possible for this dreadful cup to pass from. Utterly alone, an Angel came and strengthened him. He who was coregent with the Father, who had made all creation and who needed nothing, had become so vulnerable that he needed strengthening. We are told that Jesus "in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death and was heard because of his godly fear, though He was a Son yet he learnt obedience through the things which he suffered." Hebrews 5:7. In absolute obedience and trust he yielded to his Father. Was it here in Gethsemane that the adversary tried to overwhelm him in death thus robbing him of the mission and purpose for which he was born? We just don't know everything.

We do not know how long this travail lasted but three times he came back to the disciples. The same disciples who had seen his transfiguration now slept through his travail. Then Judas came with the temple guards and officials to arrest him and they led him to Annas. During the early hours of the morning while it was still dark the Council held an illegal "trial", found Jesus guilty of blasphemy and condemned him to death. Arrests were illegal at night as were trials, the Sanhedrin had no authority to instigate charges, it was not in the proper place of meeting, there was no defence council, the witnesses disagreed and the Sanhedrin had no authority to pass a death sentence.

## **THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup> Morning – THE DAY OF PASSOVER**

Now the official trial held by the Roman ruling authority took place. Who was involved in these events of the day? Judas was not there but had already been paid for his betrayal. The High Priest and Jewish leaders were the Prosecution there was no defence. Pilate was Governor and Judge. There was no jury. The witnesses were false and were told what to say. Herod was the puppet king. The crowd who came were aroused and out of control. The Centurion and Roman soldiers were the executioners doing what they were told to do. Barabbas was the person really guilty of insurrection and who was released. The thief was the only one who was shown pardon, not by the Judge but by the person condemned. Simon of Cyrene was a bystander whose life was changed for ever. The only person who knew exactly what was happening and why was Jesus.

**THE "PRAETORIUM"** was the official residence of Pilate when he was in Jerusalem. Traditionally it was considered to be the Antonia Fortress that accommodated the soldiers. Recent archaeology has discounted the Convent of Flagellation as authentic and found near the modern Jaffa Gate the

remains of what some consider to have been the Palace of Herod the Great and the residence Pilate used when in town. It is unlikely that Pilate would reside with his wife in the rough tough barracks of soldiers but more likely in the most luxurious palace in town.

## **GABBATHA – THE PAVEMENT**

After the “trial” Pilate brought him out to the place called the pavement and handed him over to the Jews with a Roman contingent to carry out the execution. They led him north to Golgotha. The Via Dolorosa is not the original route for the city was totally destroyed and rebuilt. It was Helena in AD326 who decided this was the route and it is now largely accepted.

### **JUDAS and the FIELD OF BLOOD Called “ACELDAMA”**

Unbeknown to most people another drama now took place. Judas had come to his senses. It was as though he had been blinded but when he saw that Jesus was condemned to death he realised what he had done. Judas had been duped by the High Priest for he evidently had not expected Jesus to be condemned to death. When he realised this he was filled with “regret” a very strong word meaning remorse, regret, repentance and sorrow. (3338 Strongs) He brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders and confessed; “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.” Matthew 27:3-10. This was what one was supposed to do if one had sinned; one had to go to the priests and make confession and sacrifice. He declared Jesus innocent and confessed his own sin to the Priests. By doing so he disassociated himself from their actions. They just laughed at him. They denied their high calling and deliberately rejected him. I wonder; if he could have got to Jesus would Jesus also have turned him away? Judas took the thirty pieces of silver and threw it into the temple to the Lord. This was the only course left for him. He did not throw it to the Lord in anger but in confession, to the *altar*, as a confession of guilt. He confessed his sin to both the Priests and to the Lord. He departed and hung himself. That was the depth of his sorrow; he could not live with what he had done.

Judas’ real sin was that he was a thief. Jesus knew it but allowed him to handle the money. Why? Is it because we have to overcome our weaknesses to be used by the Lord? Judas succumbed to his weakness. But there must have been more going on behind the scenes that we are not told about.

Why would Judas help the Pharisees to capture Jesus? It is true that he had been offended by the lavish demonstration of love shown Jesus at his anointing. The public reprimand must have stung. However, I believe something Jesus said at the supper finally swayed him. It must have seemed to him that Jesus was about to act on a disastrous mission. Don't forget that *none* of the disciples understood that Jesus was to die and rise again. After the events of the preceding days, the triumphant entry into the city, the forceful cleansing of the temple and the words of Jesus himself Judas may have concluded that Jesus was about to initiate a showdown that would end in disaster and tragedy. Jesus alluded to the possibility of his own death. None of the disciples understood and I believe that Judas was thinking like any worldly person would think.

Peter had also expressed similar sentiments when he said to the Lord not to consider death. At that time Jesus had rebuked not Peter but Satan speaking through Peter. Jesus also warned Peter that "Satan desired to sift him as wheat". Luke 22:31. Judas too had been deceived by Satan. Luke 22:3. Satan was manipulating and deceiving people for his own ends. Jesus allowed it in order to fulfil all things. Did Judas think that by handing Jesus over he would stop an uprising and even save him from death? I think this is the only logical conclusion because Judas had not expected the outcome.

When Judas asked Jesus if he was the one who would betray him Jesus confirmed it. So Judas knew that Jesus knew what he was planning yet did not stop him, just the opposite; Jesus said to him "*That which thou doest do quickly.*" This was a command he was compelled to obey. Jesus was still in control directing circumstances along a preordained plan towards his own death. He was setting a trap for the adversary to fall into; by dying he would forever destroy death. Heb 2:14. It was imperative that Jesus keep "hidden the plan of God ordained before the ages for our glory which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." 1 Cor 2:7,8.

When Judas came to his senses and confessed to the Priests it left them with a dilemma. Ever mindful of being "defiled" they were reluctant to take the money, their own money, back into the treasury because it was "tainted with blood". So after discussions they decided to buy a parcel of land as a cemetery for "strangers". In other words people who had no money for a proper funeral, foreigners who had no faith and no roots, homeless people who had fallen on bad

times, those who were the dregs of society, people no one else wanted; they could be buried in this field. It was called the “potter’s field” and “the field of blood”. Judas was probably the first to be buried there. Acts 1:18,19, Matthew 27:7-10.

What was the significance of this? It fulfilled OT prophecy. Zech 11:12,13. But there is more, the scripture also specifically refers to Jeremiah. Its full meaning is found in Jeremiah 18:2-4 where the prophet is instructed to go to the “potter’s house” and see the potter take a lump of clay that had been marred and make it again “into another vessel as it seemed good to the potter”.

It is this scripture that reveals the heart of God and gives us hope, both as individuals and nations. God is able to take us again and refashion us. This is the heart of God, He has not changed. He sent Jesus to find us; strangers, drop outs, the lost, the dregs of society, and to purchase us with his blood and make us anew. Maybe there is a lesson in this. No one is beyond the reach of God, no sin cannot be redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Judas went down to “Sheol” but according to scripture Jesus was soon to follow for that is where he went to preach to lost souls. 1 Peter 3:18-20. What happened in those dark nether regions when he and Judas met again? Is “hell” beyond the reach of the grace of God? The Psalmist writes “if I make my bed in “Sheol”, behold, You are there”. Psalm 139:8. Jonah “cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.” Jonah 2:2. Contrary to some theology Sheol is not controlled by demons or Satan but fully under God’s control. Did Judas like Jonah cry for help as well?

“History is full of people who have fallen, made mistakes, committed crimes, sinners, strangers to God and themselves. God knows and loves every single one of them. Maybe we will be surprised at what God has done. There is a field where these nameless lost ones are buried and covered by the Blood of Jesus. I have heard many say that Judas was lost for all eternity but although Peter spoke of Judas he did not know his fate, only Jesus knows for he alone is judge. It was Peter who drew the attention of the apostles to this “Field of Blood”. Acts 1:15-19. What did he really mean? Peter too had betrayed the Lord and knew the depths of God’s forgiveness. The last earthly words Jesus spoke to Judas were “My friend why do you betray me?”

Judas was his friend. □

## HIS LAST RECORDED WORDS

Jesus uttered seven sayings from the cross each one of significance.

The first and immediate words that passed his lips were words of grace and forgiveness; "**Father forgive them.**"

Pilate had written a sign and instructed that it be placed above Jesus. It said "**JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS**" and was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Clearly Pilate wanted the whole world to know who Jesus was. The Jewish leaders took offence and asked Pilate to change it but he replied; "What I have written I have written". I don't believe he was being malicious or sarcastic. Pilate knew what he meant and was not going to relent, in his mind Jesus was the King he claimed to be and was innocent and should not have been crucified.

### WAS JESUS A JEW?

Many Christians seem to have forgotten that Jesus was a Jew. We have even changed his name; his real name is Yeshua. He is depicted in paintings with fair hair and blue eyes! He was nothing like that. He must have been a typical Jew with Jewish features; dark hair and dark eyes, a strong face and possibly a prominent nose. There are some people who deny that Jesus was Jewish. Yet he was born of the tribe of Judah, his parents were devout Jews, he was circumcised on the eighth day, he went to the temple with his family every year, went to synagogue, kept the Sabbath, attended the Feasts in Jerusalem, wore a Jewish garment with tassels and was even called Rabbi. He was as Jewish as anyone can be.

### WAS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS?

There are some who say Jesus was not really the "King of the Jews." However, when the wise men came looking for Jesus they asked "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Matthew 2:2. Were they mistaken? Were they wise enough to know when he was born yet so foolish as to mistake his identity? Nathaniel declared him to be the "Son of God, King of Israel" that is, the King of the Jews. John 1:49. The Jewish leaders also called him King of Israel. Matt 27:42, Mk 15:32, Jn 12:13. Were they all mistaken?

His second utterance was to his mother and the apostle John; "**Woman, behold thy son**" and "**Behold they mother.**"

His third utterance was in response to the request of the thief who defended him from the cursing of his companion thief. 1 Pet 2:23.

Immediately Jesus responded; ***"Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."***

### **THE SUN TURNED DARK**

After three hours the sun became dark and the shadow of death fell across the entire earth. I do not believe this was a local event. As Jesus died not only was he surrounded by hateful sinners but also the full forces of demonic armies. For the last three hours He withstood all the dark spiritual powers of the universe. For the first three hours he was surrounded by all the callous hatred and unbelief of the worst of humanity. He suffered malicious taunting and mocking from his fellow country men and rulers of the world. The next three hours was the time when all the demons of darkness, the vile rulers of evil in spirit realms came against him. He had been beaten by the temple guards, scourged by the Romans and crucified. Now the storms of accusation lashed him relentlessly, great filthy waves of sin buffeted him. He took upon himself the sins of the world. The heavens turned to brass and the face of the Father was withdrawn not because He was angry but because our sin separated Jesus; he felt utterly alone. This was the full "Horror of Darkness" that Abraham had glimpsed long before when God cut the Covenant with him. Genesis 15:12.

As the Lord hung on the cross the sun darkened for three hours and a deathly gloom settled upon the planet. If the people there could have had their spiritual eyes opened they would have seen the skies full of dark spiritual powers. All the heavenly rebels surrounded him and every dissident in creation came against him. [Psalm 22:12,13; 118] This was their hour and Jesus was to be lashed with everything they could muster.

The physical lashing was only a preview of the spiritual. He would be tested to full measure yet there was no darkness found in him. [John 14:30] Wave upon wave of fallen angelic rulers smashed him as he hung alone and defenceless to their merciless, ruthless pounding. Yet the "Everlasting Rock" stood firm. When the last wave had foamed out its shame and filth he was triumphant. [John 19:30] Nailed to the cross he took on the entire power of Satan and was victorious.

As he yielded his spirit and sank to the dark realms of the nether world beneath, the earth quaked and the rocks rent. On the third day when he arose another quake shook the earth as the Eternal Son of God tore the chains of death apart. Matthew 27:51, 28:2. He was the only person who could do that.

His fourth utterance was a cry; **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

His fifth utterance was a loud cry of triumph; **"It is finished"**.

His sixth utterance was; **"I thirst"**. It fulfilled the prophetic scriptures. Psalm 69:20,21.

The **seventh** utterance was a tender affirmation; **"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit"**.

## **Thursday - evening 15<sup>th</sup> –the evening of Unleavened Bread**

The First Day of Unleavened Bread was about to begin at sunset. This was a "High Sabbath Day" and they hastened to bury him in a nearby tomb.

### **THE GARDEN TOMB**

The "Garden Tomb" is for me the authentic vicinity for the burial of Jesus.

On a visit to Jerusalem back in 1982 when I visited the Garden Tomb I walked along a path to a place where I could look out onto Golgotha. The form of a skull can be clearly seen in the rock face and quietly I asked the Lord whether this was the place where he had died. Scriptures flooded into my mind as I was given a "Bible Study" by the Holy Spirit.

It was to an *exact spot* that Abraham was led when he took Isaac to sacrifice. Genesis 22:2. It was called Mount Moriah. This was the mountain where David later purchased the threshing floor of Ornan and where the Temple of Solomon was built, not on the summit but on the same mountain lower down. 1 Chronicles 21:18.

Looking at the topography from my vantage point I could see the Temple area to the south and that Golgotha was part of the same ridge stretching north. I already knew that the "Place of the Skull" had been made into a separate hill at the time of the Macabees when they had hacked away the ground so as to make the city less vulnerable of attack from the higher ground that rose from the city walls towards the summit. This place was therefore the summit of Mount Moriah. By cutting it away it was formed into the cliff face in which one can still see the form of a skull. This is the "Rock" on which Jesus was cleft and in those days visible from afar.

The Garden Tomb was evidently that of a wealthy man for not only was it cut from solid rock but there is even to this day a substantial cistern in the garden that was used to store water. It dates from the first century. Both these facts attest the authenticity of this place.

## **FRIDAY 15<sup>th</sup> - "THE HIGH" SABBATH OF UNLEAVENED BREAD AND SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup> THE WEEKLY SABBATH**

Jesus' body lay in the Tomb. There were *two* Sabbaths between the crucifixion and the resurrection. It was a "long weekend". The events of Thursday had now impacted the entire city. The dreadful crucifixion together with darkening sun and earthquake could not be overlooked. These were notable and fearful omens and because of them the whole population knew something had happened. For the disciples there was nothing but grief and utter despair. In a single day all their hopes and beliefs had been demolished. Their lives had ended when Jesus died. They were very afraid that the leaders were going to come and get them too. Peter especially was shattered. He felt dead. He had nothing left inside.

That evening and the next day was the "High Sabbath" of Unleavened Bread and the chief priests and Pharisees sent yet another delegation to Pilate this time to beg him for an armed guard to protect the grave from "grave robbers" until the third day. Matthew 27:62-66. This then was the first day *after* the crucifixion. Pilate was irate with them and rebuffed them with the words "You have a guard; go your way and make it as secure as you know how" but can one detect some cynicism in his words? He did not give them a Roman guard but told them to use their own temple soldiers. This then is what they tried to do by sealing the tomb with iron bars and heavy chains and setting a twenty four hour guard upon it.

## **DESCENT INTO SHEOL.**

Jesus' body lay in the Tomb but where was he?

The apostle Peter tells us where he was; "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah". (1 Peter 3:18-20)

This is an amazing statement. Jesus went to the spirits from previous ages, all the people who had ever lived and died. I am not able to deal with the theological questions this may have but I believe it nevertheless. He had told the thief they would be together in Paradise. Peter, however, goes further than Paradise but to the collective body of all humanity. Paradise was within Sheol but Jesus did not just go there for Peter says he went to all who had been *disobedient* even back to the days of Noah. Psalm 22:29 declares that "all who go down to the dust shall bow before him."

What happened when Jesus met the thief? The man must have thrown himself at the feet of Jesus in gratitude and joy. What happened when Jesus met Judas? Did he also throw himself at the feet of Jesus and cry for mercy? I have heard many preachers say that Judas was utterly lost but who are we to make that judgment? Jesus had just died for the sins of the whole world; He alone is judge and saviour. The last words Jesus spoke to Judas were "My Friend." These were not words of condemnation but of endearment and hope. It is true that Peter quoted Old Testament prophecies of judgment and linked them to Judas but he stopped short of declaring him eternally lost. Acts 1:20, Psalm 69:25, Psalm 109:8. But, some may say, "even Jesus said he was lost." John 17:12. I ask myself in what context was he lost; was it for all eternity or was it in that present situation? Only Jesus is Judge and it is best we respect that.

Paul the apostle understood something that perhaps most people do not know; that a believer can be delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor 5:5. And in the previous chapter he wrote that we should "judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of our hearts." 1 Cor 4:5.

## SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> – THE WAVE OFFERING - RESURRECTION

On Sunday the women came very early to the tomb and found it empty. As they approached there was an earthquake and a mighty Angel rolled away the stone and sat upon it in triumph. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow. The guards fell as if dead overwhelmed in fear. Matthew 28:1. They recovered and fled to their masters to report what had happened. They were paid to say that the disciples had stolen the body.

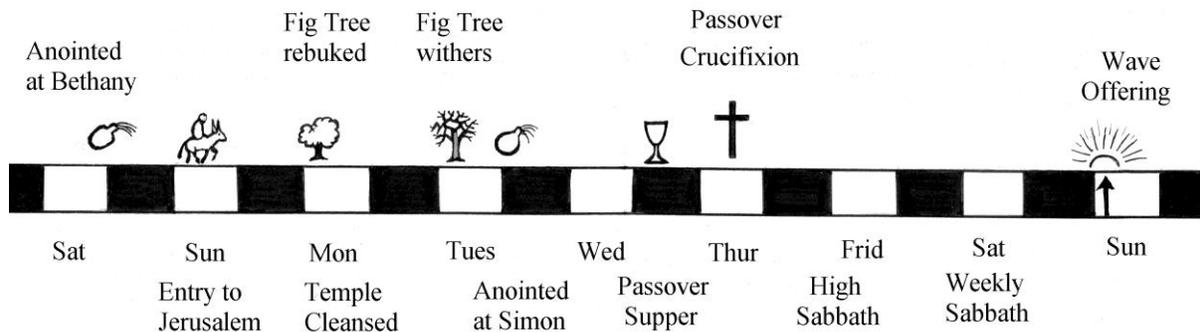
These were Jewish Temple Guards. They were in a panic and went to the rulers and told them what had happened. Once again the Chief Priests and leaders came up with some cash to solve the problem. They told them that they should say that they had fallen asleep and the disciples came and stole his body. They were not Roman guards for they would never have fallen asleep and surely would not have been bribed by the Jewish leaders.

The women ran and told the disciples and Peter and John ran to the tomb. The men did not see the angels and left but the women saw the angels who told them Jesus had risen. Then they met the Lord in Risen Glory. Later that day the Lord appeared to two disciples and then to the others.

Six days before Passover  
Jesus came to  
Bethany on Friday

Jesus ate Supper  
in exact middle of week

Jesus rose on  
Sunday



### THE LAST WEEK

Sun Morn - 3 ½ days - Wed Eve - 3 ½ days - Sun Morn  
From Sunday morning to Sunday morning

## The Tomb is Empty.



**HE HAS  
RISEN**

### Chapter 4 - RECONSTRUCTION OF EVENTS

*This follows as closely as possible the sequence of events as shown in scripture. Where there is an element of doubt I have written my own understanding of what happened. There may be some errors but I have taken all four Gospels into account to arrive at the sequence of events.*

The Master and his disciples had slept the night in Jericho at the well-to-do home of Zacchaeus the tax collector. It had been comfortable, even lavish but the Master wanted an early start so after breakfast they left on the road to Jerusalem. It was a tough climb and the road was notorious for bandits. He was determined not to delay and seemed focused on his goal to get the long walk over. It seemed he was on a mission and had set his face as a flint with one thing in mind, Jerusalem. It was six days before Passover and he wanted to be there in good time so he stepped out with long strides.

As they left Jericho a large throng followed him. Two blind men sat by the roadside and when they heard that Jesus was passing they cried out loudly "Have mercy on us O Lord, Son of David." The people told them to keep quiet but they cried even louder, "Have mercy on us O Lord, Son of David." The Lord paused for a moment in mid stride and listened, then, turning in their direction he called them to come to him. They responded immediately. One of them was well known; his name was Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus a local man in the vicinity. Bartimaeus leapt up and threw aside his outer garment. The other man clung to his friend and together they felt their way through the crowd which opened to let them through and closed behind them.

"*What do you want me to do?*" the Master asked in a firm encouraging voice. "Lord, that our eyes might be opened" came their immediate response. His face softened with compassion and he reached out and drew them closer. Taking each in turn he looked deep into their dull blind eyes and sighed deeply. Then he placed his extended fingers upon their eyes, his right hand on one and his left hand on the other and breathed out soft words of healing, "*Go your way, your faith has made you well.*" Instantly, both men could see. It was amazing to behold yet it seemed quite normal that this man from Galilee could do such a miracle.

The brilliance of new vision overawed the men who looked at the world in utter wonder and then fell at the Lord's feet with faces of radiant joy and gave thanks in worship. A broad smile broke upon the face of the Master who lifted them up and embraced them. They began to laugh in sheer ecstasy. After a short while he gave them a final hug and strode away with the disciples running to catch up with him. The whole event had only taken a few minutes as if he was on a more important mission.

The walk was long and tiring with very few moments to rest and when at last they entered Bethany the sun was beginning to sink towards the western horizon. They arrived at the home of the two sisters Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus had recently raised from the dead. What a welcome they received. They were just in time for the start of Sabbath and that evening they rested and caught up on news. They went to sleep early and the next day was spent in prayer and scripture reading. This was the last opportunity the Master would have to prepare for the week to come, the week that would demand all his strength, wisdom and courage, the week that would change the course of history. During the day there were moments in which he was able to share intimately with the family. He told them of what was about to transpire; that he would be arrested and put to death on the cross and rise again. They were able to understand his words for Lazarus had himself just been through death and resurrection. The

experience had changed him completely and he had shared with his sisters things that he had not shared with others.

At Saturday sunset the Sabbath ended and Mary and Martha prepared supper. It was a special meal for their beloved Master and his disciples. They set to the task with enthusiasm Martha in charge as usual and she served a delicious meal. Lazarus was there with the disciples. Everyone was relaxed when Mary did something unexpected. She had planned it in advance for she had understood what the Master had told her. She entered the room full of reclining men carrying a pound of rare spikenard perfume that was very expensive. She had purchased this with her hard earned savings and now she stooped and in respect knelt at the Master's feet. Silence fell as every eye turned upon her. She opened the perfume and slowly poured it upon his feet. Then she shook her hair loose and began to wipe his feet with her hair caressing them tenderly as she wept. The room was filled with fragrance. The Master made no move to stop her but gazed upon her with affection. Such a public show of intimate adoration was unheard of and bordered on impropriety. Every man was caught off guard and silently beheld the spectacle not knowing how to react.

Judas, thinking that the silence endorsed his own feelings of offence, spoke up; "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred Denarii and given to the poor?" His words of accusation cut the silence.

*"Leave her alone" replied the Master, "she has done this for my funeral. You always have the poor but I won't be with you very long."*

Supper was now over and a large number of people gathered outside for the news had spread that he was there and many wanted to see him as well as Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. Since his resurrection Lazarus had been keeping a low profile away from the curious and especially from the Pharisees who wanted to kill Jesus and possibly him too. However, these people were friends and neighbours and the evening was one of singing and rejoicing with the Lord.

The next day was Sunday the first day of the week and everyone was happy. Joyful news of the Master's whereabouts had travelled even into Jerusalem and when he and his disciples set out for the city people ran to tell friends. The Master sent two disciples ahead to the nearby village of Bethpage with instructions to find a young colt on which no one had ever sat. He told them exactly where it was and added that if anyone asked what they were doing they should reply "the Lord has need of it."

They found the colt and brought it to him and put their clothes on it and he

sat upon it. The animal was still young and unaccustomed to carrying weight but its little legs braced and it stood firm. Then with a few faltering steps it started off towards Jerusalem with people waving palm branches and spreading their clothes on the road. When he got to the descent of the Mount of Olives the people rejoiced and praised God for all the things they had seen, singing "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest." It was a scene of great joy and expectation.

Some Pharisees called to him from the crowd "Teacher, rebuke your disciples" but he answered them *"I tell you if they keep silent then even the stones will cry out."*

Then in the midst of it all he stopped at a vantage point overlooking the city and stepped down. He gazed long and earnestly and began to weep with deep sobs that grew with each heaving breath until his whole body racked with grief. "Oh" he cried "if only you had known the hour of your visitation and the things that bring you peace but now they are hidden from you. The days will come when you will be levelled to the ground and your children destroyed. You will not see me again until you cry out 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

He ascended from the valley and entered the temple courts through the Eastern Gate. Here he paused to gaze upon the scene. Quietly he walked past the stalls of money lenders and the merchants selling doves and other things. They were not just changing money but charging excessively. The place was crowded and filled with noise as they bartered their wares. It was now getting late so he left to return to Bethany. He was very quiet on the walk back and the disciples sensed his sombre mood and hung back from him. They had witnessed an extraordinary day and were trying to make sense of it. They knew something momentous was about to happen but were not sure just what.

That evening the Master sat alone. He had obtained a length of heavy leather thong and was intent on binding it to a strong and heavy handle. It took some time but his fingers worked skilfully. As he did he prayed within himself talking softly to his heavenly Father and recalling the time he had first come to the temple as a child just twelve years old. How he loved his Father and His Father's house. His devotion was woven into each knot as he made the whip. Finished and content he said a prayer and retired to sleep.

Early the next day he aroused his disciples and they set out on the road to Jerusalem a road they had trodden many times before. There was a Fig Tree that grew along the way and being hungry he made a detour to see if there

was any fruit on it. It was not yet the fig season but there should have been the early formation of small fruit knobs that are edible although not very palatable. Peasants and poor people often resorted to eating them but there were none for the tree was devoid of all fruit indicating that it would not bear any crop that season. He spoke to the tree with a few simple words; "Let no one eat from you ever again" strange words but full of meaning. Turning away he led the disciples on until they came to the gates of the temple. Once more he paused, said a prayer and then took from his bag the whip he had made and with a deep breath entered the courts walking with focused purpose towards the gathered people. A mighty authority had now come upon him and with great force he drove out those who bought and sold, overturned the tables of the money changers and threw away the seats of those who sold doves. He shouted out with a voice of thunder "It is written My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations but you have made it a den of thieves." People scattered in fright, coins went rolling and doves flapped away in panic. One man against a throng, with his whip flaying, he threw out the remaining money changers and took up a strategic place to control the court not allowing anyone to carry their wares through the temple area.

The priests who had watched the whole spectacle enquired "By what authority do you do this? He replied with another question, "*Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?*" They were unable to give an answer and so he said "*Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.*" News of this event spread quickly and people gathered in the temple to hear him teach. He was now daily in the temple teaching and healing and slept at Mount Olives. Luke 21:37, 22:39, John 7:53+8:1,2.

The following day as they came into the city the disciples saw that the Fig Tree had died. The whole tree had withered. It was now two days before Passover and pilgrims from all around the land were arriving for the Feast. They came from the furthest regions of Israel including Galilee in the far north. Some had travelled a long way even from the Diaspora overseas. The streets were beginning to fill with jostling crowds, young and old, families with babes in arms and elderly people all making pilgrimage. They came from north, south, east and west. Some led lambs or carried them. Many entered the temple precincts for prayer and thanksgiving. Soon it would be Passover.

If you had been there in the temple courts you would have seen a young man of noble bearing yet common appearance quietly surveyed the throngs. At his feet were children for they were drawn irresistibly to him and from time to time broke into song. Every now and then he was approached by people in ones and twos and sometimes in groups bringing infants or loved

ones so that he might pray for them which he did laying his strong beautiful hands upon them, sometimes holding the young ones to his chest in the cradle of his arms as he dedicated them to God. People with illness or disabilities came to him and he healed them all. Tenderly he would gaze upon each and share loving words of healing and salvation.

Standing back in disapproval were groups of priests who looked with disdain upon his actions. But the temple court was strangely quiet; there were no money changers or traders, no noisy barter and no one dared carry anything in and out of the temple area. Mark 11:16

Nothing was missed by the keen eyes of this man who at times quietly moved among the people. He saw everything even the old woman, an obvious widow left in poverty since the death of her husband. He watched as she threw two very small copper coins, almost worthless, into the temple treasury. He commented with approval about this to the small group of disciples who followed closely. Mark 12:41

He was a man of deep serenity and inner strength. An immeasurable calmness pervaded his being. He never rushed or moved in haste but with assurance in every stride and action. During these days he was there in the temple almost unnoticed yet his Presence was felt everywhere.

That night he and his disciples were invited to supper at the house of Simon the Leper who lived at Bethany. He was a notable man and Simon did everything to provide an impressive meal. All went well until a woman unexpectedly appeared with an alabaster bottle of pure spikenard of perfume which she broke and poured upon the head of the Master as he sat at the table. This once again caused much offence and some were indignant that it too was not sold and the money given to the poor. Giving of alms was considered an important thing among the Pharisees.

Once again the Master defended this woman saying she had come before hand to anoint his body for burial. "*What she has done*" he said "*will be declared in all the world as a memorial to her.*" He was anointed as King.

Early next day the Master was back in the temple despite several confrontations with the temple officials, Priests and Pharisees, who challenged his authority to teach and heal. It was on this day that Andrew and Philip, two of his disciples, came to him with a request from some pilgrims all the way from Greece. They wanted very much to see him. The Master sent back a message "*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*" He would soon lay down his life. Then he lifted his eyes upwards and prayed "*Father, glorify your name.*"

A thunder rolled through the temple courts carrying words of affirmation; *"I have glorified it and will glorify it again."* Silence fell as wonder gripped the people and they whispered to one another that an angel had spoken. The temple was filled with a sense of awesome Presence.

On this morning two of his disciples, Peter and John, were missing. Earlier he had given them some strange instructions; to go into the city and look for a man carrying a pitcher of water. By this time the streets of Jerusalem were packed with people and there was very little room to move. Many thousands had come to the Feast and all the accommodation in town was taken. Among the throng they must find this man and follow him, an impossible task one would think but actually such a man would have stood out from the crowd for men did not carry pitchers of water, this was a woman's task.

Sure enough Peter and John soon saw him, his hands uplifted with the pitcher balanced high upon his shoulder clearly visible above the crowd. They followed him to a substantial residence in the wealthy area of town and there they spoke to the master of the house saying "the Master Rabbi asks where is the guest room in which he can eat Passover with his disciples?" They were shown to a large upper room lavishly furnished and prepared. It seems "the Master" had made arrangements here long before. Peter and John and probably all the family that lived there together with the man spent the rest of the day getting everything ready for the evening meal. The house had to be thoroughly cleaned, all leaven had to be discarded and the feast prepared with herbs and unleavened bread.

That evening, just at twilight, the Master arrived with the rest of his disciples and they were shown upstairs. I believe it was Passover and the lamb was roasting and soon ready. The meal began. They reclined on the floor around central plates and reached out to take food as required. The Master declared *"I have looked forward to this hour with great longing and have wanted to eat this meal with you before I suffer for I will not eat again until what it stands for has taken place in God's Kingdom."* They were hungry and ate quickly according to the Old Testament instruction to eat in haste.

Supper being ended the Master now arose and taking off his garments he girded himself with a towel and took a bowl of water and one by one washed the feet of each disciple. He did so tenderly and lovingly, massaging and washing each one. The symbolism of this was not missed by the disciples for when it was his turn Peter protested strongly saying he needed to be washed all over not just his feet. The Master gently replied there was no need to do so if they had already bathed but there was one amongst them who was not clean. John 13:13:9. Having finished he took again his garments and sat

down. He then gave them instructions concerning what he had done; if he their Master had become a servant to them so they too should be servants to one another. It was a clear visual lesson that none of them could ever forget.

He then took some of the unleavened bread and gave thanks for it and broke it saying *"This is my body broken for you, take eat of it all of you."* He took a cup with wine still in it and said *"This is my blood that is shed for you, take and drink it."*

However, a sudden grief whelmed up within him and he declared with sorrow *"There is one among you that sit with me who will betray me."* It shocked the disciples who began to ask one another who it could be. Peter leaned over to John sitting right next to the Master and beckoned him to ask who it was. Quietly, so as to not let the others hear, the Master replied *"It is the one to whom I give this bread dipped in sauce"* and dipping it in the remains of the meal he handed it to Judas with the words *"What you are going to do, do quickly."* Handing such a morsel to another in a meal was considered an act of great favour. Judas was aghast and left immediately without eating the bread or drinking from the cup. The others had not noticed anything amiss and assumed he was sent on some errand. In the midst of all the disciples the Master had revealed his betrayer to his most trusted disciple but not to any of the others.

They passed around the bread and the cup, emblems of Covenant from the days Of King Melchizedek when the Most High established His Covenant with Abraham. Genesis 14:18. The Master explained the significance of this by saying *"This is my blood of the New Covenant shed for the remission of sins."* In this way he made Blood Covenant with his disciples.

Yet hardly had this been done than a dispute broke out amongst them as to who would be greatest in the Kingdom. The Master corrected them with words of admonition that they should learn to be servants. Then he spoke to Peter and warned him that the adversary would sift him as wheat but that he had prayed for him. Once again Peter contended with him, declaring his absolute devotion and loyalty but the Master warned him that before the rooster crowed that very night Peter would deny him three times.

Now he led them in song lifting his voice with them in chords of love and acclamation in the traditional psalms sung at Passover, Psalms 116 to 118.

*"I Love the Lord for He has heard my voice; I will call upon Him as long as I live... The cords of death surround me and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me, I found trouble and sorrow...Then I called upon the name of the Lord*

*and He heard me. I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord... Open to me the gates of righteousness and I will go through them...Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."*

These Psalms are prophetic in nature and portray the events that would soon take place. They reaffirm faith in God even in the midst of adversity. Now he was a Warrior going to war, the war of the worlds and the ages. He would fight it alone. The future of creation and salvation of every single person depended upon him. Could he win against such overwhelming forces? Exodus 15:3, Psalm 24:8. Isaiah 63 began its prophetic fulfilment that would culminate at his return; he went to the "winepress".

They stepped onto the street and were gone but not before a young lad had seen them leave and followed. He was the son in the host family and all through the meal he had watched and listened from behind a blanket draped across a lintel. He was captivated by the proceedings. Now in haste with no time to change into something more substantial he sneaked out the door clothed only in his night garment and followed them keeping just behind in the shadows. They walked through the streets and around the temple precincts and down the slope towards the valley of the Kidron but paused somewhere along the route and Jesus shared at length with the disciples. They moved on to the brook where Jesus paused again. King David had fled this way from the rebellion of Absalom and saved his life but Jesus was not going to flee or save his life. 2 Sam 15:23. The stream was now only a trickle after the wet season but he knelt and drank from it. Psalm 110:7. This would be his last drink before going out to battle for that was what he was doing; The Lord of Hosts, the Mighty God, Captain of the armies of God was going out to war but he was going alone. Exodus 15:3. This was a real war, the war of the ages and a war he had to win. Everything depended upon him. This valley is considered by many to be the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the "place of judgment" where the Lord himself took the final judgment.

They moved towards the garden of Gethsemane. The night was bright and the full moon bathed the entire city in glorious silver light. Arriving at the garden the Master called Peter, James and John while the others settled down near the entrance. Something awful had happened; a great heaviness of unbearable grief had come upon him and he was hardly able to walk or talk but he asked the three disciples to pray for him. He said "*I am crushed by sorrow and am at the point of death*" and he went a short way and fell with his face to the ground and began to travail in his spirit. A great darkness of horror had come upon him and he was overwhelmed with unspeakable grief. The disciples fell asleep but they caught snatches of his prayer: "*Abba, Father, if it is possible let this hour pass from me, if it is possible take this cup away from me. If not then let your will be done.*" Abba

was the most intimate expression of a trusting child for their father. Like Isaac of old Jesus was fully yielded to his Father.

He returned to the disciples and awoke them needing their prayers and support and then went back falling again prostrate upon the ground. The ancient Olive Trees crowded in on him blocking the light and plunging him deeper into darkness. Again the disciples fell asleep for they had full tummies and heavy eyelids. His earnest cries rose and fell in great sobs. He wept as he prayed. Once more he came to the disciples but they were asleep. Yet someone was watching. As the Master fell beneath the load too awful to bear there appeared an angel who strengthened him. This heavenly being of devotion wrapped his light around him giving him strength to pray with such depth that it caused huge drops of blood-like sweat to pour from his head and face. This was the last help he would get.

He returned to the disciples and finding them asleep awoke them with the words "*Arise let us be going, behold my betrayer is at hand.*" The battle had begun. On the opposite slope was a multitude of men coming down the pathway from the temple. The disciples could hear them coming and gathered around the Master waiting for his word to flee while there was still time to escape but it did not come. He stood tall and as immovable as a rock a look of calm resolution upon his face.

Judas stepped forth and embraced Jesus with a kiss.

"*Friend, do you betray me with a kiss?*" he asked. He was still his "*Friend*" even though his betrayal must have been like a dagger in his heart. He loved Judas. Then he stepped forward and asked the mob, "*Whom are you seeking?*" "*Jesus of Nazareth*" they replied. Jesus answered "*I am*" and they fell upon the ground. He was still the Lord in control and in order to protect his own he now commanded the guards to let the disciples leave. John 18:11. The account of Moses at the burning bush comes to mind. It was there that the Lord revealed Himself as the Great "I AM" and Moses took off his shoes and fell in worship. One day every knee of every person will bow before him and every tongue will confess he is Lord.

Peter, ever faithful but flustered, grabbed a sword to defend his Master but he was no swordsman just a fisherman and only succeeded in cutting off someone's ear. Immediately Jesus told him to put the sword away and that he was able to "call upon twelve legions of angels if need be." Almost without anyone noticing he did a miracle and restored the ear. Luke 22:50-53. This was the last miracle that Jesus would do in his earthly life. John gives us an amazing gem of information; the man's name was Malchus. Did he know the man? That was unlikely for he was a guard in the pay of the

leaders. The only reasonable answer is that subsequent to this they met again and he got to know him, this time as a friend and fellow believer. The miracle had changed his life.

*"Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?"* [John 18:11] Jesus asked and then challenged them; *"Am I leading a Rebellion that you have come out with swords and with clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you teaching in the temple courts and you did not arrest me. But the scriptures must be fulfilled."* Mark 14:48,49. Right from the start he made it plain that their conduct was unnecessary, he was not leading an insurrection, yet the scriptures had to be fulfilled this way. He now put aside all his power and yielded to his captors.

Then the disciples forsook him and fled. We are told one more astounding thing. There was a lad with them that no one had noticed before. Mark 14:51. He was clothed only in a linen cloth. This was a loose fitting linen night garment to sleep in. What was this youngster doing out in this dangerous place wearing a night garment? We are not told however, we can ask some questions and make some assumptions. Was he from the home where Jesus had eaten the Passover Meal? He must have been. He had listened to all that was said and done, peeping around a wall or from behind a curtain. When the men left and without time to change he sneaked out after them and discreetly followed them. When the Master was arrested he had tarried for the guards had grabbed him. He managed to wriggle free and fled naked leaving the loose fitting garment in their clutches. He witnessed all that happened and it was recorded in Mark's Gospel. Was it Mark?

They bound the Master and led him away around the perimeter of the Temple area, across the bridge that spanned the Tyropoeon Valley to the "upper city" where the High Priest and Priests who attended the Temple lived. This bridge was especially built to allow easy access for the priests from their upper class homes in the "upper city" to the Temple without having to go down through the streets below. They took him to Annas who was the senior High Priest and the highest religious official in Jerusalem and father in law to Caiaphas the current High Priest.

Annas questioned him as though he did not know who he was or what he taught.

The Master quietly replied, *"I have spoken openly to the world, I always taught in the synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."* In this way he swept aside the pretence and any attempt to imply that he had secretly planned a rebellion.

An official next to him struck him in the face, a full on facial blow even though he was bound and unable to defend himself. He staggered back losing his balance but managed to regain his footing.

He responded *"If I said something wrong testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth why did you strike me?"* When Jesus was mistreated he did not retaliate, when reviled he did not revile in return. 1 Peter 2:23.

Annas then sent him still bound to Caiaphas the ruling High Priest of the day. They may have lived in adjoining dwellings but if not then it was not far. The High Priest's house or "palace" was a two storey palatial building near the temple. They may have thrown Jesus into a "pit" under the house for safe keeping while they called together the council members and those who bore false witness against him. This has echoes of Genesis 24:20-25 for Joseph was taken by his brethren and thrown in a pit before being sold into slavery and almost certain death.

After a while they brought him up and the Council convened and questioned him calling witnesses. However, it appeared that the testimony of the witnesses did not agree and were not serious enough to demand a death penalty. In exasperation the High Priest stood up and challenged Jesus with a single question "Are you the Messiah the Son of the Blessed?" Mark 14:60-65.

He replied *"I am"*. This time no one fell to the floor, he had put aside his authority. He continued *"You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."* He quoted from the prophet Daniel 7: 13 scriptures that refer unmistakably only to the Messiah. His reply offended the High Priest who tore his clothes in a display of fury and condemned Jesus to death, for blasphemy, not insurrection.

Meanwhile Peter had got into the courtyard below. How did he get in? He came with another disciple who personally knew the High Priest. John 18:15. This disciple knew the High Priest and spoke to the damsel who kept the door and instructed her to let Peter in. Who was this disciple who had such high links and was so influential? We read of him only in the Gospel of John and some think it actually was John but I doubt very much whether he had a close personal link to the High Priest. However, John's Gospel also tells about Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. He had secretly come to the Master and later had spoken openly in his defence to the Council of which he was a member. John 7:50. Nicodemus knew the High Priest. Was it him who let Peter in and also witnessed first hand the trial and what was said and done? Someone in the Council must have seen and heard it all and told what happened. Peter sat in the courtyard with the servants and

warmed himself at the fire. A maid heard his accent and realised he was a Galilean and a follower of Jesus. Galileans had a strong accent that could not be disguised. When she challenged him he denied it. Soon afterwards another challenged him and again he denied knowing the Master but an hour after that yet another said confidently that he was a Galilean and was with Jesus for his "speech betrayed him" and it certainly did for this time Peter let fly with curses and swearing saying that he "knew not this man".

"And immediately while he yet spake the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter". It was not a look of accusation but of divine love for it broke Peter to his innermost being. The Master had foretold his betrayal even though Peter had said he would die for him. He went out and wept bitterly. Luke 22:60-62. This must have been in the early morning as dawn began.

Then the torment began; they blindfolded and struck him with the palms of their hands and taunted him. A full-blown slap from a powerful man is extremely harmful. They hit him again and again; "prophecy who has hit you" they taunted. The events so far had violated Council law which forbade sitting at night but now that it was light the council convened to pass judgment on him and they led him to Pontius Pilate the Official Roman Procurator in charge.

Pilate rose from what must have been a disturbed sleep and left his private quarters without seeing his wife. It was very early in the morning. The elders and crowd refused to enter the "judgment hall" for they did not want to be "defiled" or contaminated because that evening they would celebrate Passover. Pilate went out to the Jews and asked them what offence this man was charged with. This annoyed the Jewish leaders for they had already discussed the whole affair the night before and told Pilate of "Jesus of Nazareth" and the trouble he caused. They responded "if he were not an evil doer we would not have delivered him up to you." John 18:29-32. Pilate's initial response was that they should take Jesus and judge him themselves. He evidently wanted nothing to do with their squabbles. However, they refused Pilate's suggestion and demanded that because he claimed to be king he should be crucified. When Pilate heard the demand for the death penalty he went back inside and questioned this man so badly beaten. Already his eyes were bruised from the facial buffeting and he looked anything but a king. His very first question was "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied with a question *"Are you saying this on your own initiative or did others tell you about me?"*

Pilate responded "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priest delivered you to me; what have you done?" Pilate was not the one who brought the charges but the Jews. It was the High Priest himself who had visited Pilate the night before and had already brought the charge against him; that he claimed to be a king and was guilty of leading an insurrection.

Jesus affirmed that he was King but explained his Kingdom was not an earthly kingdom: *"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here."* With this he immediately counteracted the charge the Jews had brought against him. He had never advocated rebellion or civil disobedience and was no direct threat to Pilate. His kingdom was within hearts; it would change the world and bring reconciliation to all people in all nations by reconciling them first to God and then to one another.

Pilate said to him "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, *"You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into this world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My Voice."* Jesus had no self doubts and was not confused, he knew exactly who he was and what he was doing. He answered with respect and reaffirmed that he was both King and Truth. Pilate asked "What is truth?" but did not wait for an answer. However, the words of the King of the Jews profoundly shook him. He marvelled at Jesus' composure and that he never answered with ill will. He went outside and said emphatically "I find no fault in him at all."

At about this time something unexpected happened. Pilate received an urgent message from his wife. She was forthright and to the point; "Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things in a dream because of him." Matthew 27:19. He was shaken. He respected his wife for she was very discerning. Pilate realised the significance of this warning. He might not have been a follower of Jesus but Romans like many others believed that dreams came from a higher authority. It had come from above; God had warned him.

Claudia Procula was the grand daughter of none other than Augustus Caesar. Pilate had brought her with him for his ten day stay in Jerusalem over the Feast period. They had talked together the previous evening and during the night she had a dream that convinced her that he must have nothing to do with condemning "this just man." She sent an urgent message to her husband and it profoundly affected Pilate. The night before he had been willing to play along with the Jewish plan; now he was not. Now he did everything possible to isolate himself from the Jewish action and to try and

change their minds and get Jesus acquitted. He attempted to shift responsibility to Herod. Three times he acclaimed the innocence of Jesus. He even tried to substitute the real instigator of insurrection in the place of Jesus. It was all to no avail. As soon as Pilate knew that Jesus came from Galilee he sent him off to Herod hoping to be rid of him.

Herod Antipas was the youngest son of Herod the Great and was a puppet king in the pay of the Romans. He had his own palace a short way from Pilate. He was "exceedingly glad" to see Jesus for he had heard many things about him and wanted very much to see him perform a miracle. He asked Jesus many questions but Jesus never said a single word to Herod. This must be one of the most frightening verses in the whole Bible. The one person who had ultimate authority and could alone grant forgiveness and salvation, utterly refused to speak a single word to this man. He had nothing to say to Herod.

There was a cruel "game" that soldiers played with men who were condemned. It came from the pagan festivities of Saturn when the Romans elected a servant as a puppet king to rule over the festival and dressed him in a purple robe. They would pretend to honour him but it was all done in mocking scorn. Herod and his men of war "played" with Jesus in this way. They arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, laughed at him and mocked him and Herod sent him back to Pilate. Out of this encounter came a strange reconciliation however, between Pilate and Herod. After a long dispute these mutual dealings with Jesus now united them.

It was the custom at that time for Rome to release a prisoner as a concession of good will to the Jews. Pilate made a bad mistake. He offered to bargain with them; he would release Jesus in the place of a man called Barabbas, they had to choose. Barabbas, "son of a father", was a rebel and had committed murder and insurrection. For some reason Pilate thought that they would see reason, after all there was no comparison between the two men; one was authentic, integral, regal, and the other was a murderer and reprobate. They chose the reprobate. It flawed Pilate. Even he knew it was wrong. One was the son of a father of insurrection the other was the Son of God and the Resurrection.

Pilate had sentenced people to death before but this time he was reluctant. He tried to reason some more but the crowd was stirred up by their leaders and clambered for Jesus to be crucified. Three times Pilate pleaded with the crowd to see reason but they were now in the pay of the Council. The leaders then said "We have a law and by our law he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God". When Pilate heard that "he was even more afraid". He questioned Jesus again who spoke clearly and with respect; "You

*have no power over me except it is given from above.*" John 19:11. Nothing could happen to Jesus outside the will of God. Pilate now sought again to release him but he could not persuade the crowd. These were not the same people who had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem the Sunday before.

Pilate ordered a bowl of water and publicly washed his hands saying that he refused to take responsibility for the death of Jesus. For a Roman Governor to do this was unheard of. He brought out Barabbas and released him to the crowd. He sent Jesus away to be scourged. He still hoped that this would appease them for no one was both scourged and also crucified. Scourging was itself a horror that often killed the person who never recovered.

The soldiers led him away to the "Praetorium hall" and there the whole military contingent gathered. Mark 15:16. Jesus was scourged. John 19:1. Scourging is a horrific act. The Romans used a whip with several lashes all in one. At the end of each lash was a piece of bone or metal. They could give up to 39 whippings in a scourging. The whip tore open the victim's body from the top of his back right down to his buttocks and thighs. Not only that but the lashes wrapped around the body to the sides. This was described in the book of Isaiah 50:6 and 52:14 and Psalm 129:3. They also plucked handfuls of beard from his face. "His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness..."

Each time the whip tore his flesh open Jesus silently prayed between his cries of agony. Not a single word of condemnation escaped his lips. All his thoughts were directed in concentrated love towards those who flogged him and those who betrayed and condemned him. That is why we are healed by his stripes; as his blood flowed only love and forgiveness oozed out of him.

Then they clothed him again in a purple robe. One of the soldiers using his thick leather gloves broke off branches from a thorn tree and wove them together into a crude crown of thorns and thrust it onto his head. They began to play the cruel mocking game in terrible earnest, taunting him and subjecting him to great violence, beating him on the head, spitting on him and bowing before him. They took advantage of his weakness and abused him the more and cried out "Hail, King of the Jews". This was a derogative title. Jews were despised by the Romans and considered with their religious beliefs to be a low caste and peculiar people. The Son of God had become not only a man but a Jew, despised and rejected by his own people and the Romans. He was ridiculed, scorned, mocked, abused and tortured.

Pilate sought to release him one more time and brought him forth dressed in the purple robe and crowned with thorns. Thorns are symbols of sin and the curse. (Genesis 3:17-19) Pilate cried out "Behold the man". John 19:5. They

cried "Away with him." He asked "Shall I crucify your King?" "We have no king but Caesar," they shouted back. It was a last appeal for compassion and fairness but the crowd showed no pity and cried the more saying "If you let this man go you are not Caesar's friend. Whosoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." That did it for Pilate, now the choice had been thrown back at him and he had to choose between Caesar and Jesus. He chose Caesar. He brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat called the Pavement and in Hebrew Gabbatha. At no time did the Jewish rulers enter Pilate's Judgment residence or public Hall. He handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified. It had started at about 6am in the morning and had lasted nearly three hours. Mark 15:25, John 19:6.

They took the purple robe off him, dressed him in his own clothes and led him away. With him were two other condemned men, both rebels and sentenced for treason. They were probably part of the rebellion led by Barabbas. Jesus, who never led an insurrection, was traded for the very person who had. The three men were led away to the place of death, Golgotha.

## **THE ROAD TO GOLGOTHA**

They led Jesus away to a place called Golgotha.

A huge crowd had gathered as Jesus was led out of Jerusalem. With respect for all those believers who walk the Via Dolorosa of today I do not think this was the route they took Jesus. They led him north not west to a small knoll outside the city walls. The soldiers guarded the three condemned men from any hope of escape or rescue, not that Jesus looked for either. At first he carried the upper beam of the cross but in his terrible physical state he could not go far and fell unable to rise. The soldiers grabbed a strong looking man from the crowd and compelled him to carry the beam. It was Simon from Cyrene. Mark 15:21. He took up the cross of Jesus and carried it for the King of Glory. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus so evidently after this the disciples got to know him and his family. This experience changed his life for ever for he became a follower of Jesus; such an event could not fail to do so. How many others in the crowd were irrevocably changed that day?

We are told of one more incident. A large number of women followed. They wailed in dreadful sorrow at what they beheld. They were followers of Jesus. We do not know their names but God does. News of the arrest of Jesus had travelled fast and they had gathered in the vicinity of the trial. When they saw their beloved, beaten, bloodied Master step out the people gasped in horror. They could not be consoled and followed him wailing. Along the way Jesus had opportunity to pause and he turned to them with words that are

some of the most awful one can hear. He told them not to sorrow because of what had happened to him for much worse was coming.

*"Daughters of Jerusalem" Jesus said "weep not for me but for yourselves and your children for if they do this when the tree is green what will they do when it is dry."*

This term, "Daughters of Jerusalem," was one of love and endearment and comes from the Song of Solomon. He loved and respected them and wanted them to be safe. They needed to take the precautions necessary to save themselves and their children from the things that were to befall that very generation. Residents of Jerusalem were to experience the most horrendous suffering when the city was destroyed in AD 70. A million people perished in this holocaust and thousands were led away as slaves. It was the start of the second great Diaspora. History records that the Christians had already fled.

Golgotha was a small knoll just beyond the northern walls. It was the highest spot around the city and was in fact the original summit of Mount Moriah. This was the very mountain where long ago Abraham had brought his son Isaac to sacrifice. Genesis 22:1-18. It was here that God "cut the covenant" with Abraham. A cliff face had been formed there during the days of the Macabees when, in order to fortify the city, the defenders cut the ground away. In doing so a strange apparition had formed; it looked like a human skull embedded in the exposed rocks. It can still be seen today. From this hillock one can lookdown upon the temple and the city. It was here that they crucified Jesus just outside the city walls at the junction of the northern roads where many people passed as they came into Jerusalem. Today it is still a busy crossroads, a bus station, yet Golgotha itself still has no buildings on its top just some graves.

No one knows whether the crucifixion was at the base or at the top. It may have been at the top for I believe this was the likely place that Abraham brought Isaac, a preview of the crucifixion. The base of the hill was not cut at the time of Abraham who was directed to an *exact* place that the Lord showed him on Mount Moriah on which the temple later stood. If one follows the contours of this ridge one arrives at Golgotha. The traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not on this ridge but separated by the Tyropoeon Valley. That valley is today filled with the rubble of Jerusalem's numerous destructions but at that time it still existed. I believe Jesus died at the exact place Abraham offered Isaac for that was an echo or preview of this final fulfilment; the summit of Mount Moriah – the Rock Golgotha, the place of the skull. He said he would be lifted up for all to see and this is the highest spot in all Jerusalem. From there he could have been seen even from the temple. People coming to town from all directions would have seen him.

The soldiers gave him vinegar to drink mingled with myrrh. It was probably a callous attempt to help relieve the suffering but Jesus refused it. Matthew 27:34. He would not blot out any pain of the sacrifice but would pay the price in full. Jesus had said just the day before *"If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto myself."* Now they stripped him; laid him down, twisted his hands over and behind the cross beam and drove huge nails through the palms. Once secured, they lifted him up on the beam and placed it in a groove to support it. Then his feet were secured by nails driven through the arches. I will not go into details about the affects crucifixion has on its victim. It is so horrendous it is beyond belief. There is no detailed description in the New Testament of the actual crucifixion but we know from historical writings just how horrendous crucifixion is.

During the entire crucifixion he never complained despite his awful groans of agony. His body had already endured excessive pain and now the agony hit him in continuous waves. Nevertheless, he forced out the words, *"Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do."* Only a few heard these words for they were not directed towards the people but towards his Father; a prayer for the people, not to them. However, the centurion in charge paused and looked up in wonder. Never had he heard such a reaction in the many executions he had seen. Condemned men blasphemed, swore and threatened - or begged and pleaded; no one ever prayed for his executioners.

There are some who say that these words were uttered only for the soldiers who did the actual deed and excluded all others. That is not so, for all though the words were to profoundly influence both the centurion and one of the thieves they were universal and all inclusive; Jesus taught forgiveness and gave it to all his enemies. When tested beyond all measure he lived up to his own teaching and did not pass a single word of judgment or hate.

It was customary for the soldiers to take the spoil so they divided his garments among themselves in four parts, to every soldier a part. But his coat was seamless, woven from top to bottom and so as not to rend it they cast dice for it "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." Psalm 22:18.

Who weaved this beautiful garment for him? Evidently it was done with deep

devotion and was symbolic of his spotless perfect life woven without seam. This was the garment he had taken off to wash the feet of the disciples. This was the garment that the women with an issue of blood had touched and been instantly healed. Luke 8:43. Now it was taken by the lucky lottery winner. They had an earthly relic but missed the "Fountain of eternal Life".

Pilate had written a sign and instructed it should be placed above Jesus. It said "JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS" and was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Evidently he wanted the whole world to know who Jesus was. The Pharisees took offence and asked Pilate to change it but he replied "What I have written I have written." Pilate knew what he meant and was not going to relent; in his mind Jesus was the King he claimed to be and was innocent and should not have been crucified.

The soldiers were preoccupied with their loot and a small group of women accompanied by a man cautiously edged towards the cross. Jesus was in great pain and covered in blood with dark bruises, his face swollen and raw where his beard had been pulled out and his scalp was oozing blood. His body was covered with ragged wounds. It was John his beloved disciple who was the only male disciple to approach the cross although Peter and maybe others watched from afar. 1 Peter 5:1. Among the women was Mary his mother and the other Mary wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. There were other women there; Salome the mother of John and Joanne the wife of Chuza from the household of Herod. It was the three Marys who approached close to the cross. To do so was heart rendering. Jesus looked at his mother and said in a broken stuttering voice, "*Woman, behold your son.*" Then he turned his eyes to John and said "*Behold your mother.*" He never called Mary "mother" but woman; there was a new relationship between them. He was her Saviour dying for her. She must let go of him. He bequeathed her to John. Jesus had absolute confidence that John would take good care of her, she was in good hands. By entrusting her to John he revealed the true relationship we all should have. There are people in our lives who are entrusted to us.

John put his arms around Mary and gently supported her. There was nothing they could do and she was near to collapse but refused to leave the side of her son. The pain that pierced her own heart was like a sword to the very core of her being. Luke 2:35. One of the condemned thieves saw and heard the tender words of Jesus and it set him off in a string of blasphemy and vile utterances directed to the authorities and to Jesus himself upon whom he vented all his hatred. Once he had begun this burst of obscenity he could not stop and every vile word gushed out like a broken sewer until his anger subsided and his voice and energy waned. When it ended his companion rebuked him and defended Jesus for he had observed the manner in which

Jesus conducted himself and his gracious words and humble bearing even in the midst of such dreadful torture. Even though this man was also in great pain he was drawn towards Jesus.

Looking towards Jesus he cried out "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Immediately Jesus responded "*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*" He had no doubts about the outcome of his life or that he had authority over all men and women. There were no buts or ifs and no reluctance to grant forgiveness to the thief. All who are drawn to Him will be welcomed no matter their past; he proved it at the cross.

This man saw and understood that "Grace and truth come through Jesus Christ." He acknowledged his own sin, recognised Jesus as King and asked for pardon. The first man to believe in Jesus at the cross was a thief!

It was now that the shadow of death fell across the entire earth. I do not believe this was a local event; the sun went dark. The first three hours had been the period when Jesus was surrounded by the callous hate and unbelief of the worst of humanity. Small crowds of people took turns to shout ridicule and taunts at him. The next three hours was the time when all the demons of darkness, the vile rulers of evil in the spirit realms massed against him. He had been beaten by the temple guards, scourged by the Romans and crucified. Now storms of accusation relentlessly lashed him, great waves of filth from the sins he carried buffeted him. The heavens turned to brass and the face of the Father was withdrawn. He was alone, utterly alone, yet the Father was with him. John 8:16,29, 16:32. This was the full "Horror of Darkness" that Abraham had glimpsed long before when God cut the Covenant with him. Genesis 15:12.

In the thick darkness he cried "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" This was the cry of a broken man. It is the cry that we all cry at times, "Why?" There are things that seem to have no meaning, the deep pains and disasters of life that we cannot explain and have no answers for; this was Jesus' cry for he took our sins and weaknesses. [Philippians 2:7-9 2 Corinthians 13:4.]

I believe it was more than a cry but a prayer; it was a declaration of total trust and eventual deliverance for it is the opening lines of Psalm 22 which Jesus would have known by heart. David uttered it centuries before but David only echoed the words of Jesus, the Word of God, nailed to the cross. They were Jesus' words given to David and inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were not words of despair or doubt but a declaration and prayer. This Psalm

declares his ultimate triumph over all adversity and opposition and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The opening words are not what they seem. God never forsook Jesus but Jesus was a man subject to all the feelings of pain and rejection. The Hebrew word means more than being forsaken and includes; "commit self, fortify, help, relieve" as well as "refuse, forsake". The Peshitta Bible translated from the ancient Aramaic reads "*My God My God why hast thou let me live?*" Whatever the full meaning of the cry of Jesus it was not meant as an accusation but as a declaration of what God would do through his suffering which was foretold in this Psalm in precise detail.

God the Father was never angry with His Son. He did not pour His wrath upon Jesus. Isaiah tells us that "it pleased the Father to bruise him" and "the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hands." Isaiah 53:10-12. Everything Jesus did was according to the will of God; "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Jesus willingly submitted himself as a sacrifice for the whole world which would break the power of sin and the power of death. "Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Eph 5:2. The voice from heaven that came when Jesus was baptised and also at the Mount of Transfiguration said; "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Everything Jesus did pleased his Father. John 8:29. God was glorified in him. John 12:28. God loved Jesus, Satan hated him. God was never angry with Jesus but with Satan the prince of wickedness. It was not Jesus' suffering that pleased the Father but the consequences of it; redemption for mankind.

The religious Pharisees thought he was crying out to Elijah and railed upon him; "lets see if Elijah will help him, he says he is Messiah, the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross." Matthew 27:42.

What did Jesus do at the cross? He defeated the powers of darkness for it was Satan the "prince of this world" who was judged at the cross. John 12:31. Satan threw all of his hatred and filth at Jesus as he hung alone. None of it stuck to Jesus for there was nothing of Satan in him. John 14:30. He never responded in any way. He never reacted except in love and forgiveness. By dying Jesus destroyed the power of death, fulfilled the demands of the law, removed the curse and paid our ransom in full. Satan was disarmed. If the Father's face turned away from Jesus on the cross it was not in anger but in sorrow and love. Jesus did not "become sin" on the cross but he bore the sins of the whole world and nailed them to the cross and because he was righteousness he left them there. It was sin that was judged, all the sins of the world including yours and mine. His blood covers them, they are destroyed forever and every single person who ever lives will bow before him and all who call upon him will be saved. Psalm 22:29.

After a long time Jesus cried again, a loud cry of triumph "*It is finished*". This was the final stanza of Psalm 22:31. The psalm ends with an exclamation of God's purposes being fulfilled. The Amplified Bible reads; "They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born – that He has done it - it is finished! He did not have enough strength to utter the full Psalm but he knew the words by heart and I believe continued to pray within himself quietly in his spirit. When he came to the final sentence he shouted out in triumph. He had overcome everything and there was no more that the powers of darkness either human or spiritual could do to him. This was the moment of fulfilment. He had accomplished all that the law demanded, finished his work, defeated the power of sin and Satan and fulfilled the Promise. The Lord himself "Cut the Covenant." Genesis 2:1, Dan9:24.

He had endured great suffering. Fluid had collected in his chest around his heart making it almost impossible to breath. His whole body and every nerve screamed with excruciating pain. He spoke; "*I thirst*". This was an expression of terrible need; the most basic necessity for life is water. One of the guards ran and took a sponge and soaked up some vinegar and gave it to him to drink. It was the last cruel act and Jesus refused it. It fulfilled the prophetic scriptures. Psalm 69:20,21.

At last he spoke again to his beloved Father in tender affirmation "*Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*". He was speaking from Psalm 31:5. It is a beautiful Psalm conveying absolute trust in the midst of adversity. This was the prayer of a man who had taken the iniquities of all mankind upon himself and a declaration of God's unfailing goodness and salvation. This was the beloved Son committing himself into the care of the beloved Father. Jesus totally entrusted himself to his Father. The time was right, the time for the slaying of the Passover Lamb, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

There was a mighty earthquake and the veil of the temple was rent in two at the moment of the afternoon Passover sacrifice just as Jesus died. As the priests performed the sacrifice the ground shook, the curtain swayed and then split from top to bottom revealing the Holy Place. After the initial tremor people emerged from where they had fled; some had flung themselves on the ground, others had clung to walls. The whole city was in shock. No one was injured but a terror fell upon the people. When the priests saw the inner sanctuary they were afraid and called an emergency meeting. Repairs would have to be made to close the Holy Place for it was not permitted for people to gaze within it or enter it. The Veil would have to be replaced.

At Golgotha there was awe bordering on terror as people cried aghast at the manner in which Jesus died and the simultaneous earthquake. The soldiers

stood motionless, the sky was dark and gloomy. A sense of foreboding fell. The Roman centurion who had continually watched Jesus cried out "Surely this was the Son of God." Mark 15:39.

This centurion had seen many men die and witnessed many executions so what was so different about this one that made him shout such an acclamation? There was something so awesome about Jesus' death that this battle hardened soldier cried aloud for all to hear his amazing declaration. He had seen beyond the physical, beyond the flesh and blood to the hidden person who Jesus really was. Philippians 2:5-13 had come to pass; in appearance he was a man, in reality he was the Son of God.

The darkness began to slowly lift but the sun was getting low and the shadows longer. Darkness had blanketed the scene for three hours and a deathly gloom had settled upon the planet. As Jesus died not only was he surrounded by hateful sinners but also the full forces of demonic armies. He had suffered the malicious taunting and mocking of his fellow country men and rulers of the world and withstood all the dark spiritual powers of the universe. If the people there could have had their spiritual eyes opened they would have seen the skies full of dark spiritual powers. All the heavenly rebels surrounded him and every dissident in creation came against him. Psalm 22:12,13; 118:10. This was their hour and Jesus was lashed with everything they could muster. The physical beatings and lashing were only shadows of the spiritual. He was tested to the full measure yet there was no darkness found in him. John 14:30. Wave upon wave of fallen angelic rulers battered and smashed him as he hung alone and defenceless to their merciless, ruthless pounding. Yet the "Everlasting Rock" stood firm. Deut. 32:4. When the last wave had foamed out its shame and filth he was triumphant. Nailed to the cross he took on the entire power of Satan and was victorious. As he yielded his spirit and sank to the dark realms of the nether world beneath, the earth quaked and the rocks rent.

The leaders were concerned that Jesus and the thieves should not be left hanging on the cross during the days of the Feast. It was Roman custom to leave people to suffer and die a lingering death. The Council leaders could not allow this for it would "contaminate" the Feast Day so they went back to Pilate and besought him to send soldiers to break their legs. Once this is done the victims die very quickly. So Pilate sent soldiers and the deed was done on the two thieves, a ghastly act of brutality. When they came to Jesus they found he was already dead. Nevertheless, to be certain a soldier plunged a spear deep into his chest cavity right into his heart and out burst a huge gush of blood and water. John 19:37, Exodus 17:6.

Physicians explain that under extreme stress fluid can collect around the

heart forming a sack of liquid plasma. This is literally when someone suffers from a "broken heart".

John was witness of this, as well as a number of the women who had refused to leave the side of Jesus. John described it as another fulfilment of prophecy. "Not one bone of his bones shall be broken" and "they shall look on him whom they *pierced*." The Rock that was cleft as the Fountain of Life.

There was another compelling reason why they could not leave Jesus hanging on the tree. Deuteronomy 21:22,23; "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death and he is put to death and you hang him upon a tree, his body shall not remain overnight upon the tree but you shall surely bury him that day so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance..."

The Jews never used crucifixion but in the Old Testament capital punishment was allowed for certain deeds. If so, the body was not to be left hanging but must be shown respect and dignity and buried; also to prevent disease in the land. Hanging was reserved for those who were accursed by God, in other words for extreme sin. Jesus carried the curse for us; he took our guilt and sin and died in our place. Crowned with thorns and hanging on the cross he "redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us." Gal 3:13.

It was getting late and a man now appeared on the scene, Joseph of Arimathaea. John 19:38. Evidently the Council did not have a unanimous decision when they sentenced Jesus to death for Joseph was a notable member of the Council and described as a "good man and just". We are told that "he did not consent to the death of Jesus." Summoning all his courage he went to Pilate not to ask that Jesus be killed but to beg for his body so that it could be properly buried before the High Sabbath began at sunset. Mark 15:42, John 19:38. Pilate was astonished that Jesus was already dead and called the centurion and after confirming Jesus' death gave Joseph permission to remove the body.

There is a saying amongst unbelievers that Jesus did not die on the cross but swooned and later recovered in the tomb. These events convincingly declare his death. Not only was he beaten, scourged, crucified and pierced right into his heart but the Roman centurion confirmed he was dead. If he had been mistaken it would have cost him his own life. The centurion's word was better than a coroner's death certificate. More to the point, could anyone have survived these fatal wounds? If Jesus had then he certainly was not a mere mortal. He was however, destined to die and then rise again.

Joseph brought a linen cloth and Nicodemus too brought a large amount of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes about 100 pounds, and together they took down the body. The women had been at the cross all this time; Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, the other Mary wife of Cleophas and Salome the mother of John. These women were very close to Mary the mother of Jesus who now probably collapsed and needed to be taken away. I believe that John and Salome took Mary from the brutal scene to somewhere safe. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained and were close at hand to help.

Joseph was a man of wealth for near that place there was a garden and he owned the tomb there. Together the two men carried the body to the tomb. It was hewn from solid rock and had never been used. They wrapped the lined around the body and bound it with strips and laid it in the tomb and then spread the spices over and around it. They did so in haste as it was now late. Nothing of the Passover Lamb could be left. Exodus 12:10,11. Then they rolled the stone of the sepulchre on to the door. This was an exceedingly heavy stone that was made to fit in a groove. Once in place it would be extremely difficult to roll it back out again.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary watched all this and the men left them sitting there by the sepulchre. How long they sat we are not told but they were utterly inconsolable and devastated. It must have been a long, terrible night.

For the disciples there was nothing but grief and utter despair. In a single day all their hopes and beliefs had been demolished. Their lives had ended when Jesus died. They were also afraid that the leaders were going to come and arrest them too. Peter especially was shattered. He felt dead. He had nothing left inside.

It was the women who devised a plan. They decided to go to the tomb first thing on Sunday and embalm the body properly. This was the usual custom and was done *after* three days for then the body would need attention. Having made the decision they gathered all the money they could and bought sweet spices. They left early on Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and Salome and Joanna and maybe others made their way down the deserted pathways to the garden tomb. They talked in hushed tones about who could roll the stone away. Suddenly without warning another earthquake shook the entire vicinity. The ground trembled and a mighty crash rumbled across the land. We are not told the exact time that Jesus rose but the earth shook and the rocks rent as the Eternal Son of God tore the chains of death apart. Matt 27:51, 28:2

A mighty Angel rolled away the stone and sat upon it in triumph. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow. The guards fell as if dead overwhelmed in fear. Matthew 28:1. They recovered and fled to their masters to report what had happened. They were paid to say that the disciples had stolen the body.

Holding on to each other and with great trepidation the women approached the tomb. The first soft rays of sunlight were just beginning to touch the earth. Something had happened, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was open. When the women arrived the angel was not visible but the tomb was empty. The guards had fled but when the women went inside to their amazement they found a "young man" clothed in white. Who was this? Was he an angel or was he someone who had sat vigil at the tomb?

The guards at the tomb were Jewish Temple Guards. They were in panic and went to their rulers and told them what had happened. Once again the Chief Priests and leaders came up with some cash to solve the problem. They told them that they should say that they had fallen asleep and the disciples came and stole his body. They were not Roman guards for they would never have fallen asleep and would not have been bribed by the Jewish leaders.

He said to the frightened women "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here for he is risen as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay." The tomb had been opened not to let the Lord out but to let the women in. Now two angels had appeared and they spoke to the women saying "go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead."

The women rushed away full of fear and joy. Mary was younger than the others and rushed ahead. She found the disciples and told them the news but to them "it was idle tales and they believed them not." Luke 24:9-12. However, Peter and John ran to the sepulchre and John got there first and stooped to look in and saw the linen clothes lying empty but he did not go in. Peter pushed past him and entered the tomb and saw the clothes and the napkin that was wrapped around his head lying folded in another place. Then John also entered and we are told they believed. John 20:1-10. However, the disciples left without seeing the angels or the Lord.

Mary had by this time returned and was on her own for a while. She could not leave without knowing what had happened for she still had lingering

doubts that someone had taken the body. She was weeping and looked again into the tomb and saw two angels. They talked briefly and turning away she saw a man who she supposed was the gardener. In despair she asked "Sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." What a sorrowful request. All she wanted was to find her Lord and she would take him away. Anybody who has lost a loved one will know how she felt. There is no grief as bad as that of death except the added sorrow of not knowing where the body is.

*"Mary, Mary"* was all Jesus said and knowing the voice of her beloved shepherd Mary replied "Rabboni" and fell at his feet in relief, joy, adoration and worship. Rabboni means "Great One". Jesus said, *"Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father but go to my brethren and say unto them I ascend unto my Father and your Father and to my God to your God"*.

These words indicate that he had only very recently risen for he had not yet ascended. Later that same day he met with the disciples and encouraged them to touch and hold him. So it seems that shortly after meeting with Mary he ascended to the Father.

The first person Jesus appeared to in his risen glory was a woman who at one time was considered the very worst of society. But Jesus had found her and changed her life. Jesus did not appear first to his men disciples but to this woman. Why was that? I believe it was because these women had searched for him early in the morning. They were the ones who had tarried at the tomb and seen the angels whereas the men had not even seen them even though they were right there. It was Mary who was unwilling to leave without finding the Lord. She could not live without him dead or alive. She had seen him first because of her great devotion.

Was there also another reason? Women were generally overlooked in the society of the day and even considered of lesser value. Men were the leaders, women followed. There was the age-long accusation derived from wrong thinking about the Genesis account of the fall of mankind, that it was somehow the fault of the woman; she was to blame for sin. But the promise God gave was that the "seed" of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. It was fitting therefore that Jesus appeared first to the women.

But there was another to whom Jesus appeared and that was Peter. In fact the messenger in the empty tomb especially mentioned Peter by name when he instructed the women to go and tell the disciples that Jesus had risen. When exactly Jesus appeared to Peter we are not told but it was before he appeared to all the disciples later that evening. Luke 24:34. The Lord lovingly restored Peter to himself. Later they would talk again when they had

breakfast on the shore of Galilee. John 21.

Jesus next appeared to two disciples as they walked from Jerusalem down the long winding road to Emmaus. They were despondent and heavy hearted, sad, discouraged, deflated and without hope. He joined them as they walked and asked why they were so sad. The two responded with some amazement that he had not heard about what had happened in Jerusalem during the Feast. "Are you a stranger in Jerusalem that you have not heard?" they asked.

The things that happened had become well known to everyone. The crucifixion of Jesus and the earthquakes and other events that followed had shaken the entire city. Not only that but many people reported seeing deceased loved ones who had appeared to them. Matthew 27:52,53. It was to change the course of history. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus shaped history. The lives of millions of people both men and women were sacrificed to spread that news and the faith of millions grew to a force that directed nations and mankind for two thousand years. There is not a generation or nation on earth that has not been influenced by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Yes, there have been imposters and fanatics who have misappropriated the teaching of Jesus but there have been many others who changed society for good. They faced lions and gladiators and took the good news of God's love and salvation to the ends of the world. They built hospitals, abolished slavery, campaigned for equality, uplifted women, brought reforms and laid down their lives for others. It has been a long hard journey and you and I have benefited from it.

This person the two disciples considered a stranger talked to them as they walked and he recalled all the prophecies concerning the Messiah. When they got to Emmaus they invited him into their home. They made him supper and he took bread and broke it and their eyes were suddenly opened – it was Jesus, they had not recognised him. Had they been hallucinating in their deep sorrow? Their encounter was so real that they rushed all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples who were shut up there for fear of arrest. This was a long uphill journey. When they got there Jesus appeared again. Were they hallucinating again? No, the Lord had risen.

The disciples were shocked and awed by his appearance.

## **APPEARANCES OVER 40 DAYS**

There are ten appearances of Jesus that we know of, how many more that we have not been told about? We know that he appeared to his half brother

James. Surely he would not have left his mother comfortless. Mary Magdalene and the other women were caring for her. After seeing Jesus Mary Magdalene must have rushed to tell Mary his mother. Did Jesus also appear to her? We are not told everything.

He appeared ten times that we know of – **1 Corinthians 15, Acts 1:3**

1. To Mary Magdalene and the other women with her.
2. To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus one of whom was Cleophas.
3. To Peter.
4. To the ten disciples, Thomas being absent.
5. To Thomas and the other disciples.
6. To seven disciples on the shore of Galilee.
7. To those who came to the "Mountain in Galilee". Was this when there were 500 people in one place?
8. To James his half brother, part of his own family. We are not told when he appeared to him. Did he also appear to other members of his family? If he appeared to his half brother surely he appeared to his mother. She was as much a believer as the rest of the disciples. She probably needed comfort more than any of them. James was later to become the leader of the church in Jerusalem and eventually was martyred. He must have had a significant encounter with Jesus after the resurrection.
9. Jesus appeared to all the apostles including Mathias and Joseph Barsabas. Acts 1: 23.
10. He assembled with them and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the Holy Spirit. Then he led them out as far as Bethany near Mount of Olives, blessed them and departed. (Luke 24:50)

How many more did he appear to? Did he appear to Mary, Martha and Lazarus his beloved friends? They are notably missing from the crucifixion account. That they knew he was going to die is evident from the events earlier in the week. Did Jesus specifically tell them to stay away from Jerusalem? When Jesus ascended why did he lead his disciples to Bethany? This was where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Were they there to witness his departure? Luke 24:50.

But there were others that we know of: when Stephen, the first Martyr, was stoned "heaven opened" and he saw Jesus in Glory; Paul on the road to Damascus saw the Lord and was commissioned by him.

We are told that by many *infallible proofs* he showed himself to them over a period of 40 days; just as he had been tempted by Satan for 40 days so now he triumphed over him for 40 days. We are not told everything he did or to whom he appeared but he ate and drank with them. The Amplified Bible reads "While being in their company and eating with them"; there is the thought that he "lodged" with them eating daily in their presence. [Acts 1:4, 10:40,41] As Peter said, "He went in and out among us." Acts 1:21. Jesus appeared only to people who believed in him. He did not appear to Pontius Pilate, or Herod or even the High Priest. Only to those who loved him.

This 40 days was a time of his personal revealing to his disciples and to no one else. It was intimate and loving interaction and instruction in which he dealt with issues in their lives and gave them instructions for the future. We see this in the way he gently restored Peter and gave him assurance that he would remain true even unto death. It is seen in the way he strongly exhorted Thomas to throw off his doubts and to believe. It is seen in the way he cautioned Mary not to "*cling to him*" for he had risen and was about to ascend. It is seen in the way he taught and restored the faith of the two disciples who were over whelmed with sorrow. He appeared to many people. Many years later he appeared again to John his beloved disciple when he was a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. Through the age He has appeared to people. He will do so again. (See my book "Covenant of Glory".)

Countless thousands of people who were not there and never saw him have believed in Him and loved Him and served Him. There is a special blessing for them. Jesus said to Thomas "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" You may say you have not seen Him but will you believe nevertheless? If you do then you are especially blessed. His life shines across the ages; He is the light of the World. Jesus is alive and still walking with us, seeing everything, knowing everything. He will come again in glory. Philippians 2:5-13 has come to pass. In appearance he was a man, in reality he was the Son of God. He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Hebrews 2:9. The crown of thorns is now a *crown of glory*.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." [2 Cor 5:19] We are reconciled through his death. Col 1:21,22. He holds the keys of hell and death and has overcome them. Rev 1:18. Through death he has forever destroyed him who had the power of death that is the devil. Hebrews 2:14,15. *He said "Who ever believes in me shall never die."*

The following words were written 700 years before it happened to him.

## **Isaiah 52:13 -53:12**

*See my Servant shall prosper. He shall be highly praised. Yet many shall be amazed when they see him. Yes, even far off nations and their kings will see him. They shall stand speechless in front of him. For they shall see and understand what they had not been told before. They shall see my Servant beaten and bloody. He will be so beaten up that one would hardly know it was a person. And so shall he make many nations clean. But, oh, how few believe it! Who will listen? To whom will God reveal his saving power? In God's eyes he was like a tender green shoot. He was a sprout from a root in dry ground. But in our eyes there was no beauty at all. There was nothing to make us want him. He was a man of great sadness. And he knew the bitterest of grief. We turned our backs on him. We looked the other way when he went by. He was hated and we didn't care. Yet it was our grief he carried. It was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought that his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins. But he was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was lashed and we were healed! We have all strayed away like sheep! We left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on him the guilt and sins of every one of us! He was oppressed and he was abused yet he never said a word. He was brought as a lamb to be killed. And he was quiet like a sheep before her shearers. He stood silent before the ones judging him. From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people of that day knew it was their sins that he was dying for? Who knew that he was suffering their punishment? He was buried like a criminal but in a rich man's grave. But he had done no wrong and never spoken an evil word. Yet it was the Lord's good plan to bruise him and fill him with grief. But his soul shall be made an offering for sin. And then he shall have many children and heirs. He shall live again. And God's plans shall succeed through him. And He shall see all that has been done by the pain of his soul. Then he shall be happy. And by his experience my righteous Servant shall make many clean before God. For he shall carry all their sins. Therefore I will give him the honours of one who is great. This is because he has poured out his soul unto death. He was counted as a sinner. He carried the sins of many. And he prayed to God for sinners. Simplified Living Bible Text .*

*"He was made a little lower than the angels and is crowned with glory and honour." Hebrews 2:7. "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory..." "He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."*

## THE END?

### **What happened to the High Priests: Annas and Caiaphas?**

They were High Priests during the persecutions of the early part of the church in Jerusalem. Acts 4:6. Caiaphas was deposed by Vitellius, Governor of Syria, in AD 36. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 and the role of O.T. priests was forever terminated.

### **What happened to Pilate?**

Pilate was Procurator of Imperial Rome from AD26 to AD36. During the ten years of his administration he was at times both callous and harsh towards the Jews. He offended the Jews by bringing outrageous Roman Standards into Jerusalem. At another time he hung golden shields inscribed with the names and images of Roman deities and Emperors in the Temple itself. He also killed some Galilean worshipers at Mount Gerizim; "Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifice." Luke 13:1.

In the years after Jesus he seems to have become even more harsh and spiteful in his dealings with the Jews. Very little is known about his latter life except he fell from favour and went into oblivion.

### **What happened to Herod?**

Herod Antipas was the youngest son of Herod the Great who had slaughtered all the babes of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. He inherited Galilee and other parts of his father's kingdom. He was the Herod who murdered John the Baptist on the whim of an erotic dance that his step daughter, the daughter of Herodias, had done for him. This had appealed to him and he promised her anything she asked for. On the instruction of Herodias she asked for the head of John the Baptist and Herod approved her request.

One wonders how more abased anyone can be. However, it seems at one time God was speaking to him for Herod had protected John the Baptist and listened gladly to what he said. Mark 6:14-29. When Herod committed this terrible crime he lost his moment of salvation and denied the truth. When Jesus heard of it he departed with his disciples into a secluded place. John and Jesus were cousins.

When Herod threatened to kill him Jesus sent back a message;

*“Go tell that fox, Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today, tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow and the day following for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”* Luke 13:32,33.

Jesus had given Herod, in this message, an insight into what would take place. The word “perfected” means consecrated, to be made perfect, to consummate. Herod had not understood the message. Yet, Herod heard of the miracles Jesus did for within his household was a believer called Chuza. Herod had wondered about Jesus and wanted to see him for himself so he was very pleased when Pilate sent Jesus to him.

“When Herod saw Jesus he was exceedingly glad for he had desired for a long time to see Him because he heard many things about Him and he hoped to see some miracle done but Him. Then he questioned Him with many words but He answered him nothing.” Luke 23:8,9

It seems he wanted Jesus to prove himself by doing a miracle but Jesus never spoke a single word to Herod. He did not so much as open his mouth. This must be one of the most frightening verses of the whole Bible; Jesus had absolutely nothing to say to Herod. In contrast he did speak to Pilate and answered his questions and even seemed to reason with him. But to Herod he gave not a single word of hope; he was a doomed man.

In AD36 he was heavily defeated in a campaign against his ex father in law and subsequently in AD39 he was deposed by the Roman Emperor and ended his days in exile. His life went into oblivion.

## THE BEGINNING

The Crucifixion was the "beginning" for many people involved in these events. For the young lad who saw the arrest of Jesus. For Malchus who was healed by the Lord. For Claudia who received a dream from God. For Simeon who carried the cross. For the thief who believed. For the Centurion who acclaimed Jesus as the "Son of God." For Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus who buried him. For Mary Magdalene who saw him in Glory. For Peter and the apostles and many others.

Early one morning after his resurrection Jesus ate his "First Breakfast" with his disciples at Galilee. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Early in the morning as the eastern sky lightened a solitary figure could be seen on the shore. He was building a fire and called out to them "*Boys, have you caught anything?*" When they replied in the negative he shouted back "*Cast your net on the other side of the boat.*" It sounded familiar and they did so and suddenly the net was full. Turning back to gaze at the stranger on the shore John said, "That's the Lord." Peter dived in and swam to shore and the others followed pulling the net with them. When they got there they found Jesus. He had the fire going and already had his own fish and bread grilled on the flames. He invited them to join him and they had their "First Breakfast" together.

I wonder what they did for the rest of that day? The answer is simple; they cleaned fish, after all, they were not going to let that catch go to waste. As they did they talked and shared and Jesus spoke into their lives, first with Peter and then with them all, explaining the things concerning the Kingdom of God. That was only the beginning.

Since then millions of people during the last two thousand years have believed in Jesus, trusted him for salvation and followed his teaching. Millions have laid down their lives for him. They were thrown to the lions in Roman arenas and killed throughout the ages. Christians are still persecuted in many countries. When our dear friend Hazel together with fifteen others were martyred because of their witness and faith in Jesus the last words we know she said as they led her away to kill her were; "Tonight we are going home to Jesus."

### **MANY PEOPLE HAVE SEEN JESUS**

All through history, starting with Stephen the first martyr, men and women have had encounters with him. I have met people who have had such real encounters that it completely changed their lives. Jesus can and does appear to people, yet he says "*Blessed are those who having not seen me yet*

*believe.*" We do not have to see Jesus to believe in him. Can we see love? The answer is yes. We can see it working all around us. Its source is found in the One who *is* Love, the King of Love. He is most of the time invisible but he is real.

One day Saint Francis of Assisi [1181-1228] met a leper who was covered with sores and disfigurements. Lepers were despised and feared and no one dared to touch them or go near them but he was compelled to dismount his horse and to reach out to the leper and embrace him. As he did so suddenly the leper was gone! Had he encountered Jesus? Francis was forever changed. One day much later when he was with other believers and they were praying a young man suddenly appeared in their midst and taught them. Then he too was gone. Was this also the Lord?

There are thousands of testimonies through history of people who have seen Jesus even in recent times. These accounts are generally discounted just as the first disciples refused to believe what the women told them. What would you do if someone close to you told you they had seen Jesus? Would you believe? Unless you believe you cannot "see" him for he makes his presence known to those who believe. First one must believe.

## **WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT JESUS**

Albert Einstein, one of the world's greatest scientists said; "I am a Jew but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene...No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every page."

Mahatma Gandhi, respected leader said of Jesus; "A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act."

Mother Theresa, Catholic nun, said; "Christ who being rich became poor and emptied himself to work out our redemption, calls us to share His poverty that we might be rich through his poverty; to bear witness to the true face of Jesus – poor, humble, friend of sinners and the weak and despised."

Martin Luther, reformer, said; "The Gospel demands faith in Christ because he has overcome sin, death and hell for us."

Napoleon, Emperor and conqueror, said; "Jesus Christ is not mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible comparison...Jesus Christ founded his empire on love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him."

John Knox, spiritual leader, said; "No one else holds or has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds...no other man has been so devoutly loved."

The quotes are endless for He has impacted the world. We would need volumes to record the life and love of Jesus Messiah since his death and resurrection. John 21:25.

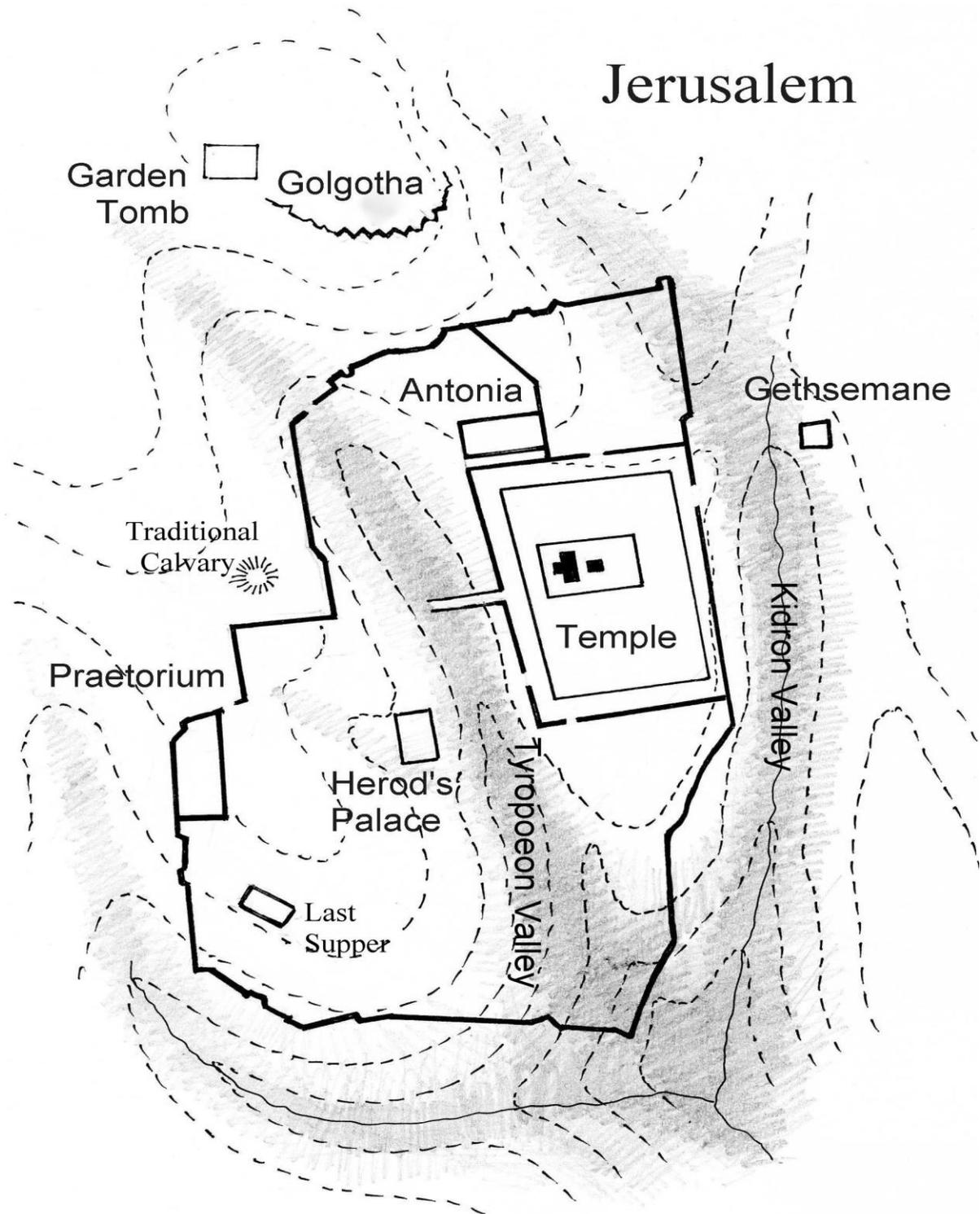
Jesus borrowed a stable to be born in, he borrowed a boat to preach from, he borrowed fish and loaves to feed thousands, he borrowed a room in which to eat his last meal and he borrowed a donkey to ride on. He died on another man's cross and was buried in another man's tomb. Yet he possesses the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

*"Now I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse and He who sat upon him was called Righteous and True and in Righteousness He judges...and on His head were many crowns...He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God."*

*Revelation 19:12.*

***He will return.***

# Jerusalem



The High Priests' house was near the temple. The Antonia was the Roman Soldiers' Garrison. The Praetorium was the Palace of Herod the Great and residence of Pilate. The palace of Herod Antipas was between the Praetorium and the temple. Golgotha was the summit of Mt Moriah to the north.

## **APPENDIX – The Dates concerning Jesus’ birth and death.**

There is a traditional view that Jesus died on Friday and I note with interest comments made by one author who has researched it.\* He holds to this view with many others that Jesus was crucified on Friday which I find hard to accept as I have already shown. It is on this understanding together with precise astronomical calculations that he works out the year of the Lord’s death to AD33. Many other Bible scholars believe this as well and it is a long standing tradition.

As I have explained I believe from the words of Jesus that he was crucified on Thursday. Those who believe it was Friday must discount the *definitive* words of Jesus concerning *three days and three nights*. Some researchers say that it was Jewish custom to count part of a day as a whole day and so Friday was one day, Saturday the second day and Sunday the third day = three days. The custom of counting part of a day as a whole is true yet Jesus was emphatic that it would be a total of three *days* and three *nights*. If Jesus was crucified on Friday then at best he spent only two days and two nights in the grave, counting the Friday he died and Friday night, Saturday and Saturday night. Once again notice that when Jesus made this statement “Three days and three nights” he counted the days before the nights, something contrary to Jewish custom of counting evenings before days. So Jesus was not looking at a Jewish calendar but at an actual period of time; the first day was Thursday, the second day was Friday and the third day was Saturday; the first night was Thursday night, the second night was Friday night and the third night was Saturday night. If the words of Jesus are taken with no preconceived traditions then that is what they mean. I will shortly consider the validity of AD30 as the correct year.

Few Bible readers consider the message of Daniel 9 that directs us to the exact year Jesus started his ministry. There are conflicting views about these scriptures and few Christians seem to understand their significance. The Lord has kept them sealed. Daniel 12:9. In the Bible a specific year was foretold for Christ’s appearance. Luke 3:1,2. 4:18,19, Mark 1:15, Gal 4:4. This date is linked with the decree of three Persian Kings; Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes in particular. These three decrees became one decree, the Decree of God. Ezra 6:14, 9:9, 7:11-13. Historians mostly agree that the final decree by Artaxerxes was issued in 458/7BC. From that date there would be a period of 69 weeks (483 years) to the coming of Messiah the Anointed One. The calculation works out to AD26/7. The disparity in any dates depends on which calendar is used; a Persian Babylonian calendar would be 458BC (spring to spring), a Jewish calendar would be 457BC fall to fall. Remember there is no “0” year in the Julian calendar and when calculations are made from BC to AD a year should be added to get a correct

date; 458BC plus 483 years = AD25 + 1 = AD26.

It may not be possible now to state the exact year Jesus started his ministry but I believe it is accurate to within a few years; in about AD26/29. The details Luke gave in 3:1,2 perfectly fit AD 26/27. Luke said it was in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius that Jesus started his ministry. Tiberius started his "official" reign in AD13. However, his rule actually started in AD11/12 when he was coregent with Augustus Caesar when Augustus was ill and the early Christian Tertullian documented this. So the 15<sup>th</sup> year would have been AD26/27. Pilate took control of Israel in AD26 and all the other key figures fit perfectly. Luke was entirely accurate in his dates.

Another date to take into account was the Roman census during which Jesus was born. We know that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great but there is much disparity about when he died and Professors and Historians are by no means united as to when this was. Many believe he died in about spring of 4BC. There is a case for a later date around BC2/1 or AD1 which is based on statements from historians such as Josephus and others and by calculating various astronomical events that are mentioned about his reign and death. Some astronomers try and work out his birth from various constellation and planet alignments. I am not a scientist and have no knowledge of astronomical events and other details that influence the way researchers come to their conclusions. I do however have the Word and hopefully can come to a valid understanding of it. I do not believe the "Star" seen by the wise men was necessarily an astronomical sign but was a supernatural sign. It was given especially to the wise men and possibly they were the only ones who could see it, certainly Herod and his soldiers would not see it. The wise men came to Jerusalem looking for the King who had already been born. The star did not lead them to Jerusalem but from Jerusalem to Bethlehem even to the very *house* in which Jesus and family dwelt. I do not believe a cosmic sign could have done that but that the "star" was an angelic being that went before them. The word star is used in scripture for angels (see Revelation and other verses). When they arrived Jesus may already have been several months old if not older. When Herod realised he had been deceived he immediately calculated from what the wise men had told him a possible two year period for Jesus' birth. I believe the visit by the wise men was partly to inform the Jewish leaders that Messiah had been born and also to provide Joseph with the necessary funds he needed to embark on two long distance journeys to Egypt and back plus the establishment of a home and a business on his return.

An important indicator of the time of Jesus' birth is Luke 2:2. This verse has caused much controversy as the dates of Quirinius Governor of Syria do not coincide with Herod the Great. We know Jesus was born during a Roman

census when "*All the world should be registered*". (Luke 2:1) I understand this to mean "all the Roman Empire"; in other words it was not a local census but a *major* census of the whole Empire. Only two major censuses were conducted by Caesar Augustus; the first was ordered in 8BC and the second in AD6 when Quirinius was Governor of Syria. Did Luke mean the first census or the second census? There is a simple answer; Luke used the word "first" (*protos* Strongs 4413) which also means "before". It could not have been the latter census so it must have been the former; in other words the census before Quirinius was governor. Luke was not mistaken and made sure people understood it was *not* the second census when Quirinius was governor but the first census. This was ordered in 8BC but we do not know when it was implemented in Israel. It was a major census and may have taken time for the whole Empire to be registered. Jesus was, in my view, born during the upheaval of this census around 6/5BC. Some time after this Herod slaughtered all babies of two years and older. If Herod died in 4BC the birth of Jesus must have been sometime in the preceding two years.

There are good reasons to say that Herod died in 4BC but some reputable researchers say it was later and that there was also a later census. If so then Jesus could have been born around BC2/1. Whenever Herod died Joseph and family were already safe in Egypt for he was warned in a dream to leave.

If Jesus was born in 5BC he would have been *about* 30 years of age in AD26/27. Luke 3:23. We do not know for certain the time of year Jesus was born so it is difficult to work out his exact age. If one counts the years from a birth in 5BC then Jesus would have been in his 30<sup>th</sup> year in September/October AD26. This was the age that a man in Israel would attain full adulthood and able to take his place in society and the synagogue. AD26 was the year that Pilate started to govern and also the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If Jesus started his ministry in the latter half of AD26 at the Feast of Atonement which was the start of the Jewish New Year (AD27) it would have been three and a half years to Passover AD30. I think Jesus started his ministry around this time and died in AD30. The majority of researchers accept that Jesus ministered for three and one half years. I also believe he started his ministry around September/October at the time of Atonement. There are clues in the text: he was baptised, corresponding with the cleansing of priests especially the High Priest at Atonement; was anointed as High Priest by the Holy Spirit; took the sins of the world as the Lamb of God and was then driven into the wilderness as the Scapegoat, all figures of Atonement. This would have been the month of Tishri (Sept/Oct) and also considered the start of the New Year in the Jewish calendar. Three and one half years would have taken him to Passover AD30.

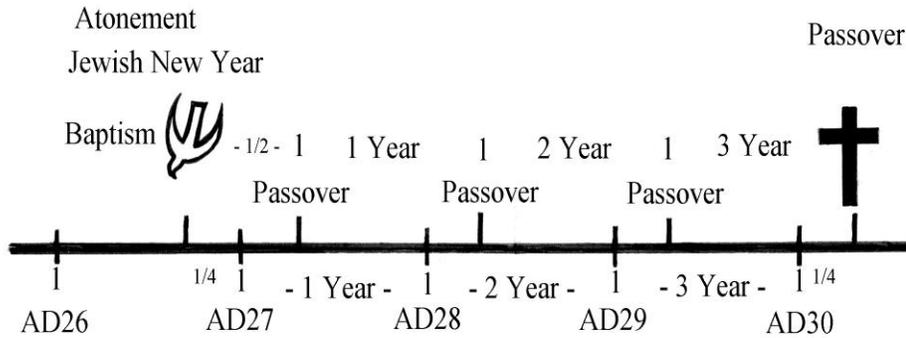
However, as I have said not all are in agreement about these dates and some researchers believe it to have been nearer 3BC to 1BC when Jesus was born and his consequent death can therefore be calculated to AD33. There is also another pointer to the times of Jesus and that is the rebuilding of the temple by Herod the Great. In John 2:20 the Jewish leaders said that the temple had been in construction for 46 years. The Gospel of John places this near the beginning of the ministry of Jesus around AD27. In other Gospels the cleansing of the temple is at the end of his ministry during the last week of his earthly life. It appears there were two temple cleansings, one at the start of his ministry and one at the end of his ministry. Not only that, but there are some differences of opinion as to when the temple restoration began. Some say it was in 20BC which would make this statement to have been uttered in AD26/27 at the start of his ministry. Some historians say temple restoration only started in about 18/17BC which would better fit the end of his ministry. So there are conflicting views and it is a study which I am not qualified to teach and the reader will have to do their own research and I do not claim to have the final word on this subject. There is however an important statement made by Luke; "Now Jesus himself was *about* thirty years old when he began his ministry." Luke 3:23. So even Luke did not give an exact precise age for Jesus and all our calculations to do so may be of no merit. If Jesus was born in 3/2 BC he would have been 29 in AD27. Is this close enough to being *about* thirty years old in Luke's view? There seems to be some leeway in scripture to calculate when he may have been born. The important thing in my mind is that both AD30 and AD33 could have been possible dates for the crucifixion and I think it was either one or the other and because he died on Thursday I believe it was AD30.

It is interesting that the author of the book mentioned above gives only two possible dates for the crucifixion; the 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan on Friday AD30 and Friday AD33. He favours AD33 but concedes it was possible in AD30 for the 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan to have been on a **Thursday** if conditions that year were exceptionally clear. He says it depended upon the clarity of the night sky and if the crescent moon was very faint it would not have been seen and therefore unlikely. However, I think it likely that even a glimmer of new moon would have been observed. The Jews had hundreds of observers all over the country. They were well trained with the sharpest eyes and were directed by professional astronomers who knew the heavens. If there had been any chance of the moon being visible they would have seen it. So it is significant that on the one year that seems to me the most accurate year to fit all requirements both OT and NT there is an element of doubt and he concedes that Passover in AD30 may have been **Thursday** and not Friday. In fact according to his precise calculations AD30 was the only year in which Passover could have fallen on *Thursday*. No other year could have been possible! This then allows room for my overall conviction that this is the best

date to fit all scriptures. I am not a scientist and do not have access to computers and astronomical calculations. I have only the Word of God to stand on. However, which ever date it was the heart of the matter is not changed, Jesus died at about this time in history.

Another thing I find hard to go along with is the idea that the sun turned dark because of a "sand storm". This in my mind is unlikely for I do not believe it was a "natural" cause that made it happen but believe it and other events were supernatural omens. As Jesus hung on the cross the sun turned dark for three hours. Joel 2:31. If it was a sand storm why was that not recorded? I think the sun turned dark because of a "sun storm." Scripture does not say that clouds covered the sun but that darkness covered the land. Scientists have discovered what makes the sun turn dark. It is caused through disruptions in the sun's magnetic fields. This causes huge solar flares or "sun spots". Big solar storms can cause portions of the sun's surface to turn dark. These sun spots can be seen through dark lenses. I believe the conflict around the cross as the Lord Jesus, the Lord of Creation, was attacked by powers of darkness was of such intensity that it caused a massive disturbance in the sun enough to affect the light. It did not stop functioning, it just became darker. Some people may say this cannot be proven and is impossible but the Bible records numerous things that are considered impossible. Darkness occurred when judgment fell on Egypt. Exodus 10:15,21. The book of Revelation tells us that it will happen again. Revelation 6:12, 8:12. The darkness at the cross was caused by a massive solar disruption that lasted for three hours during the last half of his sufferings. It was a supernatural heavenly confrontation. Psalm 18 gives insight into the spiritual war that raged around Jesus on the cross. Psalm 18:9, 7 14, 17.

One compelling bit of information that the author offers is that there was a lunar eclipse on Passover AD33 which he says fulfilled the words of Peter in Acts 2:20. However, a lunar eclipse is not necessarily required to turn the moon red but the effects of the same cosmic upheavals that caused the sun to turn dark. The moon may have been a blood colour because of lingering affects of this sun storm. Very often scientists try and find natural causes to explain the acts of God but the significance of these signs and omens is that they are "supernatural" and cannot be explained. Although there were two earthquakes, one when Jesus died and another at his resurrection, there is *no* mention of a lunar eclipse. I can hardly see it being over looked if it actually happened. Neither is there any mention of "pillars of cloud" in the same prophecy having been fulfilled. So the emphasis upon a lunar eclipse is not called for as it is not mentioned in scripture and we are making up our own events. This prophecy has a future fulfilment for its entirety. Revelation 6:12. There will be signs in the sun and moon and great pillars of cloud.



Three and a half years.

**The Years of Jesus' birth and death –**

**A/ Possible chronology -**

- 8 BC - The first census was ordered and begun throughout Empire
  - 6/5 BC - Jesus born – Wise men visited the family
  - Joseph took family to Egypt
  - 4 BC - Herod died - All babes of 2 years old killed
  - 3 BC - Joseph returned with family and settled in Nazareth
  - AD7/8 - Jesus 12 years old
  - AD12 - Fifteen years of Tiberius, AD12-26 inclusive
  - Pilate governs AD26 - Jesus baptised Sept/Oct at start of 30<sup>th</sup> year
  - AD27 - Begins his ministry Oct (Jewish AD27)
  - AD28 - 3 ½ year ministry to Passover AD30
  - AD29
  - AD30 - Passover AD30c – 33 ½ years old
- (When calculating BC to AD subtract a year because there is no 0 year.)

**B/ Possible chronology –**

- 2 BC - Jesus born
- AD1 - Herod
- AD 26 - Pilate governs
- AD 29 - Jesus started ministry in his 30<sup>th</sup> year
- 3 ½ years
- AD 33 - - Passover on Friday
- Jesus died 33 ½ years old

## C/ Possible chronology -

3/2 BC - Jesus born  
AD27 - Jesus was *about* 30 years old  
3 ½ years ministry  
Passover AD30 - Jesus died *about* 33 ½ years old

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Amplified Bible  
New American Standard Bible  
New English Bible  
Simplified Living Bible Text  
Peshitta Bible  
Strongs Exhaustive Concordance

For alternative views on this subject and additional information:

\* "The Mystery of the Last Supper" by Colin Humphreys

I have used some information in this book to endorse my own presentation.

.....

The author was active in church and mission work for four decades in Africa and has written the following books:

The Shekinah Glory of Christ  
Covenant of Glory  
The War for the World  
Daniel, Maria and Abba the Tramp  
The Monkey's Wedding  
Gingers' Great Escape.  
God Save Africa  
Through the Veil  
The Lord Reigns



