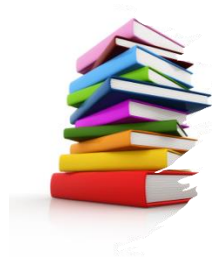


CFM Matt. 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19 – Ep 207



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

The Last Week of the Savior's Mortal Ministry

Focus: Friday

12 Events

1. The Crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27.35; Mark 15.24; Luke 23.34; John 19.23-24).
2. Soldiers cast lots for Jesus garments (Matt. 27.35; Mark 15.24; Luke 23.34; John 19.23-24).
3. The sign is placed on the cross: The King of the Jews (Matt. 27.37; Mark 15.26; Luke 23.38; John 19.19-22).
4. Jesus speaks to his mother Mary (John 19.25-27).
5. Darkness in the land – 6th to the 9th hour [12 noon – 3 pm] (Matt. 27.45; Mark 15.33-36; Luke 23.44-45).
6. The death of Jesus (Matt. 27.46-50; Mark 15.37; Luke 23.46; John 19.28-30).
7. Earthquake, the veil in the temple is rent (Matt. 27.51; Mark 15.38; Luke 23.45).
8. A soldier pierces Jesus' side (John 19.31-34).
9. The Passover scripture fulfilled (John 19.35-37).
10. Watchers near the cross (Matt. 27.54-56; Mark 15.39-41; Luke 23.47-49).
11. Jesus' burial (Matt. 27.57-61; Mark 15.42-47; Luke 23.50-56; John 19.38-42).
12. Chief priests and pharisees seal the tomb (Matt.27.62-66).

7 Statements

In this podcast, Bryce goes through the seven statements of Jesus on the cross in the following order:

1. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23.34).
2. "Woman, behold thy son!" then he said to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19.26-27).
3. "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23.43).
4. "I thirst" (John 19.28).
5. "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27.46, Mark 15.34-35).
6. "It is finished" (John 19.30).
7. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" (Luke 23.46).

In order to faithfully adhere to the chronological order of events as presented in the gospel narratives, we made the deliberate decision to structure our podcast recordings accordingly. We acknowledge that this deviation from the prescribed lesson plans outlined in the Come Follow Me format may pose

challenges for those using our podcasts for personal study or lesson planning. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. We appreciate your listenership.

1. The Crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27.35; Mark 15.24; Luke 23.34; John 19.23-24).

“And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross” (Matt. 27.32).

Cyrene, a large city in what is now Libya in North Africa, was ethnically divided among Libyans, Greeks and Jews; the Jewish community probably included some local converts. “Simon” is a Greek name commonly used by Jewish people (because of its resemblance with the biblical “Simeon”). Like multitudes of foreign Jews, Simon had come to Jerusalem for the feast. Roman soldiers could impress any person into service to carry things for them. The condemned person himself normally had to carry the horizontal beam (Latin patibulum) of the cross out to the site where the upright stake (Latin palus) awaited; but Jesus’ back had been too severely scourged for him to continue this.

Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross to Golgotha is a significant event in the Christian faith and has been depicted in various forms of art and literature throughout history. I see some possible associations between his act of service as it applies to our quest to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to hear him as we walk the covenant path:

1. **Bearing One's Cross and Serving Others:** The act of carrying the cross is often interpreted as a metaphor for bearing one's own burdens and struggles in life. Simon, who was forced to carry the cross for Jesus, represents the idea that sometimes we are called upon to help others bear their crosses as well.
2. **Universal Brotherhood:** Simon was a stranger to Jesus, but he stepped forward to help him in his hour of need. This act of compassion and brotherhood is seen as a symbol of the universal love and compassion that is at the heart of the Christian faith.
3. **Redemption and Salvation:** In some interpretations, Simon's act of carrying the cross for Jesus is seen as a symbolic act of redemption and salvation. By bearing the burden of the cross, Simon is believed to have shared (in a small way) in the redemptive power of Christ's suffering and death.
4. **Humility and Service:** Simon's willingness to help Jesus, despite the trauma this experience would have involved and the fear it probably caused him, is seen as an act of humility and service. This act can be seen as a reminder that true greatness lies not in power or wealth, but in service to others.

The Crucifixion – A Medical Understanding

"The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostals (rib) muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia (elevated blood levels of carbon dioxide) would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.

"Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders. However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals (feet) and would produce searing pain. Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves (in the wrist). Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes. Muscle cramps and paresthesias (numbness) of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia (suffocation).

"The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Other possible contributing factors included dehydration, stress-induced arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms), and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions (fluid buildup around the heart and lungs)...Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word excruciating (Latin, *excruciates*, or 'out of the cross')."¹

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha (John 19.17).

The Nail in the Sure Place

Elder Holland taught:

"When the Roman soldiers drove their four-and-one-half-inch crucifixion spikes into their victim's flesh, they did so first in the open palm. But because the weight of the body might tear that flesh and not sustain the burden to be carried, they also drove nails into the wrist, down in the nexus of bones and sinews that would not tear no matter what the weight. Thus, the nail in the wrist was the "nail in a sure place." Once it was removed and the Savior was "cut down," the burden of the crucified body (more literally, the burden of the Atonement) was brought to an end. In terms of our salvation, Christ is the Nail in a Sure Place—never failing, never faltering, ever the most certain and reliable force in eternity. For this we surely "hang upon him all the glory of his father's house."²

Golgotha

James E. Talmage wrote:

"The Place of a Skull." -- The Aramaic Hebrew name "Golgotha," the Greek "Kranion," and the Latin "Calvaria" or, as Anglicized, "Calvary," have the same meaning, and connote "a skull." The name may have been applied with reference to topographical features, as we speak of the brow of a hill; or, if the spot was the usual place of execution, it may have been so called as expressive of death, just as we call a skull a death's head. It is probable that the bodies of executed convicts were buried near the place of death; and if Golgotha or Calvary was the appointed site for execution, the exposure of skulls and other human bones through the ravages of beasts and by other means, would not be surprising; though the leaving of bodies or any of their parts unburied was contrary to Jewish law and sentiment. The origin of

¹ William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI, [On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ](#). *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 1986.

² Jeffrey R. Holland, [Witness for His Names](#), Deseret Book, 2019.

the name is of as little importance as are the many divergent suppositions concerning the exact location of the spot.”³

Proposed location(s) of Golgotha

The Garden Tomb Association

The Garden Tomb association proposes the location for Golgotha outside the current Jerusalem city walls in the Muslim area of Jerusalem, just outside the Muslim quarter. You can see a video [here](#) (0:11-0:17) where they propose both the site of the crucifixion took place, as well as where they propose the location of the tomb Jesus’ body was placed. See: <https://gardentomb.com/>

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Another proposed location of Golgotha is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is considered to be the site where Jesus of Nazareth was both crucified and buried. It has been a significant place of pilgrimage for Christians all over the world since the time of Constantine in the fourth century.

As stated in the New Testament, Golgotha, also known as "the place of the skull," is where Jesus was crucified (Matt. 27.33–35; Mark 15.22–25; John 19.17–24). This area is believed to have been an abandoned stone quarry outside the city walls. Approximately a decade after the crucifixion, another wall was erected that enclosed the location of the execution and burial within the city, explaining why the Holy Sepulchre is now inside the Old City of Jerusalem. Tradition relates that the emperor Hadrian had a temple to Jupiter built in the city and that he renamed the city Aelia Capitolina. At the site of the crucifixion of Jesus, tradition relates that he constructed a temple to Venus.

In the fourth century, the Roman emperor Constantine I, who had converted to Christianity, ordered the destruction of the temple of Venus that Hadrian built in Jerusalem. After it was destroyed, it was discovered that a rock-cut tomb lay underneath. Constantine’s mother Helena identified this as the location of the tomb of Jesus Christ. Constantine then ordered that a church be built over this location. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was completed in 335.⁴

³ James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 575.

⁴ For a more detailed history see: [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#), Wikipedia. Accessed 3.10.23. Other historians relate that the church was completed in 333. See: Charles Couasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem*, Oxford University Press, 1974. Regarding the connection between the location of the tomb and the temple of Aphrodite/Venus, the author (p. 13) writes, “In the year 324, when Constantine, after his victory over Licinius, became the sole master of the Roman Empire, the town-plan of Aelia Capitolina had not changed for nearly 200 years, while the Church Community of Jerusalem had then existed for 300 years. In 325, Constantine convoked the Nicaean Council, with the object of re-establishing the unity of the Faith, which had been compromised by the Arian heresy. Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem came to the Council and requested the Emperor to disinter the Tomb of the Lord, which, according to tradition, was buried under the Temple of Aphrodite, to the west of Hadrian’s Forum. Constantine replied favourably to Macarius’s wish, and commanded the razing of the pagan temple in order to rediscover the Tomb.” Couasnon highlights the history of the structure, noting its being burned on May 4, 614. This book is a good introduction regarding the claims made about this location and its place in Christian history.

2. Soldiers cast lots for Jesus garments (Matt. 27.35; Mark 15.24; Luke 23.34; John 19.23-24; Ps. 22.18).

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots (Matt. 27.35).

Romans completely stripped the person being executed. Roman law permitted the execution squad any minor possessions the executed person carried (cf. also Ps 22:18). The custom of casting lots, common in both the Old Testament and Greek culture, was a common ancient way to make decisions of this nature.⁵

Elder Oaks taught, “The Roman soldiers of Pilate provided an unforgettable illustration of the different perspectives of the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. During a tragic but glorious afternoon on Calvary, a handful of soldiers waited at the foot of a cross. One of the supreme events in all eternity was taking place on the cross above their heads. Oblivious to that fact, they occupied themselves by casting lots to divide the earthly property of the dying Son of God (see Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24). ***Their example reminds each of us that we should not be casting our lots for the things of the world while the things of eternity***, including our families and the work of the Lord, ***suffer for our lack of attention.***”⁶

Jesus the Great High Priest in John’s Gospel

“Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout” (John 19.23).

The “outer garments” would represent the rectangular cloth draped around the body in inclement weather; the tunic was normally “a long, tight-fitting shirt made of two pieces of cloth sewn together,” typically sleeveless, whether of “wool, linen or leather.” A seamless tunic, which would fit the neck more closely and generally have short sleeves, was of special value. That Jesus’ tunic was “seamless” might recall the high priest’s garment,⁷ as may the failure to tear his garments (Lev 21:10).⁸ The term *ὑφαντός* appears especially in conjunction with the high-priestly raiment in the LXX (Exod 28:6; 39:3, 5, 8, 22, 27 [36:10, 12, 15, 29, 34 LXX]), though also with other furniture of the tabernacle (Exod 26:31; 35:35; 38:23 [37:21 LXX]). ***In that case, the narrative would reveal Jesus as high priest while undermining the role of the official high priest*** (John 11:49–51; 18:13–24), another case of Johannine irony.⁹

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: The New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 121.

Elsewhere Keener writes, “Confiscation of goods was a common penalty attending execution or other sentences of judgment, but Jesus has few goods on him to confiscate. The removal of clothing (19:23–24) fits what we know of typical ancient executions; Romans crucified their victims naked. Although some later rabbis, explaining the proper way to carry out theoretical executions, allowed men a loincloth, it is unlikely that Pilate’s soldiers would have accommodated their sensitivities; further, other tradition indicates that most Jewish teachers allowed men to be executed naked. Public nakedness could cause shame in other settings, and Romans stripped those they would punish to degrade them, but it was especially shaming for Palestinian Jews.” Keener, *The Gospel of John*, Baker Academic, 2010, p. 1138.

⁶ Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, Bookcraft, 1988, p. 116.

⁷ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 60; Watkins, *John*, 388; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 3.161. Dunstan, “Clothing,” prefers an allusion to the new temple by contrast with the rending of the veil (Mark 15:38), which John omits; but this seems overly subtle (cf. Mark 15:24).

⁸ Peter Ellis, *The Genius of John*, Liturgical Press, 1984, p. 270.

⁹ John Paul Heil, “Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 4 (October, 1995), pp. 729-745. He writes (p. 745), “As the irony of Gentiles preserving the seamless tunic of the

Not all agree with this reading

But the allusion remains far from certain; for example, the LXX of Exodus does not depict any of the priest's garments with ἱμάτιον, the standard language for an outer cloak; it does use χιτῶν (Exod 28:4, 39, 40; 29:5, 8; 35:19; 39:27 [36:34 LXX]; 40:14), but that term, like ἱμάτιον, was the usual term.¹⁰ More significantly, John seems to lack the sort of explicit priestly emphasis one finds in Hebrews (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–5:10; 6:20–8:4; 9:11, 25; 10:21; 13:11).

3. The sign is placed on the cross: The King of the Jews (Matt. 27.37; Mark 15.26; Luke 23.38; John 19.19-22).

And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS (Matt. 27.37).

The condemned person sometimes carried the charge (Latin titulus) to the site of execution.¹¹

The charge posted above Jesus' head (John 19:19–22) reveals the irony of the situation: Jesus is executed for being king of Israel, though the leaders of his own people reject his kingship. They might have preferred the charge of ληστής, a social bandit or revolutionary (which he applied to them, John 10:8–10)¹², but they themselves had supplied the wording for the treason charge “king of the Jews” (18:33–35), and now they cannot dismiss it... *John's distinctive elements are the three languages, the high priests' rejection of the posted charge, and Pilate's ironic insistence on “its irrevocability.”* The three languages suggest *the universality of Jesus' reign*; these very languages all coexist on Roman Jewish burial inscriptions. Many scholars take these as the major languages of the first-century Mediterranean world (interpreting Hebrew as Aramaic, which may be reasonable), hence Jesus' rightful reign even over the Gentiles.¹³

4. Jesus speaks to his mother Mary (John 19.25-27).

“Woman, behold thy son!” Gr: Γύναι ἰδοῦ ὁ υἱός σου (John 19.26)

Those at the cross

Only historical tradition would seem to account for Jesus' “mother's sister” and probably for “Mary wife of Clopas” (though cf. a Mary in Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1). (Mary Magdalene also appears here without introduction, as if known to John's audience from other accounts.) The named women present could be four in number; if Jesus' mother and brothers are for some reason unnamed, it makes sense that his aunt would be for the same reason. It is also possible (though less probable) that “Mary wife of Clopas” could be Jesus' mother's sister, despite the overlap with the name of Jesus' mother in the tradition; in some Roman homes, for example, a father might give two sisters the same name... Although John alone

high priest Jesus indicates (John 19.23-24), Jesus' self-sacrificial death unifies all believers into a universal people composed of Jews and Gentiles (John 11.45-53).

¹⁰ Walter Lewis Liefeld, “[The Wandering Preacher as a Social Figure in the Roman Empire.](#)” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1967, p. 181. Liefeld finds no special garb here (vs. the philosopher's pallium).

¹¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 121.

¹² The irony is thick here.

¹³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 1136-7, emphasis added.

among the canonical gospels includes the presence of a male disciple at the cross (19:26–27), he agrees with the Synoptics in emphasizing the presence of women after the male disciples had fled (16:32).¹⁴

Jesus' mother

The presence of Jesus' mother is not mentioned in the Synoptic line of tradition but is plausible and consistent with her reported presence in Jerusalem a short time later (Acts 1:14). Some suggest she merely came later to reclaim the body; returning Galilean pilgrims could have brought back word of Jesus' death, requiring her to go to Jerusalem to claim the corpse, before she received word of the resurrection. It is no less likely, however, that she and Jesus' brothers were already in Jerusalem for the Passover (7:10; Luke 2:41–42); and if she was present, she would surely have heard of Jesus' crucifixion several hours before he died. If she knew of her son's execution, it is almost certain that she would have been present to mourn.¹⁵

Why does Jesus address his mother as (Γύναι)“woman”?

We don't know why he does this, but there are some possibilities. There are different interpretations of why Jesus refers to his mother as "woman" in John 19:26, but one common explanation is that he is creating distance between himself and his earthly family to emphasize his divine mission. By addressing Mary as "woman," Jesus is not only distancing himself from his immediate family, but also indicating his role as the son of God rather than merely the son of Mary. This interpretation aligns with Augustine's suggestion that Mary had to learn that her relationship to Jesus as a disciple was more important than her relationship to him as his mother.¹⁶ This idea emphasizes the spiritual connection between Jesus and his followers, which transcends familial ties.

“Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23.43).

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

The statement by the Savior, [“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”](#) has caused many in Christianity to believe that all that is needed for salvation is that we confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The revelations of the Restoration teach that there is a spirit world where the righteous and the wicked await the resurrection. After the resurrection mankind will be assigned to one of three degrees of glory or perdition for those who choose to abide there. Much of the Christian world believes that spirit paradise and spirit prison constitute the final state of man, that is that they either attain heaven or hell. So by the teachings of traditional Christianity, Jesus Christ promised the thief that he would attain heaven and live with him forever. The thief is saved by his belief in Jesus.

How do we interpret [this text](#)? Is this what is being taught? Can a person live a destructive life contrary to the teachings of Christ, then confess the name of Jesus before they die, thereby attaining heaven?

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1142.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1143.

¹⁶ Augustine *Ep.* 243 to Laetus; cf. also *On Virginity* 3; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 10.3.2 (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 48–49); likewise John Chryostom [Hom. Jo. 21](#) (on John 1:49–2:4).

While I do not know the totality of how all of this works, it would seem contrary to the nature of heaven that we can say one thing and do another, and attain heaven simply by saying a few words. Surely our beliefs are manifest by our actions. Otherwise, why did we come to earth in the first place? Why not simply confess Jesus (as we all have done previously before we came to earth) and be ushered into eternal paradise?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“There has been much said by modern divines about the words of Jesus (when on the cross) to the thief, saying, ‘This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ King James’ translators make it out to say paradise. But what is paradise? It is a modern word: it does not answer at all to the original word that Jesus made use of. Find the original of the word paradise. You may as easily find a needle in a haymow. Here is a chance for battle, ye learned men. There is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken that signifies paradise; but it was—This day thou shalt be with me in the world of spirits: then I will teach you all about it and answer your inquiries. And Peter says he went and preached to the world of spirits (spirits in prison, 1 Peter, 3rd chap., 19th verse), so that they who would receive it could have it answered by proxy by those who live on the earth.”¹⁷

Orson F. Whitney taught:

“[Some] uninspired minds have drawn the conclusion that the penitent thief was promised immediate heavenly exaltation, for repenting at the last moment and professing faith in the Redeemer...Jesus never taught such a doctrine, nor did any authorized servant of the Lord. It is a man-made theory, based upon faulty inference and misinterpretation. The Scriptures plainly teach that men will be judged according to their works, and receive rewards as varied as their deeds. It was best for the thief, of course, to repent even at the eleventh hour; but he could not be exalted until prepared for it, if it took a thousand years.”¹⁸

From my reading of these and other teachings from leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I gather that they are pushing against the notion that death bed repentance or a mental assent to the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord is sufficient for exaltation. I certainly do not know the answers, but there seems to be more happening here in Luke 23 than what we currently know. Having more revelation in this last dispensation opens up more ideas about the salvation of man than that which exists with the canonized Biblical record alone. At least I am open to a more nuanced reading here than what we have here in the text.

5. Darkness in the land – 6th to the 9th hour [12 noon – 3 pm] (Matt. 27.45; Mark 15.33-36; Luke 23.44-45).

Elder McConkie wrote, “He will continue to suffer the curses of crucifixion for another three hours, until around 3:00 P.M. when he voluntarily gives up the ghost. Of these coming hours, Matthew and Mark say only that it was a period when there was darkness over all the land; Luke extends this turning of day into night over a greater area. ‘There was a darkness over all the earth,’ he says, ‘and the sun was darkened.’...That this darkness did cover the whole earth we surmise from the Book of Mormon account. The Nephite prophets had spoken, Messianically, of three days of darkness that would be a sign unto them of the crucifixion of Christ. At that time the rocks would rend and there would be such upheavals in

¹⁷ [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#), Deseret Book, 1977, p. 309.

¹⁸ Saturday Night Thoughts, Salt Lake City, *Deseret News*, 1921, p. 290-291.

nature that those on the isles of the sea would say, 'The God of nature suffers.' (1 Nephi 19:10-12; Helaman 14:20-24.)"¹⁹

6. The death of Jesus (Matt. 27.46-50; Mark 15.37; Luke 23.46; John 19.28-30).

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matt. 27.46)

C.S. Lewis wrote:

"Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no more desiring but still intending to do God's will, looks around upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, asks why he has been forsaken and still obeys."²⁰

Elder Holland said:

Now I speak very carefully, even reverently, of what may have been the most difficult moment in all of this solitary journey to Atonement. I speak of those final moments for which Jesus must have been prepared intellectually and physically but which He may not have fully anticipated emotionally and spiritually—that concluding descent into the paralyzing despair of divine withdrawal when He cries in *ultimate* loneliness, "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46)

The loss of mortal support He had anticipated, but apparently He had not comprehended this. Had He not said to His disciples, "Behold, the hour . . . is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" and "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him"? (John 16:32; 8:29)

With all the conviction of my soul I testify that He *did* please His Father perfectly and that a perfect ***Father did not forsake His Son in that hour. Indeed, it is my personal belief that in all of Christ's mortal ministry the Father may never have been closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering.*** Nevertheless, that the supreme sacrifice of His Son might be as complete as it was voluntary and solitary, ***the Father briefly withdrew from Jesus the comfort of His Spirit, the support of His personal presence. It was required; indeed it was central to the significance of the Atonement,*** that this perfect Son who had never spoken ill nor done wrong nor touched an unclean thing had to know how the rest of humankind—us, all of us—would feel when we did commit such sins. For His Atonement to be infinite and eternal, ***He had to feel what it was like to die not only physically but spiritually, to sense what it was like to have the divine Spirit withdraw, leaving one feeling totally, abjectly, hopelessly alone.***

But Jesus held on. He pressed on. The goodness in Him allowed faith to triumph even in a state of complete anguish. The trust He lived by told Him in spite of His feelings that divine compassion is never absent, that God is always faithful, that He never flees nor fails us. When the uttermost farthing had then

¹⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, [Mortal Messiah](#) 4:224-25. See also: Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, volume 4, p. 38.

²⁰ C.S. Lewis, [The Screwtape Letters](#), 39.

been paid, when Christ's determination to be faithful was as obvious as it was utterly invincible, finally and mercifully, it was "finished."²¹

John Taylor wrote:

The suffering of the Son of God was not simply the suffering of personal death; for in assuming the position that He did in making an atonement for the sins of the world He bore the weight, the responsibility, and the burden of the sins of all men, which, to us, is incomprehensible. . . .

Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood He was led to exclaim, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He had wrestled with the superincumbent load in the wilderness. He had struggled against the powers of darkness that had been let loose upon him there; placed below all things, His mind surcharged with aging and pain, lonely and apparently helpless and forsaken, in his agony the blood oozed from His pores. Thus rejected by His own, attacked by the powers of darkness, and seemingly forsaken by His God, on the cross He bowed beneath the accumulated loan, and cried out in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" When death approached to relieve Him from His horrible position, a ray of hope appeared through the abyss of darkness with which He had been surrounded, and in a spasm of relief, seeing the bright future beyond, He said, "It is finished Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."²²

Melvin J. Ballard taught:

"We cannot stand by and listen to those cries without its touching our hearts...His Father looked on with great grief and agony over his Beloved Son, until there seems to have come a moment when even our Savior cried out in despair: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that hour I think I can see our dear Father behind the veil looking upon these dying struggles until even he could not endure it any longer; and, like the mother who bids farewell to her dying child, has to be taken out of the room, so as not to look upon the last struggles, *so he bowed his head, and hid in some part of his universe, his great heart almost breaking for the love that he had for his Son. Oh, in that moment when he might have saved his Son, I thank him and praise him that he did not fail us, for he had not only the love of his Son in mind, but he also had love for us.* I rejoice that he did not interfere, and that his love for us made it possible for him to endure to look upon the sufferings of his Son and give him finally to us, our Savior and our Redeemer."²³

Jesus drinks sour wine – "I thirst" (John 19.28-29).

In the popular passion tradition, the sour wine lifted to Jesus' mouth is part of the ridicule heaped against him (conjoined with the skepticism that Elijah would rescue him; Mark 15:36); here, however, Jesus deliberately invites the sour wine to fulfill Scripture (John 19:28–29). In light of this moment, the informed reader might encounter Jesus' miracle at Cana in a new way: Jesus began the road to the cross when he turned water into wine (2:3–4, 9–10). Now he receives sour wine (19:29–30) before giving forth water (19:34). Only when he has fulfilled this final scripture does he hand over his spirit (19:30).²⁴

²¹ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "None Were with Him," [Conference April 2009](#), emphasis added.

²² John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 150-51.

²³ Melvin J. Ballard, "The Sacramental Covenant," *The New Era*, Jan. 1976, 9-10, emphasis added.

²⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 1146-1147.

“It is finished” (John 19.30).

This portrayal of Jesus’ triumph in death fits John’s emphasis on Jesus’ glorification through death and the events his death introduces (e.g., 12:23–24). The Jewish martyr tradition emphasized courageous defiance, but Mark emphasizes Jesus’ brokenness at his death; John is closer to the martyr tradition here, emphasizing Jesus’ commitment to his mission. John of course differs from the martyr tradition as well; his Jesus is not merely a righteous martyr but deity in the flesh. Nor is this picture of Jesus’ triumph [docetic](#),²⁵ as if he were less human in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:14); a Jewish martyr story in the philosophic tradition could go much further in praising triumph in death, even working from an explicit dualism, without ever adopting a fully docetic understanding. Thus, for example, Eleazar in 4 Maccabees treated his torture as if it were a dream (4 Macc 6:5) and maintained the dignity of his reasoning even though his body could no longer withstand the pain (4 Macc 6:7). For all his emphasis on Jesus’ deity, John’s Christology appears less docetic than this Hellenistic Jewish work’s anthropology, which itself cannot be properly considered docetic.²⁶

7. Earthquake, the veil in the temple is rent (Matt. 27.51-53; Mark 15.38; Luke 23.45).

The Veil Rent

Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ([Matt. 27.51](#)).

The rending of the veil in [Matthew 27.51](#) refers to an event that occurred at the moment of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. The veil in question was the heavy curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the Temple.

The symbolism of the rending of the veil is rich and profound. In Jewish tradition, the veil was seen as a symbol of the separation between God and man. According to the account given to us in our Old Testaments, it was only the high priest that was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies, and only one time a year. The tearing of the veil symbolized the opening of a new way for humanity to approach God. We see this in Mark’s account when we read: “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens [opened](#), and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him” (Mark 1.10).²⁷ Mark uses the verb σχίζω - *schizō* to describe the opening of the heavens. He uses this verb again in discussing the ripping of the veil in Mark 15: “And the veil of the temple was [rent](#) in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mark 15.38).²⁸

²⁵ Docetism was a belief held by some early Christian groups that claimed Jesus Christ only appeared to have a physical body, but was actually a divine being with no physical substance. The word "docetism" comes from the Greek word "dokēsis," meaning "illusion" or "appearance." According to this belief, Jesus’ human body was an illusion or phantom, and his suffering and death on the cross were only apparent. This concept was rooted in the belief that matter and the physical world were inherently evil, and therefore, a divine being could not have a physical body. However, this view was considered heretical by the mainstream Christian church, as it denied the reality of Jesus’ human nature and his true humanity.

²⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 1146-1147.

²⁷ καὶ εὐθέως ἀναβαίνων ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν [σχιζομένους](#) τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον ἐπ’ αὐτόν. (Mark 1.10).

²⁸ Καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ [ἐσχίσθη](#) εἰς δύο ἀπὸ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω (Mark 15.38).

The significance of the veil being torn from top to bottom is also important. This direction of the tearing suggests that it was a divine act rather than a human one. The tearing of the veil is seen as a sign of the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant, which was established through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

Furthermore, the tearing of the veil symbolizes the access to God that is now available to all people through faith in Jesus Christ. As the book of Hebrews puts it, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10.19-20). Latter-day Saints who have entered the temple can see the connection between the rending of the veil, the flesh of Jesus, the act of ascending to God the Father through the Atonement of Christ, and the Father and Son's desire for all to come unto him.

This act of the rending of the veil in the temple at the very moment of Jesus Christ's death symbolized in many ways the end of the Old Covenant, and the beginning of the New Covenant, initiating a new message that the access to God the Father is now available to all people who choose to come unto Jesus Christ by covenant.

Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"Christ is now sacrificed; the law is fulfilled; the Mosaic dispensation is dead; the fulness of the gospel has come with all its light and power; and so-to dramatize, in a way which all Jewry would recognize, that the kingdom had been taken from them and given to others-Deity rent the veil of the temple 'from the top to the bottom.' The Holy of Holies is now open to all, and all, through the atoning blood of the Lamb, can now enter into the highest and holiest of all places, that kingdom where eternal life is found. Paul, in expressive language (Heb. 9 and 10), shows how the ordinances performed through the veil of the ancient temple were in similitude of what Christ was to do, which he now having done, all men become eligible to pass through the veil into the presence of the Lord to inherit full exaltation."²⁹

The Dead Arose

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many (Matt. 27.52-53).

Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"What is the reward and status of those who were with Christ in his resurrection? 'They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death.' (Mosiah 15:20-23.) Theirs is a state of glory and exaltation. Three of them-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-are singled out by name and made patterns for all the rest. Of these three the Lord says: 'They have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.' (D&C 132:29, 37.) These are they who were with Christ in his resurrection, who, as Matthew says, 'came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' (Matt. 27:53.) These are they whom the Lord Jesus will bring with him in the clouds of glory when he comes to rule and reign among men for a thousand years."³⁰

²⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, [Doctrinal New Testament Commentary](#), 1:830.

³⁰ Bruce R. McConkie, [The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man](#), 632.

8. A soldier pierces Jesus' side (John 19.31-34).

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs (John 19.32-33).

Those bound with ropes often survived on the cross several days (e.g., Josephus, Life 420-21). The dying man could rest himself on a wooden seat (Latin *sedile*) in the middle of the cross. This support allowed him to breathe—and prolonged the agony of his death, until (often) blood loss or dehydration killed him. When the soldiers needed to hasten death by asphyxiation, they would break the legs of the victims with iron clubs so they could no longer push themselves up; *Cicero and others attest this custom of leg breaking. Romans might have allowed the bodies to rot on the crosses (and feed vultures), but Deuteronomy 21:23 and Jewish sensitivities about the sabbath require that these executions be speeded up, and Romans often accommodated Judean leaders' wishes particularly during the crowded festivals. (Josephus declares that Jewish people always buried crucifixion victims before sunset.)³¹

“One of the soldiers... a spear pierced his side³²... and blood and water came out” (John 19.34).

Truman Madsen stated, "At the last, a spear was thrust into his side. Out of it flowed water and blood...To Mary he had said, 'A spear shall pierce through him to the wounding of thine own soul also; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' (JST, Luke 2:35.)"³³

Elder McConkie wrote,

“Our Lord sweat great drops of blood from every pore as he bowed in agony in Gethsemane; then again, on the cross, his blood was shed as Roman steel pierced his flesh. As to the presence of spirit, the meaning also is clear. He voluntarily gave up his mortal life; he chose to let the eternal spirit, the Spirit which was the Great Jehovah, leave the tenement of clay and enter the paradise of peace. But what of the element of water? How was this present in his atoning sacrifice? The answer is given to us in the words of the same John who set forth that water, blood, and spirit were all present on that transcendent occasion. Of the last moments of our Lord's mortal life, the Beloved Apostle wrote: 'One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.' (John 19:34-35.)

"With the vision of that cruel event still shining in his mind, John later wrote, 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.' He is speaking of those that bear record that 'Jesus is the Son of God,' and having first identified those who bear this witness in heaven, he turns to a symbolical witness that is borne on earth. 'And there are three that bear witness in earth," he says, "the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.' That

³¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 307.

³² That the spear wound was of major proportion, one that would have slain him had he not already voluntarily given up his life, is evident from his statement made to the Nephites after his resurrection, "Thrust your hands into my side." (3 Ne. 11:14.) McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Volume 1.

³³ Truman G. Madsen, "The Olive Press," *Ensign*, Dec. 1982. This message is a revised and condensed account from a 14-Stake Fireside address given at Brigham Young University 9 May 1982.

is to say, the presence of these three elements in the death of Christ unite in testifying of his divine Sonship."³⁴

9. The Passover scripture fulfilled (John 19.35-37).

And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced (John 19.35-37).

The reference to the scripture being fulfilled refers to two specific passages from the Hebrew Bible that are associated with the Passover.

The first is found in Exodus 12.46, which states that none of the bones of the Passover lamb should be broken. This was a specific commandment given to the Israelites during the time of the Exodus, when they were instructed to sacrifice a lamb and apply its blood to their doorposts as a sign of their faith and obedience to God. This act protected them from the plague of the firstborn that struck Egypt, allowing them to escape and begin their journey to the Promised Land in the Land of Canaan.

In John 19.36, this prophecy is seen as being fulfilled in the fact that none of Jesus' bones were broken during his crucifixion, even though this was a common practice used by the Romans to hasten the death of those being crucified. This can show us that the authors of the New Testament read back into the Hebrew Bible types of Jesus Christ. As they examined the things that happened in Jesus' life, they reread their sacred scripture with new eyes. This allowed them to see Jesus throughout the story of Israel from the time of Adam and Eve, to the era of the Patriarchs, to the Exodus, the Conquest, the monarchy and divided kingdom, to the destruction of the First Israelite Temple, and the rebuilding of the Second Temple.

The second text that the author of John is referring to is found in [Zechariah 12.10](#), which describes a future time when the people of Israel will look upon the one whom they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child.³⁵ In John 19.37, this prophecy is also seen as being fulfilled in the fact that Jesus was pierced with a spear during his crucifixion, and those who witnessed his death saw him hanging on the cross, fulfilling this statement that was made in the Book of Zechariah.

In this way, the author of John 19.35-37 works to portray Jesus' death on the cross as not only fulfilling types in the Hebrew Bible, but also specific details outlined in the ancient Passover, which was a central event in Jewish history and culture.

10. Watchers near the cross (Matt. 27.54-56; Mark 15.39-41; Luke 23.47-49).

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. And many women were

³⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ*, Deseret Book, 1978, p. 387-388.

³⁵ In speaking of his Second Coming, Christ said through the mouth of Zechariah, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." (Zech. 12.10.) This Messianic utterance shall find fulfillment in the appearance of the resurrected Lord to the descendants of his ancient covenant people when he returns in glory. They will then say: "What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?" His reply: "These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God." (D&C 45.51-52; Zech. 13.6.)

there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedees children (Matt. 27:54-56).

The significance of this passage is multi-faceted. Here we see different manifestations of witnesses to Jesus' majesty, suffering, and triumph on the cross:

1. **The centurion's declaration:** The centurion's statement "Truly this was the Son of God" is significant because it represents the first time in the Gospel of Matthew that a non-disciple recognizes Jesus' true identity. This declaration affirms that Jesus is not just a mere mortal, but the divine Son of God.
2. **The earthquake:** The earthquake that occurred at the moment of Jesus' death is significant because it represents a cosmic disturbance that highlights the significance of Jesus' death.³⁶ The Gospel of Matthew portrays the earthquake as a sign that the world was being transformed at the moment of Jesus' death.
3. **The presence of women at the foot of the tree:**³⁷ The presence of the women at the foot of the tree/cross is significant because it highlights the faithfulness of Jesus' female followers, who did not abandon him (unlike many other disciples) even in the face of great danger. It also underscores the importance of women in the early Church of Christ, who served as witnesses to some of the most important events in the life of Jesus, including his death, burial, and resurrection. Women had a place in the early Church, just as they do among the Latter-day Saints.

Overall, Matthew 27:54-56 is significant because it portrays the moment of Jesus' death as a cosmic event that has profound theological and social implications. The declaration of the centurion, an outsider, shows that Jesus is the God of the whole created order, as John works to portray. Alongside this, the portrayal of the earthquake, as well as the presence of women all contribute to the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as a divine figure whose Atonement has power to affect all creation.

11. Jesus' burial (Matt. 27.57-61; Mark 15.42-47; Luke 23.50-56; John 19.38-42).

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came

³⁶ We read of the earthquake in the New World: ... there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, ***the a whole face of the land was changed***, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and ***the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth***; And the a highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and ***many smooth places became rough***. And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and ***many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth***, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate. And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many in them who were slain. And there were some who were carried away in the a whirlwind; and whither they went no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away. And thus the face of ***the whole earth became deformed***, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the ***quaking of the earth*** (3 Nephi 8.12-17).

³⁷ Peter taught, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, ***whom ye slew and hanged on a tree***. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5.30-32).

therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand (John 19.38-42).

History

Crucifixion victims were usually thrown into a common grave for criminals and were not to be mourned publicly after their death; had the Romans had their way, the corpses would not have been buried at all, but such behavior would have needlessly provoked otherwise peaceful local residents. Local Jewish leaders probably normally deposited the bodies in criminals' graves for a year before handing them over to families. But exceptions seem to have been made at times if family or powerful patrons interceded for the body, naturally inviting comment as in the Gospels. Burying the dead was a crucial and pious duty in Judaism, and an important act of love; being unburied was too horrible to be permitted even for criminals (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.202, 264- 65). Scripture and tradition mandated it before sundown (Deut 21:23; Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.317). To accomplish his task before sundown and the advent of the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea has to hurry. Roman authorities did sometimes hand over bodies to friends or relatives who desired to bury them. Nevertheless, Joseph's request for Jesus' body was an act of courage. Especially for someone outside the family to make the request, it could identify one with the person executed for treason. Far from Joseph's wealth and influence protecting him, it could have also made him a target of special scrutiny and envy. Joseph acts more courageously here than do Jesus' previously public disciples.³⁸

"A hundred pound weight"³⁹ of myrrh and aloes (John 19.39).

If this measure of Nicodemus's mixture is one of weight, it is as much as seventy-five modern pounds (more than thirty kilograms; Roman pounds were lighter than modern pounds); less likely, some have suggested a measure of volume identified with the Old Testament log, hence less than seventy fluid ounces. In either case it is a lavish expression of devotion, as in 12:3; but seventy-five pounds is perhaps a hundred times costlier than the lavish gift of 12.3. Other accounts of lavish devotion for beloved teachers are occasionally reported (a Gentile convert allegedly burned eighty pounds of spices at the funeral of Gamaliel I, Paul's teacher); indeed, five hundred servants carried all the spices for Herod the Great's funeral (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.673; *Jewish Antiquities* 17.199). Myrrh was used for embalming the dead, and aloes for perfume.⁴⁰

"As the manner of the Jews is to bury" (John 19.40).

John mentions the Jewish custom; Jewish people did not burn dead heroes, as some Gentiles did, or mutilate them for embalming, as Egyptians did. **Bodies were wrapped in shrouds, sometimes expensive ones, especially prepared for burials.** Jewish sources are emphatic that none of these actions may be undertaken unless the person is clearly dead; thus those burying Jesus have no doubt that he is dead.

³⁸ Keener, *Background*, p. 308.

³⁹ ὡσεὶ λίτρας ἑκατόν "about a hundred pounds" (John 19.39).

⁴⁰ Keener, *Background*, p. 308.

Here strips of linen rather than a full shroud are used, perhaps because of the imminent approach of the sabbath at sundown. White linen garments were worn by Jewish priests, by some other ancient priests (devotees of Isis) and by angels in Jewish tradition (e.g., 2 Maccabees 11:8); they were also wrappings for the righteous dead. *Spices reduced the odor of decomposition.*⁴¹

“A new sepulchre, where was never a man yet laid” (John 19.41).

On the locale, see “near the city” in verse 20: according to Jewish custom, burials had to be outside the city walls (one may compare the outrage of pious Jews over Antipas’s building Tiberias on a graveyard). *To be buried in a tomb not yet used was no doubt a special honor and would make the tomb difficult to confuse with others in the vicinity.* Tombs were sometimes in garden areas (cf. 2 Kings 21:18, 26). Most Judean tombs were private burial sites belonging to families; often caves were used, and often entrances were sealed with a large, disk-shaped stone that could not be removed from within and were moved from outside only with considerable effort. A tomb belonging to a wealthy person such as Joseph might have a stone a full yard or meter in diameter. Other tombs in this area suggest some wealth of the tomb owners (cf. Mt 27:60).⁴²

And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre (Matt. 27.60-61).

Women generally took part in preparing bodies for burial in the ancient world. The oldest tradition for the site of Jesus’ grave (the Roman Catholic location of the Holy Sepulcher) is a clearly first-century tomb located inside the walls of Jerusalem since the forties of the first century, even though the New Testament and Jewish law required that the crucifixion happen outside the city walls. But King Agrippa I expanded the city walls during his reign (AD 41–44); at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, that area was still outside the walls. Thus the tradition of the approximate site of Jesus’ burial and resurrection goes back to within roughly ten years of the event.⁴³

Legends of Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph of Arimathea is a figure from the New Testament who is best known for his association with the burial of Jesus Christ. Matthew 27 ([Matthew 27.57](#)) describes him simply as a rich man and disciple of Jesus, but according to Mark 15 ([Mark 15.43](#)) Joseph of Arimathea was “an honorable counsellor,⁴⁴ who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God.” Luke 23 (Luke 23.50–56) adds that he “had not consented to their decision and action.” Scholars see Joseph’s request for Jesus’ body as being something that put his life at risk, because prominent people viewed allies of a condemned revolutionary as an ally subject to investigation and arrest.⁴⁵

According to John 19 (John 19.38), upon hearing of Jesus' death, this secret disciple of Jesus "asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission." Joseph immediately

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 308.

⁴² Keener, *Background*, p. 308.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 123. Keener disagrees with the location put forth by the owners of the [Garden Tomb](#).

⁴⁴ εὐσχήμων βουλευτής “an honorable member of the council,” or a good and respectable member of the Sanhedrin. (see [Mark 15.43](#)).

⁴⁵ Keener, *Background*, p. 123.

purchased a linen shroud (Mark 15.46) and proceeded to Golgotha to take the body of Jesus down from the cross. There, according to John 19.39-40, Joseph and Nicodemus took the body and bound it in linen cloths with the spices (myrrh and aloes) that Nicodemus had brought. Luke 23.55-56 states that the women "who had come with him from Galilee" prepared the spices and ointments. In addition to these many details laid out by the writers of the gospels, there are several legends and traditions associated with Joseph of Arimathea that have been passed down through the ages Christian tradition. Among these, some are noteworthy:

1. **Joseph of Arimathea was the uncle of the Virgin Mary:** According to some traditions, Joseph of Arimathea was related to the family of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Some sources claim that he was her uncle, and that he was present at the Annunciation when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.⁴⁶ Other sources discuss the idea that Joseph of Arimathea journeyed back and forth to Britain from the Holy Land, and that Jesus accompanied him when he was young.⁴⁷
2. **Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man:** Some legends suggest that Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy merchant who traded in tin and other metals. He is said to have brought these metals to Britain, where he established mines and built a chapel at Glastonbury.⁴⁸
3. **Joseph of Arimathea founded the first Christian church in Britain:** According to legend, Joseph of Arimathea traveled to Britain with a group of followers after the death of Jesus. He is said to have preached the gospel and converted many people, and he is credited with founding the first Christian church in the country. There were even legends that at Glastonbury, he washed the cup that contained a portion of the blood of Jesus, and that from this an iron-rich spring known as "the red spring," or "the blood spring" came forth.⁴⁹
4. **Joseph of Arimathea possessed the Holy Grail:** Some legends suggest that Joseph of Arimathea possessed the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, which became known as the Holy Grail. According to one tradition, Joseph brought the Holy Grail with him to Britain, where it was eventually hidden at Glastonbury.

It should be noted that these legends and traditions are not discussed in the canonized scriptures that have come to us through the early leaders in the Christian movement.⁵⁰ These details, though discussed

⁴⁶ C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor, *From Scythia to Camelot: a radical reassessment of the legends of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and the Holy Grail*, Routledge, 2000, p. 310. Littleton and Malcor provide genealogical charts at the end of their text outlining the claims of Joseph of Arimathea's to those associated with the Grail legends.

⁴⁷ Lionel S. Lewis, *St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury*, James Clarke Lutterworth, 1983.

⁴⁸ Matt. 27.57 speaks of his wealth.

⁴⁹ William John Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History (Biblical Refigurations)*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 100-101. Lyons connects this spring to a thorn tree that arose from this. He writes (p. 101), "The Guide to Glastonbury and Street recounts that: '[i]n December it is a Glastonbury custom for the Mayor to cut a spray of blossom from the Holy Thorn [*Crataegus monogyna*] in St John's Churchyard. . . . [That] blossom is sent to the Queen and is put on the Royal breakfast table on Christmas Day', a tradition believed by some locals to go back to the time of Queen Anne in the early seventeenth century, but certainly revived by the Rev. Lionel Smithett Lewis, vicar of Glastonbury, in December 1929. In 1986, an image of the thorn flowering in the snow was used for the United Kingdom's 12/13p Christmas stamps."

⁵⁰ Day, [How did we get the Bible?](#)

and written about in several documented sources, are of course speculative and open to much debate and interpretation today by historians.⁵¹

12. Chief priests and pharisees seal the tomb (Matt.27.62-66).

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (Matt. 27.62-66).

The priestly aristocracy, ever politically astute, takes no chances, and despite the sabbath and festival they obtain an audience with Pilate to secure the tomb. It is debated whether Pilate here provides them with Roman guards or tells them where the tomb is and permits them to post some of their temple guard; the guards' fear of Pilate's reprisals (Matt. 28.14) could indicate that they are Roman guards, but they also answer to the high priests (Matt. 28.11) and it seems unlikely that Pilate would put his own soldiers at the chief priests' disposal. The seal on the stone would make any tampering obvious. That the Jerusalem authorities would have acted thus on the sabbath indicates their special interest in the case as well as suggests the selectiveness of their piety.⁵²

Sunday Will Come

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught:

“Each of us will have our own Fridays—those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. We will all have our Fridays.

But I testify to you in the name of the One who conquered death—Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, ***Sunday will come.***

No matter our desperation, no matter our grief, ***Sunday will come.*** In this life or the next, ***Sunday will come.***

I testify to you that the Resurrection is not a fable. We have the personal testimonies of those who saw Him. Thousands in the Old and New Worlds witnessed the risen Savior. They felt the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. They shed tears of unrestrained joy as they embraced Him.”⁵³

⁵¹ See: William John Lyons, [*Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History \(Biblical Refigurations\)*](#), Oxford University Press, 2014. J. Armitage Robinson, [*Two Glastonbury Legends: King Arthur and St. Joseph of Arimathea*](#), Kessinger Publishing, 2010. Mary Caine, *The Glastonbury Zodiac*, 1978. Lionel S. Lewis, *St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury*, James Clarke Lutterworth, 1983.

⁵² Keener, Background, p. 123.

⁵³ Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, [*“Sunday Will Come,”*](#) October 2006 General Conference.