

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**12-20-23**

**Matthew 27**

**Jesus Is Handed Over To Pilate – Verses 1-2**

**<sup>1</sup> Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. <sup>2</sup> So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.**

**27:1-2** The religious leaders had to persuade the Roman government to sentence Jesus to death because they did not have the authority to do it themselves. The Romans had taken away the religious leaders' authority to inflict capital punishment. Politically, it looked better for the religious leaders anyway if someone else was responsible for killing Jesus. They wanted the death to appear Roman sponsored so the crowds couldn't blame them. The Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus on theological grounds— blasphemy. Because this charge would be thrown out of a Roman court, however, they had to come up with a political reason for Jesus' death. Their strategy was to show Jesus as a rebel who claimed to be a king and thus a threat to Caesar.

**27:2** Pilate was the Roman governor for the regions of Samaria and Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. Jerusalem was located in Judea. Pilate took special pleasure in demonstrating his authority over the Jews; for example, he impounded money from the temple treasuries to build an aqueduct. Pilate was not popular, but the religious leaders had no other way to get rid of Jesus than to go to him. Ironically, when Jesus, a Jew, came before him for trial, Pilate found him innocent. He could not find a single fault in Jesus, nor could he contrive one.

**Judas' Miserable End – Verses 3-10**

**<sup>3</sup> When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. <sup>4</sup> "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." <sup>5</sup> So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. <sup>6</sup> The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." <sup>7</sup> So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. <sup>8</sup> That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup> Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, <sup>10</sup> and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."**

**27:3-4** Jesus' formal accuser (see 26: 48 note) wanted to drop his charges, but the religious leaders refused to halt the trial. When he betrayed Jesus, perhaps Judas was trying to force Jesus' hand to get him to lead a revolt against Rome. This did not work, of course. Whatever his reason, Judas changed his mind, but it was too late. Many of the plans we set into motion cannot be reversed. It is best to think of the potential consequences before we launch into an action we may later regret.

**27:4** The priests' job was to teach people about God and act as intercessors for them, helping administer the sacrifices to cover their sins. Judas returned to the priests, exclaiming that he had

sinned. Rather than helping him find forgiveness, however, the priests said, “That’s your responsibility.” Not only had they rejected the Messiah, they had rejected their role as priests.

**27: 5** According to Matthew, Judas hanged himself. Acts 1:18, however, says that he fell and burst open. The best explanation is that the limb from which he was hanging broke, and the resulting fall split open his body.

**27: 6** These chief priests felt no guilt in giving Judas money to betray an innocent man, but when Judas returned the money, the priests couldn’t accept it because it was wrong to accept payment for murder! Their hatred for Jesus had caused them to lose all sense of right and wrong.

**27: 9-10** This prophecy is found specifically in Zechariah 11: 12-13 but may also have been taken from Jeremiah 18: 1-4; 19: 1-11; or 32: 6-15. In Old Testament times, Jeremiah was considered the collector of some of the prophets’ writings, so perhaps his name is cited rather than Zechariah.

### **Jesus Before Pilate – Verses 11-14**

**<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “You have said so,” Jesus replied. <sup>12</sup> When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” <sup>14</sup> But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.**

**27:12** Standing before Pilate, the religious leaders accused Jesus of a different crime than the ones for which they had arrested him. They arrested him for blasphemy (claiming to be God), but that charge would mean nothing to the Romans. So the religious leaders had to accuse Jesus of crimes that would have concerned the Roman government, such as encouraging the people not to pay taxes, claiming to be a king, and causing riots. These accusations were not true, but the religious leaders were determined to kill Jesus, and they broke several commandments in order to do so.

**27:14** Jesus’ silence fulfilled the words of the prophet (Isaiah 53: 7). Pilate was amazed that Jesus didn’t try to defend himself. He recognized the obvious plot against Jesus and wanted to let him go, but Pilate was already under pressure from Rome to keep peace in his territory. The last thing he needed was a rebellion over this quiet and seemingly insignificant man.

### **Pilate Hopes To Release Jesus – Verses 15-18**

**<sup>15</sup> Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. <sup>16</sup> At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” <sup>18</sup> For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.**

**27:15-16** Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion against the Roman government (Mark 15: 7). Although an enemy to Rome, he may have been a hero to the Jews. Ironically, Barabbas was guilty of the crime for which Jesus was accused.

## **Pilate Influenced By Both His Wife And The Religious Leaders – Verses 19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.” <sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.**

**27:19** For a leader who was supposed to administer justice, Pilate proved to be more concerned about political expediency than about doing what was right. He had several opportunities to make the right decision. His conscience told him Jesus was innocent; Roman law said an innocent man should not be put to death; and his wife had a nightmare that caused her to encourage her husband to let Jesus go. Pilate had no good excuse to condemn Jesus, but he was afraid of the crowd.

## **The Crowd Demands The Release Of Barabbas And The Crucifixion Of Jesus – Verses 21-23**

**<sup>21</sup> “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. “Barabbas,” they answered. <sup>22</sup> “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!” <sup>23</sup> “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”**

**27:21** Crowds are fickle. They loved Jesus on Sunday because they thought he was going to inaugurate his kingdom. Then they hated him on Friday when his power appeared broken. In the face of the mass uprising against Jesus, his friends were afraid to speak up.

## **Pilate Tries To Avoid Responsibility For Jesus’ Fate – Verses 24-26**

**<sup>24</sup> When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” <sup>25</sup> All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!” <sup>26</sup> Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.**

**27:24** At first Pilate hesitated to give the religious leaders permission to crucify Jesus. He perceived that they were simply jealous of a teacher who was more popular with the people than they were. But when the Jews threatened to report Pilate to Caesar (John 19: 12), Pilate became afraid. Historical records indicate that the Jews had already threatened to lodge a formal complaint against Pilate for his stubborn flouting of their traditions— and such a complaint would most likely have led to his recall by Rome. His job was in jeopardy. The Roman government could not afford to put large numbers of troops in all the regions under their control, so one of Pilate’s main duties was to do whatever was necessary to maintain peace.

**27:24** In making no decision, Pilate made the decision to let the crowds crucify Jesus. Although he washed his hands, the guilt remained. Washing your hands of a tough situation doesn’t cancel your guilt. It merely gives you a false sense of peace. Don’t make excuses— take responsibility for the decisions you make.

## **Jesus Is Beaten And Mocked – 27-31**

**<sup>27</sup> Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. <sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they**

knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. <sup>30</sup> They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. <sup>31</sup> After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

**27:27-31** Describes the mockery and abuse that Jesus endured from the Roman soldiers after being sentenced to crucifixion. They stripped him, put a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns on him, and hailed him as the king of the Jews. They spat on him, hit him, and bowed before him in false homage. These events show the contrast between human power and evil and God's love and sacrifice. They reveal the cost of our salvation and the sin of the world that Jesus bore.

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus – Verses 32-37**

<sup>32</sup> As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. <sup>33</sup> They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). <sup>34</sup> There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. <sup>35</sup> When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup> Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

**27:32** Condemned prisoners had to carry their own crosses to the execution site. Jesus, weakened from the beatings he had received, was physically unable to carry his cross any farther. Thus a bystander, Simon, was forced to do so. Simon was from Cyrene, in northern Africa, and was probably one of the thousands of Jews visiting Jerusalem for the Passover.

**27:33** Some scholars say Golgotha (“the place of the skull”) derives its name from its appearance. Golgotha may have been a regular place of execution in a prominent public place outside the city. Executions held there would serve as a deterrent to criminals.

**27:34** Wine mixed with gall was offered to Jesus to help reduce his pain, but Jesus refused to drink it. Gall is generally understood to be a narcotic that was used to deaden pain. Jesus would suffer fully conscious and with a clear mind.

**27:35** The soldiers customarily took the clothing of those they crucified. These soldiers cast lots and divided Jesus’ clothing among themselves, fulfilling the prophecy made by David. Much of Psalm 22 parallels Jesus’ crucifixion.

### **Jesus Is Mocked On The Cross – Verses 38-44**

<sup>38</sup> Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>39</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup> “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” <sup>44</sup> In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

**27:38-44** This was the peak of God’s love for man: to endure this for our salvation. But it was also the summit of man’s hatred for God; God came to earth, and this is what man did to Him. Jesus had to suffer this alone, outside the gate. He was cut off from the community; both so we could be joined to

His community, and also so that our experiences of isolation can be redeemed and made into opportunities of fellowship with Him.

### **The Death of Jesus – Verses 45-49**

<sup>45</sup> From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). <sup>47</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” <sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup> The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

**27:45** We do not know how this darkness occurred, but it is clear that God caused it. Nature testified to the gravity of Jesus’ death, while Jesus’ friends and enemies alike fell silent in the encircling gloom. The darkness on that Friday afternoon was both physical and spiritual.

**27:46** Jesus was not questioning God; he was quoting the first line of Psalm 22— a deep expression of the anguish he felt when he took on the sins of the world, which caused him to be separated from his Father. This was what Jesus dreaded as he prayed to God in the garden to take the cup from him (26: 39). The physical agony was horrible, but even worse was the period of spiritual separation from God. Jesus suffered this double death so that we would never have to experience eternal separation from God.

**27:47** The bystanders misinterpreted Jesus’ words and thought he was calling for Elijah. Because Elijah ascended into heaven without dying (2 Kings 2: 11), they thought he would return again to rescue them from great trouble (Malachi 4: 5). At their annual Passover meal, each family set an extra place for Elijah in expectation of his return.

### **The Death Of Jesus – Verses 50-56**

<sup>50</sup> And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split <sup>52</sup> and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!” <sup>55</sup> Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. <sup>56</sup> Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

**27:51** The temple had three main parts: the courts, the Holy Place (where only the priests could enter), and the Most Holy Place (where only the high priest could enter, and only once a year, to atone for the sins of the nation— Leviticus 16: 1-34). The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two at Christ’s death, symbolizing that the barrier between God and humanity was removed. Now all people are free to approach God because of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins (see Hebrews 9: 1-14; 10: 19-22).

**27:52-53** Christ’s death was accompanied by at least four miraculous events: darkness, the tearing in two of the curtain in the temple, an earthquake, and dead people rising from their tombs. Jesus’ death, therefore, could not have gone unnoticed. Everyone knew something significant had happened.

## The Burial Of Jesus – Verses 57-61

<sup>57</sup> As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. <sup>59</sup> Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup> and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

**27:57-58** Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple of Jesus. He was a religious leader, an honored member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15: 43). Joseph courageously asked to take Jesus' body from the cross and to bury it. The disciples who publicly followed Jesus had fled, but this Jewish leader, who followed Jesus in secret, came forward and did what was right.

**27:60** In John 19:41 it specifically tells us that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea that Jesus was laid in was close to the place of Jesus' crucifixion (and each of the two suggested places for Jesus' death and resurrection bear this out). Joseph probably didn't like it that the value of his family tomb decreased because the Romans decided to crucify people nearby — yet it reminds us that in God's plan, the cross and the power of the resurrection are always permanently and closely connected.

## The Guard at the Tomb

<sup>62</sup> The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. <sup>63</sup> "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup> So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup> "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

**27:64-66** The religious leaders took Jesus' resurrection claims more seriously than the disciples did. The disciples didn't remember Jesus' teaching about his resurrection (20: 17-19); but the religious leaders remembered and took steps they thought would prevent it (or at least a fabrication of it). Because of his claims, they were almost as afraid of Jesus after his death as when he was alive. They tried to take every precaution that his body would remain in the tomb. Because the tomb was hewn out of rock in the side of a hill, there was only one entrance. The tomb was sealed by stringing a cord across the stone that was rolled over the entrance. The cord was sealed at each end with clay. But the religious leaders took a further precaution, asking that guards be placed at the tomb's entrance. The Pharisees failed to understand that no rock, seal, guard, or army could prevent the Son of God from rising again.